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Paper presented at **"Anual Conference Young People and Societies in Europe and around the Mediterranean, Marseilles – 22, 23 and 24 October 2003"**

**Axe A:** En quoi les jeunes apparaissent-ils comme révélateurs des évolutions des sociétés?  
Atelier: Itinéraires professionnels: quels parcours? Quelles différenciations?

**Title: "Future orientation of young participants in the Social Guarantee Schemes: What do I aim to? What am I afraid of?"**

### **Abstract**

The research context of this project is a particular training course aimed at young people with no degree training for a profession at a level 1 qualification: the Social Guarantee Schemes (SGS) in the Valencian region (Spain). The Social Guarantee schemes offer a specially suitable research context in order to study the vocational socialisation of teenagers. Due to these schemes the formal educational system provides young school failed people an opportunity, in some cases it's the very last opportunity. This opportunity it's related to the possibility of changing their developmental path from a learning experience based on different aspects: the labour component, the social maturity and the personal maturity. On the framework of a larger research focused on the vocational identity configuration at the Social Guarantee Schemes, we present here an evaluation of the goals and fears that these young people shows when they answered open questions about their future foretaste for the next five years. By analysing goals and fears number, their contents and the perceived grade of control on the own development we can extend the perspective about three subjects of interest: (i) the effects of the schemes on the socialisation they provide; (ii) the interrelation between the professional sphere and other meaningful living spaces; (iii) the main values which will guide the future decisions of this young people. We compare as well the results of this particular group with those founded in other similar research done in the European context.

**A1**

# FUTURE ORIENTATION OF YOUNG PARTICIPANTS IN THE SOCIAL GUARANTEE SCHEMES: WHAT DO I AIM TO? WHAT AM I AFRAID OF?<sup>1</sup>

## 1. INTRODUCTION

Defining future life plans is considered to be an important developmental task during adolescence. Adolescents are expected to make choices that involve imagining themselves as future adults: the attainment of educational goals, the acquisition of a vocational identity, and the formation of a family are the traditional markers of achieving adult status. This task has recently become complex because today the transition to adulthood takes place as a double transition, the first lasting from adolescence to the "emergent adulthood" (Arnett, 2000) and the second, from this to full adulthood. This transition as it happens in complex Western societies takes place in a progressive and fragmented way and with insufficient community support, particularly in the second stage of access to adulthood.

There are two research traditions associated with adolescent thinking and preparation for the future (Lanz, Rosnati, Marta and Scabini, 2001). The first has investigated how adolescents see their personal futures in terms of hopes, goals, expectations, and concerns. Results are consistent and show those adolescents are concerned with future jobs and education, secondly, with leisure time and material belongings and, finally, with couple relationships and building their own family.

Young people are also quite optimistic about their personal future. This optimism is reflected in the greater number of hopes than worries that they express and in the ways in which they anticipate future events: they do not consider negative life-events to be likely in their own future lives. It seems to be only little variation across societies and cultures in such hopes and interests and in their sequence and realization, kind of reflecting a "cultural prototype" of development during the life cycle (Nurmi, 1991). However, a substantial proportion of their fears or worries deals with societal and even global issues (war, pollution, etc.). Furthermore, considerable cross-cultural variety and change across historical time is found in such concerns.

The other research tradition concerns identity formation: planning the future is an important part of identity construction during adolescence. It is by planning the future that one begins the process of defining a personal system of elements around which one's identity takes shape.

In other words, the question of 'who am I' can only be addressed properly if the individual finds an answer to the question about 'who I wish to be and who may I become'. Erikson (2000) remarks that 'it is the image of the self in the future the one that determines the construction of my present identity (I am what I will be), that is, these images of the self are not descriptions of the present self, but images of an idea of the self as embedding the possibility of becoming somebody.

The dimension of "future", therefore, is specially relevant in this age. In fact, to talk about temporal perspective means to make reference to the process of formulating plans and goals which take shape partly in response to individual needs and partly as an effect of social and relational structures into which individual life plans are channeled. Through socialisation processes, adolescents learn which goals are realistic in a certain socio-cultural context in accordance with its structural and cultural constraints (e.g., labour market). Moreover, people also learn what are appropriate and non-appropriate ways to

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<sup>1</sup> This paper has been written under the research project 'The formation of vocational identities in Social Guarantee Schemes. The impact of transformations in the educational system upon the processes of vocational training' (SEC2000-0801), funded under the National Programme for Research, Development and Innovation, Spanish Ministry of Science and Technology.

accomplishing their goals, at which age their goals can be reached and which are their chances to succeed in their attempts to aim at those goals. Thus, social time and individual time are integrated in the adolescent temporal perspective.

Portraying this sociocultural context according to the age in which the adolescent will contrast her individual aims varies after dimensions like *sex roles* and *previous educational experience* of the individuals. Research conducted in the seventies showed that the image of the future reflected traditional sex roles, with a larger emphasis on girls among aims related to the future family and lower occupational expectations. Recent research reveals that such differences have decreased substantially and have even disappeared in both academic and occupational domains. Adolescent girls have educational and occupational expectations as high and even higher than boys (Lanz et al., 2001; Nurmi, Poole y Kalakoski, 1994). Nevertheless, there are still certain differences: boys talk about expectations related to property and leisure, while girls show higher levels of fears (Malmberg y Norrgard, 1999). More traditional differences have also been found like a greater interest and worries of girls relating the future formation of a family and marriage (Nurmi et al., 1994).

The educational pathway proves to be a key in the future orientation. Guichard (1995) recalls the intimate connection between school experience, identity as the self-portrayal and representations of future in the occupational domain. The capacity to think oneself as a 'competent self' is determined by the school experience. School has provoked in many adolescent groups a kind of 'identity aggression': the consciousness that one will not be able to ever do nothing of some worth. Such an 'alienation' will be reinforced if they do not enter educational experiences able to provide them with an image of the self as a carrier of competencies. If the adolescent does not think of himself as a 'competent self', a minimum cognitive representation about profession will not be possible. It may be also expected that in the transition to adulthood these adolescents will diminish the aims related to their future education and that they perceive their personal future in a rather negative and external way (Salmela-Aro, Nurmi y Ruotsalainen, 1995).

The research we present here is written under the frame of a wider research project on the configuration of the vocational identity in the Social Guarantee Schemes (SGS from now). The SGS is a kind of training dedicated to people that have not obtained the Scholar Certificate of OSE (Obligatory Secondary Education), that is to say, the most basic qualification in the elementary schooling in Spain. Therefore, the SGS are an opportunity for these adolescents to get a qualification in order to access to the labour market as well as to consolidate knowledge from basic training. But the important fact is that we can add a clear component of psychosocial maturation to the academic component: the participants in these schemes do not have only a history of school failure, but they often also present problems of social integration. Besides, in these schemes they are taught abilities for the employment search. These schemes are developed during a single academic course.

The aims that guide this research are threefold:

Aim 1. To obtain a general view of teenagers' goals and fears with a record of academic failure in the formal educational system.

We expect to find in this group a combination of aims in the long-term 'typically' related to the transition to adulthood together with other aims closer to current existential reality of adolescents' life. Nevertheless, as a consequence of their previous educational trajectory, aims related to the future education will weight considerably less than the occupational ones. Aims in the short-term related to leisure and the acquisition of personal belongings will be equally important. As a group, their vision will be rather optimistic and, as shown in previous research, aims will surpass fears.

Aim 2. To verify whether there are significant differences within this group associated to the gender role.

We expect some differences according to sex in a clear way for the stereotypes surrounding sex roles in this group. First, hopes and worries will be expressed to a larger extent by girls, as a consequence of their greater cognitive planning. Second, differences are expected in relation to the most relevant contents. Boys will show greater interest in leisure and personal belongings, while girls will focus on the future family and personal and friendship relations. Following recent studies there would be no differences with relation to educational and occupational aims.

Aim 3. To identify the degree of control perceived by these adolescents on goals and fears that they have, according to the domain to which these refer.

We expect that in certain domains of goals and fears there are differences related to the internality of the perceived control. Such perceived internality is expected to be lower in goals and fears within the domain of future occupation and education, while it will increase in the domains with more immediate aims such as personal relations, material belongings and leisure. In these domains, the feeling of self-governance will be higher and, therefore, control will be perceived rather internally.

## **2. METHOD**

### **2.1. Sample**

We have tried to show the above with a sample consisting of 102 adolescents that participate in 8 SGS in different towns of the Valencian region. 16.7% of these adolescents are studying furniture, 14.7% of them industrial clothmaking, 13.7% of them were preparing to become administrative assistants, 12.7% soldering and the same percentage for electricity, 10.8% mechanics, 9.8% studied trading and 8.8% masonry.

Regarding sex, there is enough representation of each gender: 61.8% of the sample were male and 38.2% female. Regarding age, the youths of the sample range between 15 and 23 years old (mean = 16.79, SD = 1.33).

### **2.2. Measure instruments**

During the first term of the academic year we administered the sample a battery of questionnaires to assess diverse aspects of the psychosocial development in the context of the Social Guarantee Schemes. These were applied in two sessions in groups of 3-4 people.

The results shown below have been taken out from the following tools. In first place, an open answer scale asking about the hopes and concerns that they have for the next five years. Starting from the classification proposed by Nurmi, Seginer and Poole (1990), the teenagers' goals and fears were structured in twelve contents:

- Education (for instance 'to study vocational training').
- Work-career ('not to find a job')
- Couple-marriage ('to form a family')
- Leisure ('to travel')
- Friends-peers ('to fall out with my friends')
- Family relationship ('to have better relationship with my parents').
- Personal health ('to be a healthy person')
- Family health ('a death in my family')
- Material acquisitions/losses ('to buy a car')
- Collective ('no wars in the world')
- Global ('let everything in my life go wrong')
- Others ('to get my driver license')

In second place, two scales that assess the degree of control perceived by the youth on each one of the goals and fears that they have pointed out. The teenagers are requested to estimate in a scale ranging from 1 to 3 to what extent accomplishing each of those hopes and worries depend on luck, other people, their personal abilities and their own effort. The questionnaire has a grill shape where the individuals place the number that represents the frequency of each one of the answer categories for each one of the described situations. The Alpha Coefficient for this tool is 0.78 for the scale of goals and 0.90 for the scale of fears.

The battery of questionnaires also includes some questions on sociodemographic features: age, sex, study and the entity where he/she is studying.

### 2.3. Procedure

The analysis procedure is as follows:

- a) In relation to the implied elements (goals and fears) the answers were categorized according to the contents.
- b) In order to identify the internal structure of the perceived degree of control we used the Main Components Analysis with Varimax rotation.
- c) In order to obtain a general view of the sample in the different analyzed variables we made a description by means of frequencies and percentages or the mean and the standard deviation.
- d) In order to describe the most relevant differences related to sex we used the T Test for related samples and Pearson's Chi-square Test.
- e) In order to deepen in the perceived degree of control on the goals and fears described by the teenagers, we applied the Wilcoxon Test, given that we worked with ordinal data.

## 3. RESULTS

### 3.1. Overview of the sample and inter-category differences

We present a description of the hopes and the concerns for teenagers in risk of social exclusion. So, we begin speaking of their goals, later of their fears and we conclude commenting the difference between goals and fears.

*In the first place*, the sample seems to have a medium level of goals (M=5.01). The mean for goals in women (M=5.51) is higher than in men (M=4.7) although these differences are not statistically significant ( $\chi^2=8.625$ ,  $p>0.05$ ). Table 1 presents the means and standard deviation of goals.

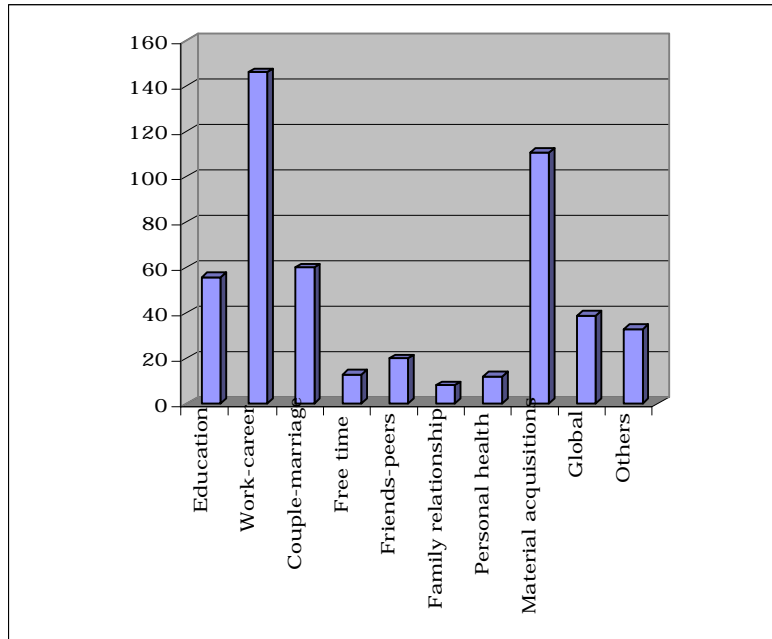
Table 1. Descriptive statistics of teenagers goals

	Total Mean	Total S.D.	Mean - Boys	S.D. - Boys	Mean - Girls	S.D. - Girls
Goals	5.01	2.35	4.70	2.41	5.51	2.18

The distribution of the goals depending on the content is presented in figure 1. As we can observe in figure 1, most of the teenagers hopes are referred to their vocational future (29.32%) and to the acquisition of material goods (22.29%) such as a house or a car. Besides, 12.05% of the youths expect to find a couple and to form a family in the future; and 11.24% have educational aims. A final consideration we would like to remark here is that there are no 'collective' goals: it seems that risk teenagers tend to have goals self-

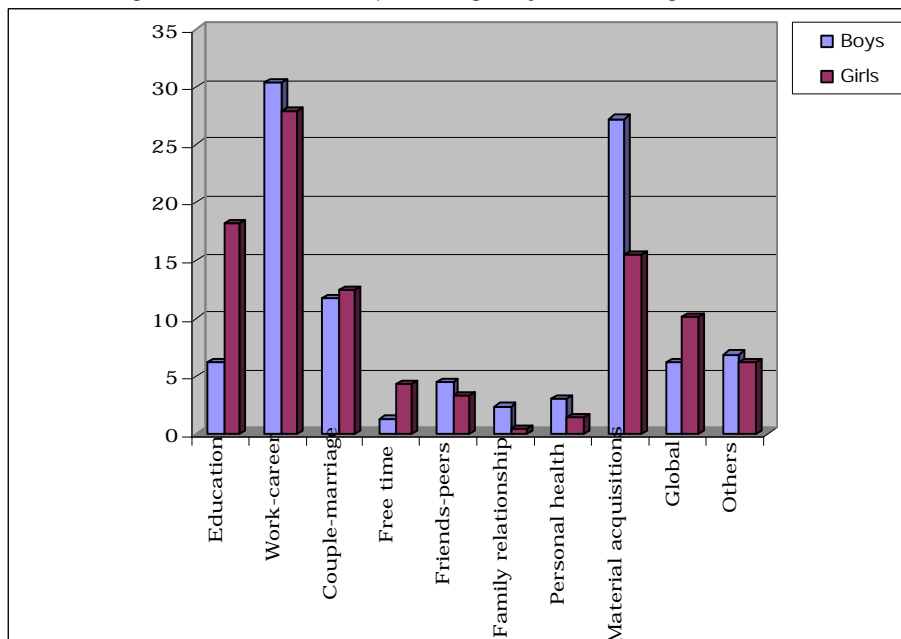
centred rather than other-centred or, at least, they do not seem to be worried about the social welfare.

Figure 1. Distribution of frequencies for goals content in total sample



In figure 2 we show the distribution of the goals according to sex. We have found meaningful statistical differences by sex in the contents 'education' ( $\chi^2=14.5$ ;  $p<0.01$ ) and 'material acquisitions' ( $\chi^2=7.15$ ;  $p<0.01$ ). The data show how the women are the most concerned for having studies than the men (men = 6.21%, women = 18.27%). Opposite to this, although both sexes indicate the importance of property, men give it a bigger relative importance (men = 27.24%; women = 15.48%).

Figure 2. Distribution of percentages by content of goals and sex



We have not find meaningful statistical differences in others domains, we want to remark that both men as women have employment stability as the highest priority (men =

30.34%; women = 27.88%). We would like to point too that both men and women have as future goal to form a family (men = 11.72; women = 12.50).

*Secondly* and with regard to fears, these adolescents do not seem to think of negative things (M=3.18). Table 2 presents the means and standard deviation of fears.

Table 2. Descriptive statistics of teenagers fears

	Total Mean	Total S.D.	Mean - Boys	S.D. - Boys	Mean - Girls	S.D. - Girls
Fears	3.18	2.20	2.87	2.16	3.70	2.20

Our results show mainly that male adolescents (M=2.87) do not think of possible negative events; in fact, 9.80% of the sample of men indicate that they do not have any fear. The same thing does not happen with women, who seem to be more expressive and/or to be more far-sighted (M=3.70) although these differences are not statistically significant ( $\chi^2=7.163$ ,  $p>0.05$ ).

The distribution of concerns according to the content is presented in figure 3. As we can appreciate, the adolescents of the sample are mainly afraid of: not getting a stable work (21.50%), their lack of personal health (19.22%), and, in a lesser extent, not being lucky in life in general, which we have named as 'global fears' (13.36%).

Figure 3. Distribution of frequencies by domains of fears in total sample

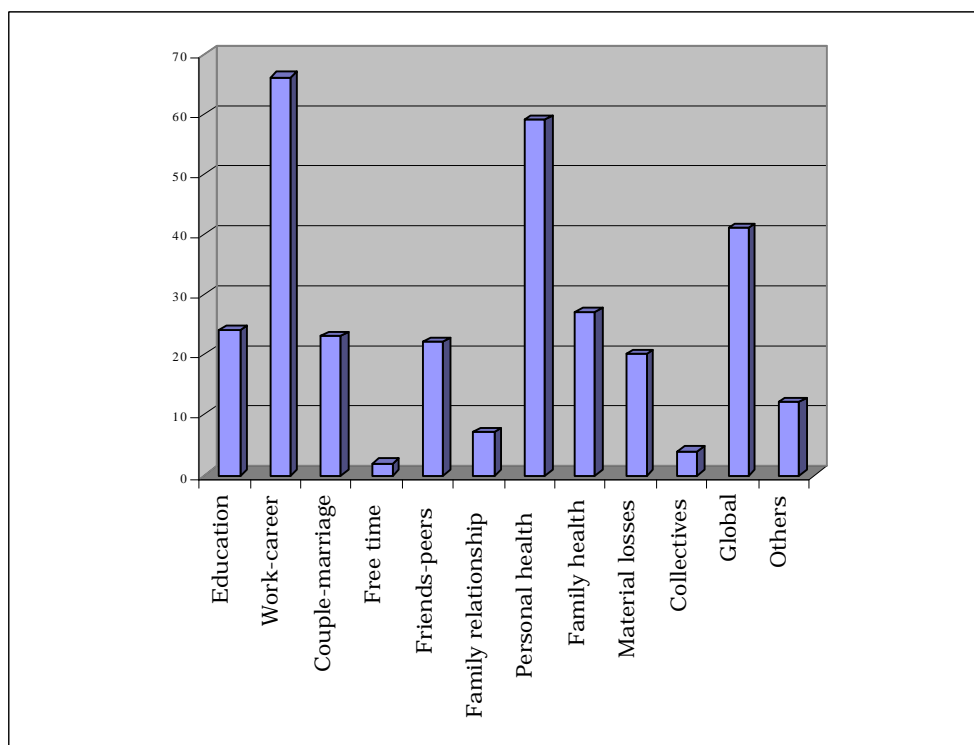
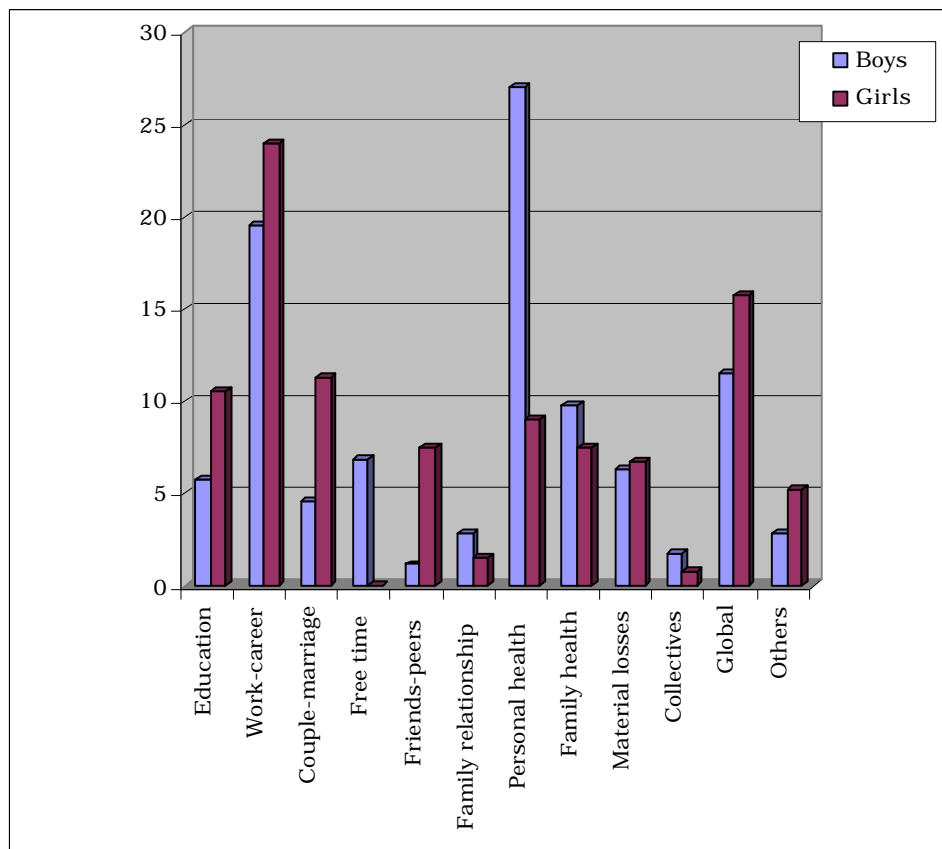


Figure 4 presents the distribution of contents of fears by sex. After the Chi-square Test, we obtained statistically significant differences in the domain of 'personal health' according to sex ( $\chi^2=12.78$ ;  $p<0.01$ ). However, we want to stand out the differences for sexes in the following contents: friends-peers (men = 1.15%; women = 7.52%), couple-marriage (men = 4.60%; women = 11.28%) and education (men = 5.75%; women = 10.53%). It can be seen that we have not stood out the difference of mean in the domain

'leisure' because we do not consider it representative, for it reflects the fears expressed by a single person -frequency in men = 2, which implies 6.90%, and frequency in women = 0.

Figure 4. Percentage Distribution of contents for fear by sex



And finally, the difference between expressed hopes ( $M=5.01$ ) and expressed concerns ( $M=3.18$ ) is statistically meaningful ( $t_{94}=10.246$ ,  $p<0.01$ ). So, it seems that adolescents in risk of social exclusion are featured by not having a life plan in the long-term. We can appreciate this by the kind of goals and fears they refer to: goals are centred on the immediate future (to get a job that allow them to acquire materials goods, for instance to buy a house) and fears are rather perceived in the long-term and frequently in a more generic way, as for instance 'to be poor', 'that life turns bad'.

### 3.2. Internality-externality in goals and fears

#### *Dimensions in the Control Perception Scale*

In order to identify the structure of the Control Perception Scale in the attainment of goals and avoidance of fears, we made two Main Components Analysis with Varimax Rotation, one in the perceived control scale on the goals and another on the fears. Both analyses gave two orthogonal factors with the result that they jointly explain 64.41% and 70.82% respectively. In the tables 3 and 4 we show the matrix of the main rotated components for each one of the scales. Starting from the content of the items with more saturation in each one of them, these two factors were denominated 'locus of internal control' and 'locus of external control'. The locus of internal control makes reference to the fact that the attainment of goals and the avoidance in the happening of fears depends on oneself. This factor explains 34.58% of the variance in the scale of goals and 44.36% of the

variance in the scale of fears. On the opposite, the locus of external control refers to the belief that the achievement of the goals and the control of the fears are due to factors that escape to their control. This second factor explains 29.84% and 26.46% of the variance respectively.

Table 3. Matrix of rotated components of the Scale of Perceived Control about Goals

	Component	
	1	2
Own effort	.828	
Personal abilities	.811	
Luck		.784
Other people		.762

Table 4. Matrix of rotated components of the Scale of Perceived Control about Fears

	Component	
	1	2
Own effort	.912	
Personal abilities	.906	
Luck		.821
Other people		.675

### ***Differences in the perceived degree of control according to content of goals and fears***

In order to identify the control degree perceived by these teenagers related to the different contents of goals and fears that they think about, we have used the Wilcoxon Test. We present below the differential analyses beginning with the more relevant differences associated to hopes and then moving to the differences according to the domains related to worries.

We begin, therefore, with *goals*. In table 5 the means are presented depending on the perceived degree of control regarding their attainment.

Table 5. Results of the Wilcoxon Test on the perceived degree of control in the attainment of goals

	Mean - Extern Control	Mean - Intern Control	Z	Asintot. Sig. (bilateral)
Goals	2.01	2.66	-11.786	.000

We observe statistically significant differences in the perceived degree of control for goals. It seems that teenagers in risk of social exclusion tend to consider that the achievement of their goals depends to a large extent on themselves.

With the purpose of deepening in this question, a detailed analysis was made for each one of the contents of goals. In table 6 the results of the Wilcoxon Test are shown in the different domains.

Table 6. Results of the Wilcoxon Test for the locus of control by contents of goals

Contents	Mean - Extern Control	Mean - Intern Control	Z	Asintot. Sig. (bilateral)
Education	1.62	2.87	-4.874	.000
Work-career	2.11	2.84	-7.167	.000
Couple-marriage	2.16	2.44	-2.212	.027
Leisure	1.75	2.50	-2.461	.014
Friends-peers	2.31	2.35	-0.250	.803
Family relationship	2.25	2.25	0.000	1.000
Personal health	2.00	2.25	-1.035	.301
Material acquisitions	1.94	2.56	-5.701	.000
Global	2.04	2.68	-3.809	.000
Others	1.98	2.91	-3.690	.000

The first thing that gets our attention when we observe table 6 is the great amount of statistically significant differences in the perceived degree of control for the attainment of goals. Concretely, it seems that these adolescents tend to rely on their abilities and their own effort as the causes for their: educational success, vocational goals, couple, leisure, the acquisition of material goods, global aspects of their lives, and other goals. It is also necessary to point out that the adolescents are not clear about the reasons behind the achievement in goals in the domains of 'friend-peers', 'family relationship' and 'personal health'.

Regarding *fears*, in table 7 we show the means according to the perceived degree of control in their attainment. The data in table 7 show that there are statistically significant differences in the perceived degree of control upon fears. This result suggests that adolescents in risk of social exclusion consider that the avoidance of fears depends to a larger extent on themselves.

Table 7. Results of the Wilcoxon Test on the perceived degree of control in the avoidance of fears

	Mean – Extern Control	Mean - Intern Control	Z	Asintot. Sig. (bilateral)
Fears	2.13	2.26	-2.360	.018

With the purpose of deepening the analysis of the adolescents' locus of control about fears, we conducted the Wilcoxon Test for each one of the domains of fear. In table 8 we show the results of this test.

In table 8 we can appreciate that the contents in which there are statistically significant differences in the locus of control of the adolescents are the following: 'education', 'work-career', 'friend-peers' and 'personal health'. It seems that young people in risk of social exclusion show a rather internal locus of control in what refers to the avoidance of fears about education, vocational stability and social relationships; that is to say, they consider that with their capacities and their effort they are able to overcome the possible obstacles in the educational and vocational world and the difficulties in their peers relationships.

However, they consider that it is their luck or other people that can support the maintenance of the personal health rather than their habits and way of life.

Table 8. Results of the Wilcoxon Test for the locus of control according to contents of fear

Contents	Mean - Extern Control	Mean - Intern Control	Z	Asintot. Sig. (bilateral)
Education	1.88	2.83	-2.687	.007
Work-career	2.18	2.65	-3.412	.001
Couple-marriage	2.11	2.36	-1.182	.237
Friends-peers	2.06	2.56	-2.584	.010
Family relationship	2.31	1.94	-0.948	.343
Personal health	2.33	1.94	-3.396	.001
Family health	1.91	1.81	-0.477	.634
Material losses	2.00	2.21	-0.878	.380
Collective	2.40	2.10	-1.732	.083
Global	1.98	2.27	-1.848	.065
Others	2.13	2.63	-1.604	.109

Lastly, we want to point out that in the contents 'couple-marriage', 'family relationship', 'family health', 'material losses', 'collective fears' and 'global' and 'other fears' significant differences are not observed in the locus of control. It is remarkable in this regard the assumption that avoiding material losses, keeping family relations and health in the family are not perceived in the same way to getting a job, peers relations and personal health respectively.

#### 4. CONCLUSIONS

Adolescence is a moment of orientation towards future, as we have shown in our data. Young people are clearly able to define aims for their future life, at least in the medium-term that we asked them to. Our data show that transition towards emergent adulthood is addressed rather than to a complete acquisition of the status of being and adult. Such an orientation, as we hypothesized, is defined by a combination of 'typical' goals of transition as well as goals closer to their immediate present (Nurmi, 1991). Furthermore, we can observe the optimist vision of future in the larger amount of hopes than worries. Such optimism seems to be coherent with the developmental stage in which they find themselves, and it serves as a driver in the task to construct their own identity.

Nevertheless, in relation to the content of goals and fears we have found results more directly related to this particular group. As we pointed out initially, occupational goals outstand educational ones. Such occupational interests seem to connect directly with the acquisition of material belongings. It is also remarkable the relative importance of goals related to the future family, showing a rather early trajectory in their access to adult life. We have not been able to verify the importance of goals in the content of leisure. According to these data, the stage of 'emergent adulthood' (Arnett, 2000) would be much shorter or even inexistent among this young people.

In relation to concerns, the picture we have got is coherent with that of hopes in the domains of work-career, material losses and education. The contrast is remarkable, instead, in the domains of personal health. These adolescents evidence an important worry about a near death. Maybe this is recalling a context of risk situations and practices that is specific of this group of youth. Furthermore, the fears about the worsening of their overall situation would diminish the optimism commented above (Salmela-Aro et al., 1995).

We have also verified a trend towards a clearer differentiation and expression of goals and fears among women. We have observed, nevertheless, hardly any difference associated to sex. The most remarkable one is that of the greater interest of girls in educational goals. This may reflect both a lower rejection for institutional authority (Gómez, 2001) as well as a larger consciousness about the need for more training in order to achieve their occupational adult goals. The trend towards goals on property is much stronger in men, something typically associated to the traditional male role. With regard to fears, we observe a much more intense worry among men for their health, despite it is women who seem to have more doubts about their overall future situation.

Finally, the degree of internality perceived about most of the hopes and worries is larger than expected. This is so precisely in the most named goals of education, work, material belongings and couple-marriage among others. Such internality diminishes fast with regard to avoiding negative events, despite it is maintained in contents such as education or work-career. We may remark, nevertheless, that fears associated to personal health are perceived as depending upon external factors and not as a consequence of certain habits, practices and lifestyles largely controlled by one-self.

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