

## The links between identity processing styles and personal goals regulation during the first year of high school

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Strengthening the capabilities to formulate and pursue personal goals are among the major developmental tasks in adolescence. This task is particularly important in relation to school and other developmental transitions (Salmela-Aro, 2009), such as starting high school. In this study, we looked at how first-year high school students develop their personal identity in relation to goal-related functional capabilities (i.e., directive, regulatory, control, and arousal functions, Karoly & Ruehlman, 1995). Since goals are among the major issues considered when forming one's identity, we expected that the way of forming one's personal identity (i.e., identity processing styles, Berzonsky, 1994) will be related to how one formulates and pursues personal goals. Specifically, we expected that deliberate and critical reflection of identity-relevant issues (i.e., informational identity processing style) will positively relate to the three goal functions, while the reliance on authority or avoidance to process identity issues (i.e., normative or diffuse-avoidant identity processing styles) will be less favorable in the context of goals regulation.

Path analysis was performed using the first assessment (T1) data from the "Goals Lab" study with a sample of 1273 Lithuanian adolescents (51.9% females,  $M_{age} = 14.86$   $SD_{age} = 0.39$ ). The findings revealed that, as predicted, the informational identity processing style had substantial links with goal-related functional capabilities (directive, regulatory, control, and arousal). Moreover, normative identity processing style was also an important positive predictor of how adolescents deal with goals, specifically, for the regulatory and control goal-related functions (self-monitoring, planning, social comparison, etc.). In addition, the diffuse-avoidant identity style was an important negative predictor for the directive goal-related function (i.e., goal value setting and self-efficacy). The study reveals that all three identity styles contribute to explaining how adolescents formulate and pursue their personal goals, which points to the importance of studying the interplay between identity and goals regulation in adolescence.

### References

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