

10. Meaning, adjustment, and autodetermination in adolescence

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Theoretical background: autodetermination theory

We believe that the far-reaching promises of positive psychology movement can come true if we focus on the developmental process of the key positive phenomena, rather than on the static description of these phenomena. In other words, the concept of positive personality development (Leontiev, 2006) should serve as the basic explanatory framework.

Within this framework human personality development is treated as directed toward enhanced humanity, in terms of specifically human autoregulation mechanisms becoming dominant over the subhuman ones. Since this direction is closely associated with the movement toward increased personal autonomy and autodetermination, toward progressive stepwise emancipation from symbiotic ties of both biological and psychological nature (cf. Fromm, 1956), the basic vector of positive personality development is the one toward personal autonomy and autodetermination.

Autonomy in literal translation from the ancient Greek means possessing one's own law, and acting along with it. This capacity belongs to the human potential, but does not develop automatically, during some mysterious "personal growth". Its mature manifestations become visible in the late adolescence, and not in everyone; even many adults fail to develop this mature form of autoregulation. The term *autoregulation*, proposed by Jaan Valsiner (2001), means essentially the same as self-regulation, without reference to "self" as some agent. For the same reason we use the term *autodetermination* instead of the more common *self-determination*. Autodetermination theory (ADT) has been elaborated by Dmitry Leontiev and Elena Kaliteyevskaya through 1991-2004 on the basis of an existential view of positive development and self-determination (Kobasa & Maddi, 1977; May, 1967) complemented by Vygotsky's cultural-historical approach (Vygotsky, 1983). It is to some extent complementary to the popular self-determination theory (SDT) (Deci, 1980; Ryan & Deci, 2000; Ryan, Deci, & Grolnick, 1995). While SDT analyzes the human capacity for self-determination in terms of skills development, cognitive evaluation and action control strategies, ADT investigates how actual autode-

termination may occur through a conscious mediated effort transforming internal activity structure.

ADT can be summarized in the following propositions:

1. The capacity for autodetermination does really exist in some mature humans. Autodetermination is defined here as the opposite of determination, the capacity to act in a way neither predictable nor manageable by an outside observer. Such an assumption does not contradict the scientific picture of the world (see Leontiev, 1994; 2006); the detailed theoretical explanation of this capacity, however, exceeds the scope of this paper.
2. Autodetermination capacity emerges from the developmental integration of freedom and responsibility. Freedom is defined as a higher form of activity, namely the capacity to initiate, stop or change the direction of activity in every its point; responsibility is defined as a higher form of autoregulation, namely treating oneself as the cause of eventual changes in oneself and in the environment and managing this personal causation capacity.
3. Both freedom and responsibility have different developmental roots and paths that cross in adolescence. The essence and psychological challenge of the adolescent crisis is the shift of the sources of personality development inwards on the basis of integration of developed freedom and responsibility. This integration provides the healthy resolution of the crisis.
4. This integration often fails; the result is an adult with unresolved adolescent crisis and lack of autodetermination capacity. That is why actual development very often does not correspond to the mentioned basic vector toward autonomy. Influenced by quite a number of other forces, personality development stagnates, takes contradictory forms and different directions. The unhealthy forms of adolescent crisis resolution are associated with the underdeveloped freedom and/or responsibility capacities.

Patterns of personality development: preliminary data

The basic propositions of the ADT have found support in a recently published empirical study by Kaliteyevskaya & Leontiev (2004) with 70 adolescents of both genders, 14 years old. Several multiscale personality inventories have been used: self-support (the basic scale of Shostrom's Personal Orientation Inventory) for freedom; locus of control scale for responsibility, self-attitude and parental attitude inventories to control the major developmental variables. Factor analysis administered to reveal various patterns of characteristic properties (Magnusson, 1996) allowed to single out four patterns of personality development that correspond to four options of crossing freedom and responsibility: autonomous pattern (integrated freedom and responsibility), impulsive (quasi)freedom, symbiotic (quasi)responsibility and conformist (lacking both freedom and responsibility).

The *autonomous pattern* includes stable positive self-attitude, self-support based on personal values, feeling one's personal responsibility for the results of one's actions. Parents emotionally accept such adolescents without violating their autonomy. The structure of parental attitudes fostering the autonomous developmental pattern includes acceptance, imposing limits, and respect for the initiative within these limits. The *symbiotic pattern* includes unstable and generally negative self-esteem, depending on external, especially parental, evaluation. The adolescents feel not free, but responsible for the realization of values given from outside, rather than self-selected; they suffer from emotional rejection and control of their mothers, and from the infantilizing attitude of their fathers. The *impulsive pattern* includes a diffuse, unstable, mainly positive self-attitude, inner support in decisions, but lack of responsibility, connivance of the mothers, as well as pressure and lack of personal involvement of fathers. The *conformist pattern* includes external support in decisions, external locus of control, as well as hidden parental rejection, manifested in the formal type of upbringing based on standards of being "like others"; this pattern also includes unstable and conditionally positive self-attitude, strongly depending on external evaluations. These patterns tend to be self-sustaining; they are evidently linked to different kinds of psychological problems emerging later in life. 117 011

The new study

Participants and procedure

The main goal of the second empirical study was to prove the validity of the four developmental patterns detected in the first study, using a different data processing strategy. Another goal was to link the patterns directly to meaning / maladjustment variables: indeed, while having labelled one pattern as "healthy" and other ones as "unhealthy", we had originally only indirect indications for this hypothesis. The participants of the second study were 70 Moscow middle/high school students, 25 boys and 45 girls. As concerns age, the sample was divided into two groups: juniors (14-15 years) and seniors (16-17 years). Both groups had roughly the same size and proportion of both genders.

To assess the relevant variables, the following inventories were used:

- the Russian version (Gozman, Kroz, 1987) of *Personal Orientation Inventory (POI)* by E.Shostrom (1966). The basic scale of self-support vs. external support in decisions was taken, with some reservations, as an acceptable measure of freedom.
- a Russian original test for measuring *locus of control (LC)* by F.Bazhin, E.Golyunkina and A.Etkind (1993), that provides a general LC score, as well

as separate scores for LC of successes and failures and LC in different spheres of activity. Again with some reservations, we have taken it as a measure of responsibility

- an original Russian *Self-Attitude Test* (SAT) by S.Pantilejev (1993) that provides a self-attitude (SA) profile by 9 scales.
- the *Life Meaning Orientations Test* (Leontiev, 1992), a modified Russian version of Purpose-in-Life (PIL) test by J. Crumbaugh and L. Maholick (1981).
- the Russian version (Rukavishnikov, Sokolov, 1991) of *Bell Adjustment Inventory* (Bell, 1962) which includes scales related to family maladjustment, health problems, submissiveness, hostility, emotionality and femininity/ masculinity.

Data were processed by means of factor and cluster analysis implemented in StatSoft Statistica 6. Rather than attempting to reduce the number of variables and to detect latent factors related to different personality types, we tried to classify cases in order to gain some 'naturally-occurring' clusters. Several 3-, 4- and 5-cluster models were obtained by the Complete Linkage and Ward's Method using Euclidean distance measures, K-Means, and factor analysis of the normal estimates of the scale values across cases.

Results

The validity of clusters

After comparing the obtained models by cross-tabulation to evaluate their interpretability and inter-relationship, we finally chose the 4-cluster model yielded by Ward's method (based on Euclidean metrics) as the best one in terms of both interpretability and similarity to all the other models (see Figure 1). Ward's method aims at minimizing the variance of any two hypothetical clusters that can be formed at each step. It works best in situations when the underlying clusters are of roughly equal size, which actually was the case. The age-gender distribution across clusters is shown in Table 1.

Figure 1. The clustering tree obtained through Ward's method.

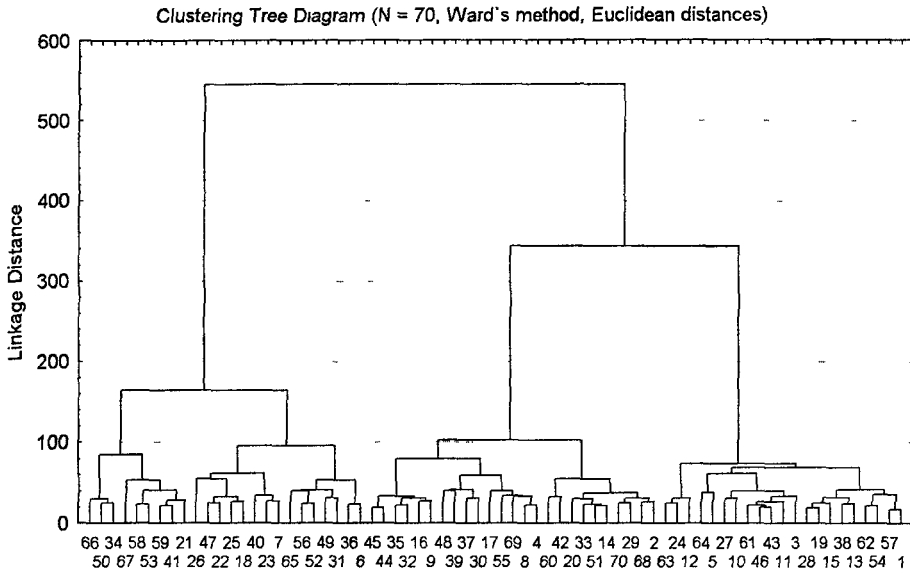


Table 1. Age-gender distribution across clusters

Cluster #	N	Gender distribution			Age distribution		
		N Boys	N Girls	Boys %	N 14-15	N 16-17	14-15 %
1	9	4	5	44	6	3	67
2	15	6	9	40	9	6	60
3	25	8	17	32	12	13	48
4	21	7	14	33	8	13	38
Total sample	70	25	45	36	35	35	50

In order to check the stability of the model, cluster analysis was performed through the same method within each of the gender and age subsample. The participant distribution in the cluster model of each subsample was compared to the distribution in the cluster model of the whole sample by means of cross-tabulation. Usually, if most members of a cluster obtained on the whole sample fall into a cluster obtained on a subsample as well, that cluster of the subsample is considered essentially similar to the corresponding cluster of the whole sample. This was the case in our study; the cross-tabulation results are shown in Table 2, the number in each cell being the N of participants classified into similar clusters on each subsample and on the total sample.

As concerns gender grouping, 4-cluster models were yielded for boys and girls separately, with 22 boys (88%) and 39 girls (87%) falling into clusters

corresponding to those yielded upon the whole sample. As for age grouping, a 4-cluster model was yielded for the junior subsample with 26 members (74%) falling into clusters corresponding to those yielded upon the whole sample. For the senior subsample, a 3-cluster model was chosen, in which clusters 1 and 2 of the original model merged, and 34 members (97%) of the senior subsample fell into clusters corresponding to those of the whole sample.

Table 2. Cross-tabulation results between the whole sample and subsample cluster models

Sample		N	Cluster 1	Cluster 2	Cluster 3	Cluster 4	Mismatch
Gender	Boys	25	4	4	8	6	3
	Girls	45	3	6	16	14	6
Age	Junior	35	6	8	4	8	9
	Senior	35		8	13	13	1
Total sample		70	9	15	25	21	n/a

The significance of the differences between the 4 resulting clusters was tested by Kruskal-Wallis criterion, to find out, which scales contributed to the classification. Significant differences ($p < .01$) were found in the Life Meaning Orientations test, in 7 of the 9 scales of the Self-Attitude Test (Self-Assurance, Self-Guidance, Mirrored Self-Attitude, Self-Acceptance, Self-Attachment, Inner Conflict and Self-Accusation), in Bell's Submissiveness and Emotionality subscales, in all but one scales related to the Locus of Control, and in 8 of the 14 scales of the POI (Time Competence, Support, Values, Flexibility, Spontaneity, Self-Respect, Synergy, Aggression, Acceptance). Some more scales revealed significant differences at the $p < .05$ level.

The differences on each scale between any two given clusters were also tested by Mann-Whitney criterion. The results are summarized in Table 3.

Taking into account age and gender across the clusters, we found that the senior adolescents were more numerous in the "healthier" clusters 3 and 4, while junior adolescents mostly fell into the "less healthy" clusters 1 and 2. More specifically, the slightly higher percentage of girls in clusters 3 and 4 as compared to 1 and 2 is also due to maturity factor, since in the age group to which our sample belongs girls tend to be more psychologically mature than boys of the same age. However, the issue of gender-age interaction in the asymmetry of their distribution requires a special investigation.

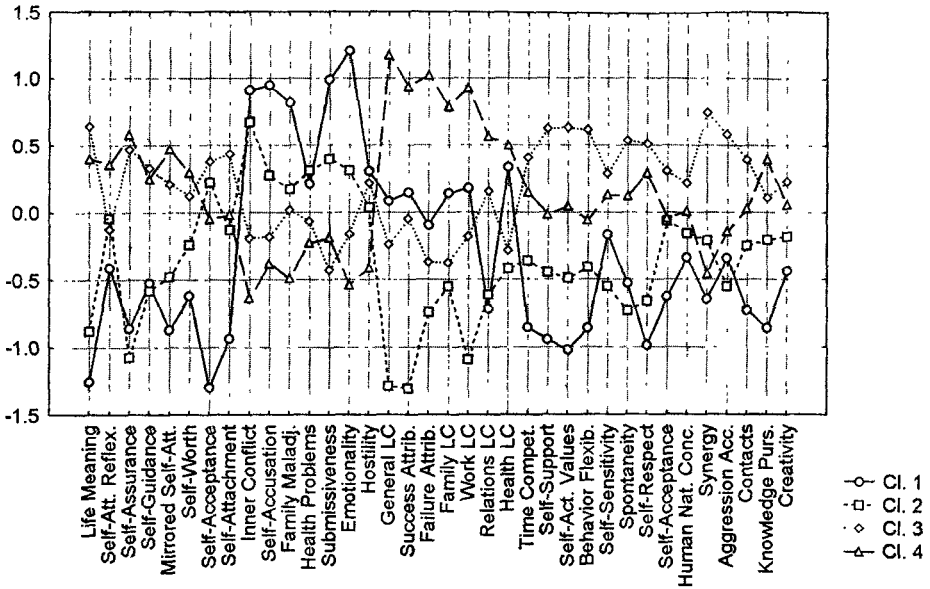
Table 3. Differences between clusters in the assessed variables (p < .01; * p < .05)**

Scale	Criterion Clusters Compared	Kruskal -Wallis		Mann-Whitney					
		All 4	1vs2	3vs4	1vs3	1vs4	2vs3	2vs4	3avs3b
PIL	General Life Meaning	**			**	**	**	**	
SAT	Self-Att. Reflexivity				**	**	**	**	
	Self-Assurance	**			*	*	*	*	
	Self-Guidance	**			**	**	*	**	
	Mirrored Self-Att.	**			**	*	*	*	
	Self-Worth	**	**		**	**	*	*	
	Self-Acceptance	**	*		**	*			**
	Self-Attachment	**			**	**	**	**	*
	Inner Conflict	**			**	**	*	*	**
Bell	Family Accusation	**			**	**	*	*	**
	Family Problems	*				**	*	*	**
	Health Problems								**
	Submissiveness	**			**	**	*	*	
	Emotionality	**			**	**	*	*	**
	Hostility			*		*			
LC	Femininity								
	General Locus of C.	**	**	**		**	**	**	
	Success Attribution	**	**	**		**	**	**	
	Failure Attribution	**	*	**		**		**	
	Family Locus of C.	**		**				**	
	Work Locus of C.	**	**	**			**	**	
	Relations Locus of C.	**			**	**	*	**	
	Health Locus of C.	*		**				*	
POI	Time Competence	**			**	**	*		*
	Self-Support	**		*	**	**	**		**
	Self-Act. Values	**		*	**	**	**		*
	Flexibility	**		*	**	*	**		*
	Self-Sensitivity						*	*	
	Spontaneity	**			*		**	*	
	Self-Respect	**			**	**	**	**	**
	Self-Acceptance				*				**
	Human Nature Conc.								
	Synergy	**		**	**		**		
	Aggression Accept.	**		**	*		**		
	Contacts	*			**	*			
	Knowledge Pursuit	*	*		**	**			
	Creativity								*

Description and interpretation of the clusters

As Figure 2 shows, the first cluster is characterized by extremely low values on General Life Meaning index.

Figure 2. Mean scale values of each cluster



The adolescents in this cluster have a diffuse (neither internal, nor external) locus of control, except for strongly external Interpersonal Relations Attribution: they definitely deny their ability to influence others' attitude towards them. These adolescents have often problems with family adaptation and their self-attitude is highly negative: they show low values of Self-Respect, Mirrored Self-Attitude and especially of Self-Acceptance together with high values of Inner Conflict and Self-Accusation. They are highly submissive and extremely emotional (according to Bell's inventory, the latter feature suggests either repression of one's emotions or inability to control their expression). Together with low values on the principal scales of the POI (Time Competence, Self-Support, Self-Actualizing Values) these results suggest an overall pattern of dependence: inability to find support within a healthy family relationship hinders the successful development of autonomy, stable self-attitude and authentic system of values. This allows us to identify this cluster with the symbiotic pattern (Kaliteyevskaya & Leontiev, 2004). Adolescents belonging to this type feel responsible for the implementation of values imposed on them by their all-controlling parents. They have to trade their potential autonomy for parental support.

The feature shared by the members of the second cluster is a highly external locus of control. However, the attribution of success is more external than the attribution of failure, which suggests a negative self-attitude. These adolescents

have low life meaning scores and below-average scores on all the scales of POI. They have average adjustment scores as measured by Bell's questionnaire, but their self-attitude is extremely ambivalent (more than in any other cluster): very low Self-Assurance, low Self-Guidance and low Mirrored Self-Attitude are combined with average Self-Acceptance and Self-Accusation, resulting in high scores on the inner conflict scale. The overall pattern of this cluster is avoidance of responsibility. However, it can be related to lack of confidence in one's own resources and lack of self-respect, with resulting outer timidity and lack of spontaneity, compensated by an inner protest and a "I still like myself" attitude. This cluster might be identified with conformist pattern (Kaliteyevskaya & Leontiev, 2004). Adolescents with such an ambivalent self-attitude often miss challenging opportunities, because, on average, failures negatively affect their self-attitude more than successes improve it. Autonomy and creativity are given up in favor of easier and more socially approved tasks. This shapes a conformist pattern.

The third cluster looks healthier. It is characterized by the highest scores in life meaning, and by maladjustment scores slightly below average, submissiveness being the lowest of all the four clusters. We find here extremely high POI scores (especially Self-Support, Self-Actualization values, Flexibility, Self-Respect, Self-Acceptance and Synergy scales) and indefinite (slightly external) locus of control. The self-attitude is globally positive, with high Self-Acceptance, low Inner Conflict and Self-Accusation based on low Self-Attitude Reflexivity (interpreted as lack of desire to face oneself) and high Self-Attachment (lack of desire to change), which suggests a strife for autonomy and independence. This cluster is essentially similar to the impulsive developmental pattern (Kaliteyevskaya & Leontiev, 2004), with some reservations discussed below.

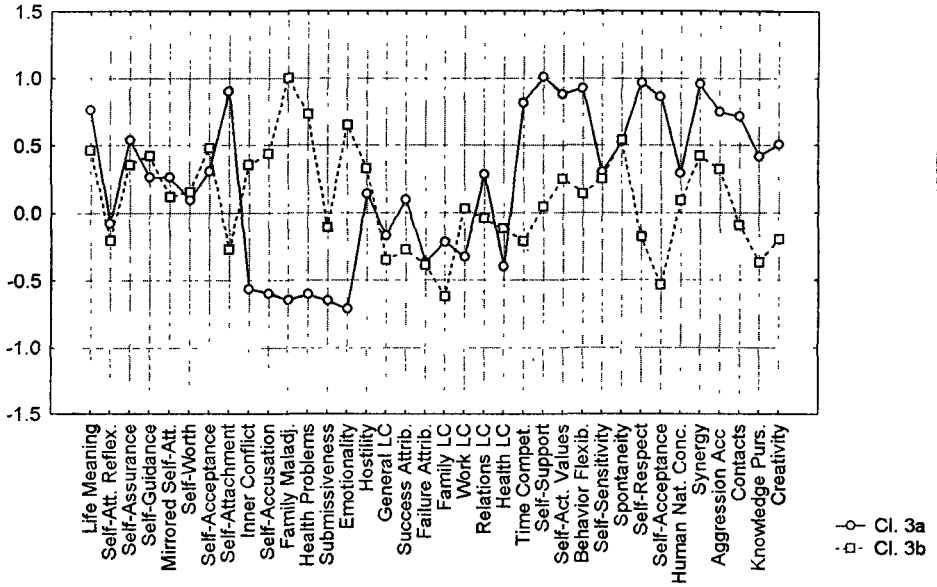
The fourth cluster also looks generally healthy, with meaning of life as high and maladjustment scores as low as in the third cluster. Its main feature is a highly internal locus of control: scores on all the LC scales are higher than in any other cluster. These adolescents have stable positive self-attitude based on high Reflexivity, high Mirrored Self-Attitude, Self-Reliance and Self-Guidance with average Self-Acceptance and Self-Attachment but lowest Inner Conflict and Self-Accusation. Self-support is above average; other POI scores are mostly around average. This cluster integrates responsibility and freedom in an autonomous pattern (Kaliteyevskaya & Leontiev, 2004).

The splitting of the third cluster

We further analyzed the third cluster, as it was clearly heterogeneous (see Figure 1), splitting it into two subclusters named 3a and 3b (N=15 and N=10, respectively). Significant differences between these two subclusters (see Figure

3 and Table 3) emerged for maladjustment, negative self-attitude, and POI scales.

Figure 3. Mean scale values of subclusters 3a and 3b.



Participants in subcluster 3a reported the highest life meaning, the highest self-attachment, the lowest inner conflict and self-accusation, together with the highest values of POI scales listed in the previous paragraph. The highest difference was also detected between Success Attribution and Failure Attribution (the latter being more external), and relatively high (internal) locus of control in the domain of interpersonal relationships. Both Self-Attachment scale of SAT and Self-Acceptance scale of POI scored extremely high. These results are consistent with the image of adolescents who look “100% OK”, completely self-satisfied, even in love with themselves. Below-average scores of Locus of control indicate that these are not “self-made” persons, but rather they accept their happy condition as something given, probably due to a favorable, or even pampering family environment. We are facing a well-adjusted narcissist version of the impulsive pattern. Underdeveloped autoregulation makes these adolescents’ well-being strongly dependent on the stability of the environmental situation.

The subcluster 3b depicts a rather fuzzy pattern: life meaning scores slightly above average, Self-Attitude Reflexivity and Self-Attachment below average, with Self-Accusation and Inner Conflict above average, high Self-Guidance

and high Self-Acceptance. This group is characterized by extremely high family maladjustment, high health and emotional maladjustment and high submissiveness. Their locus of control is mostly external. POI scores are mostly low, with relatively high spontaneity and synergy; self-support is below average that makes it formally impossible to call this group a subgroup of the impulsive type. It would be probably most relevant to call the pattern of this group “the fuzzy one”.

General discussion

The most important result of this study was the essential replication of the four developmental patterns predicted by ADT and detected in the previous study (Kaliteyevskaya & Leontiev, 2004). Having used a somewhat different assessment battery and completely different data processing procedures, we found that 14-17 years old adolescents can be distributed into four groups of both genders, according to the freedom/responsibility ratio. The four groups are also characterized by significant differences in life meaningfulness, maladjustment degree and structure, and self-attitude structure.

Figure 4 shows the distribution of the four groups in the space of the two variables General Locus of Control (used for responsibility) and Self-support (used for freedom). Figure 5 shows an even clearer distribution in the space of the variables General Life Meaning and General Locus of Control.

Figure 4. The four clusters in the dimensions of Self-support and Locus of Control (normal estimates of the scale values).

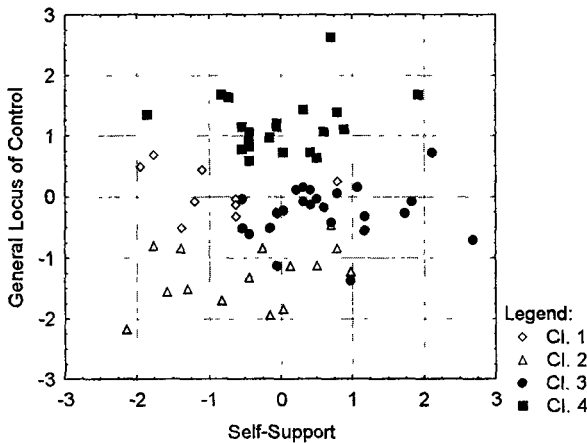
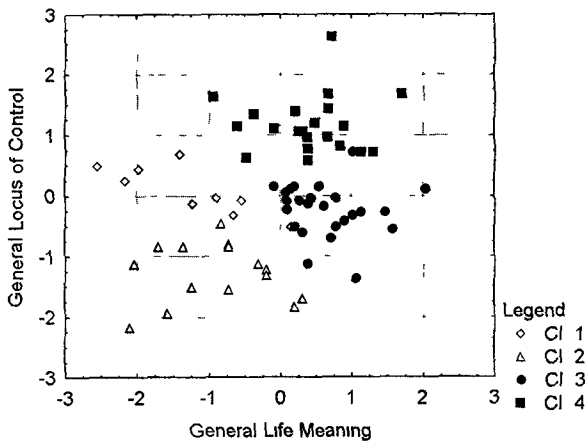


Figure 5. The four clusters in the dimensions of Life Meaning and Locus of Control (normal estimates of the scale values).



As Table 3, Figures 2 and 5 show, the four groups (clusters) significantly differ in their location along the meaning vs. maladjustment dimension (life meaning and maladjustment reveal essentially reciprocal dynamics in all the groups, except for the fuzzy subgroup). The correspondence with ADT theory was quite satisfactory, though not complete: according to the theory, the autonomous developmental pattern is the healthiest one, the other three leading to different degrees of maladjustment. In fact, the impulsive group reported as high meaning and as low maladjustment scores as the autonomous one, while the results of other three groups were just as predicted. The impulsive group, however, turned out to be heterogeneous. It was partly composed of perfectly well adjusted narcissist individuals with external locus of control, who enjoy themselves and do not perceive any problems. It is probably the other people who experience problems with them. Most likely, the high meaning and adjustment scores of this subgroup are due to a stable and favorable situation; in case of eventual change for the worse, however, these adolescents can hardly keep adjusted. The second subgroup has quite an unclear constellation of the key variables.

Comparing these four clusters with the developmental patterns described earlier, we can find similarities as well as noticeable differences. In the previous study freedom/responsibility ratio (self-support/locus of control) served as the basis for pattern distinction, and all the four rough combinations (low/low; low/high; high/low; high/high) were distributed across the four clusters obtained in the second study. By this ratio the first cluster corresponds to the symbiotic developmental pattern, the second cluster to the conformist pattern,

the third one to the impulsive pattern and the fourth one to the autonomous pattern.

Having added the direct measures of meaning (purpose in life) and maladjustment, we found, however, that the relations between the patterns and these measures are not so strict. The most maladjusted pattern turned out to be the symbiotic one (high quasi-responsibility and low freedom) rather than the conformist one (low freedom, low responsibility); indeed, in the latter case one has not to take and bear so many others' problems. The autonomous pattern (high freedom, high responsibility) turns to be neither the only positive, nor the healthiest one, as it was supposed earlier. In the third cluster (corresponding to the impulsive pattern: high quasi-freedom, low responsibility) the average meaning scores are as high and maladjustment scores as low as in the autonomous fourth cluster. It is also worth noting that, in line with multiple previous findings, life meaning and maladjustment show strong reciprocal connection in all the clusters, except in cluster 3 (see discussion below). Moreover, as concerns the two basic dimensions proposed by ADT, freedom covariates with meaning and (mal)adjustment evidently better than responsibility.

The results produce a number of challenging questions that show new directions for further elaboration of the proposed approach to positive personality development. The key issues are the following:

1. Theoretical constructs of freedom and responsibility were operationalized in both empirical studies through the variables of self-support and general locus of control, respectively. This is quite an inexact correspondence, though the data indicate its good construct validity. Is it possible to find better operationalization of the key theoretical constructs and would this influence the results?
2. Jane Loevinger, in her developmental theory, describes symbiotic, impulsive, conformist and autonomous stages as four of the six main diachronic stages of ego development (Loevinger, 1976). In ADT the four patterns are described as alternative self-sustaining individual variations of developmental paths. Our empirical data give some support to both views, though they need not necessarily be mutually exclusive. The point is, whether and to what extent do the individual patterns tend to persevere with time or they change for more advanced patterns.

Age variable reveals the same dynamics as meaning and adjustment. The impulsive group does not differ from the autonomous group by age distribution, and the symbiotic group from the conformist group. The first two groups, however, include a significantly higher share of senior adolescents than the last two groups. This also corresponds well to the theory, except for the impulsive group.

Conclusion

To summarize, the model of varying patterns of personality development in adolescence suggested by ADT has received a new empirical support. The correspondence of the results with the theory, as well as with the previous findings is good, though not perfect.

As this study suggests, a positive state of affairs may be due either to a favorable situation, independent of person's virtues, or to the person's capacity to find, build, and maintain positive situations and to transform negative ones. In other words, the key to the positive outcome might be located either in the situation, or in the person. This difference is suggested by our approach in terms of positive personality development (Leontiev, 2005). What to prefer: complete well-being due to favorable factors beyond the person's control, or a somewhat less emotionally satisfying state, produced and largely controlled by the person? How to differentiate these conditions? It seems evident that only the latter condition may be the object of psychological intervention and prevention, the former one being only the object of scholarly interest. Psychological health thus does not appear so much as a state of affairs, but rather as a functional capacity, or even a competence – one's capacity to transcend the limits of one's biological, social and psychological dispositions, and to become the true subject of one's own life in the changing world, taking the responsibility for the creative adjustment in the conditions of inescapable uncertainty.

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DIMENSIONS OF WELL-BEING

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Chiunque fotocopie un libro, chi mette a disposizione i mezzi per farlo, chi comunque favorisce questa pratica commette un reato e opera ai danni della cultura.

Stampa: Tipomozza, via Merano 18, Milano.