

LIFE GOALS AND CONCERNS DURING PUBESCENCE AND ADOLESCENCE

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Abstract

Aim: The primary aim was to map out the choice of life goals and concerns for respondents during their pubescence and adolescence and the secondary aim was to compare changes in choices made in 1996, 2003 and 2009. Changes in the perception of life goals and sources of concern or threats at the time of pubescence and adolescence were compared, along with the choices the respondents made in 1996, 2003 and 2009. We were interested to see if the choice of respondents differed in the different periods of their development and individual years. It was monitored if the frequency of the following was on the decrease or increase: the need for material values, the need for personal success, and focusing on the future and general welfare.

Methodology: The research focused on České Budějovice Grammar School students at the age of 11 to 14 (pubescence) and 15 to 19 (adolescence). The research was of a quantitative nature and the questionnaire method was employed. In 2003 and 2009 České Budějovice Grammar Schools students were approached and asked to fill in a questionnaire. 171 pubescent respondents and 204 adolescent respondents participated in the research. The first hypothesis assumed that life goals and sources of concern and threat will be identical for pubescent and adolescent respondents. The second hypothesis assumed that the choice of life goals and concerns will differ in 2003 and 2009 compared to 1996. To evaluate the data acquired from the questionnaires and to carry out the follow-up comparison of situational analysis of 1996 and 2003 and 2009 (adolescence period), the MS Office-Excel program was used, in particular its function of descriptive statistics.

Results: The research showed that in 2003 the choice of life goals and sources of concern of the adolescent and pubescent respondents was quite identical. In 2009 a significant concordance was seen in both monitored groups of the respondents when they selected the need for health and concern of starting a family. The comparison of situational analysis from 1996 with the answers of adolescent respondents in 2003 and 2009 showed that their objectives and concerns in 1996 were markedly different to 2003 and 2009. Both hypothesis were confirmed.

Conclusion: The research showed that in the same year the choice of life goals and concerns of the adolescent and the pubescent was not significantly different, but it differed in various years.

Key words: pubescence – adolescence – life goals – concerns – threats

INTRODUCTION

Pubescence and adolescence are intermediary periods between childhood and adulthood. Pubescence starts approximately at the age of 11 and adolescence ends by reaching adulthood at the age of 20. According to Kern et al. (2006) pubescence starts with the beginning of sexual maturity, for boys at the age of 9.6 to 13.6 and for girls at the age of 7.6 to 11.6, which is clearly much earlier, this is known as interindividual variability. During the pubescence and adolescence periods physical changes occur in our bodies, and the novelty and intensity of these changes has an impact on how we experience them psychologically. Freud called this period the genital phase when it is typical that our sexual instincts are activated on a completely different level than before (Wikipedia 2009). Čížková (2004) states that for the periods of pubescence and adolescence it is typical to look for our own identity, it is time when we battle with our uncertainties and doubts and when we wonder about our position in the society. The adolescence period is an important biological milestone. After the last 100 to 130 years the adolescence period and the overall growth accelerated by at least 3 years. This phenomenon is explained by more intensive stimuli of the modern world and its impact on us, by better nutrition and hygiene. This process is known as secular acceleration, in other words an absolute acceleration of growth and development over the course of the centuries. Another important milestone is the social milestone. Emancipation, the possibility of making co-decisions, the completion of compulsory education and the choice of further professional direction are all choices which gradually lead to the loss of old certainties and to the need for new stabilization under new conditions: With the need for certainty comes the need for having an acceptable position in the world. The periods of pubescence and adolescence form separate periods in our lives. If we view teenage years within the context of our lives as a specific period between childhood and adulthood, we can generally characterize this period as transition from dependence to independence, from being dependant on adults to being independent, from recklessness to moral responsibility, from consumption of social

products and values to their creation, as a transition from externally controlled learning to independent studies and self-improvement, from education to self-education, from obedience and subordination to demanding our own independence and individuality. This is a period of many changes. Our appearance, the quality of mental activities, and our mental capacity change, along with our attitudes, social relationships, self-formation, interests, aspirations and values. During this complex process we can see some significant differences between people (interindividual differences) and between the quality of individual functions and wider faculties as part of holistic personalities (introindividual differences). The teenager is for the whole period of his/her teenage years in a certain “unstable” position when s/he is separated from the world of children but still not fully accepted as a full-value partner in the company of adults. The course of this process is significantly influenced by the level of understanding (Vágnerová 2000). Therefore, this research focused on the comparison of pubescence and adolescence; the pubescent's and adolescent's life goals and sources of concern and threats.

Aim

The aim of the research was to map out the choices of life goals and concerns of respondents during their pubescence and adolescence. The secondary aim was to focus on comparison of the choices made in 1996, 2003 and 2009. We were interested to see if the frequency of the following was on the decrease or increase: the need for material values, the need for personal success, and focusing on the future and general welfare.

Methodology

The subject matter of the research and the research objectives were defined in the preliminary phase of the research (Kolová 2004). Subsequently, the pool sample was determined. In 2003 and 2009 students of České Budějovice Grammar School were approached at the age of their pubescence (11 to 14 years) and adolescence (15 to 19 years). The questionnaire method was used to confirm or disprove the hypotheses. The respondents answered a standardized set of questions which were pre-prepared in an

anonymous questionnaire. To confirm the second hypothesis the situation analysis and cross-sectional studies from 1996 and 2003 and 2009 were compared. The research was of a quantative nature. The first hypothesis stated that life goals and sources of concern and threat would be identical for the pubescent and adolescent respondents. The second hypothesis considered that different choices would be made in 1996 compared to 2003 and 2009. To evaluate the data acquired from the questionnaires and to carry out the follow-

up comparison of situational analysis made in 1996 and in 2003 and 2009 (adolescence period), the MS Office-Excel program was used, in particular its function of descriptive statistics.

RESULTS

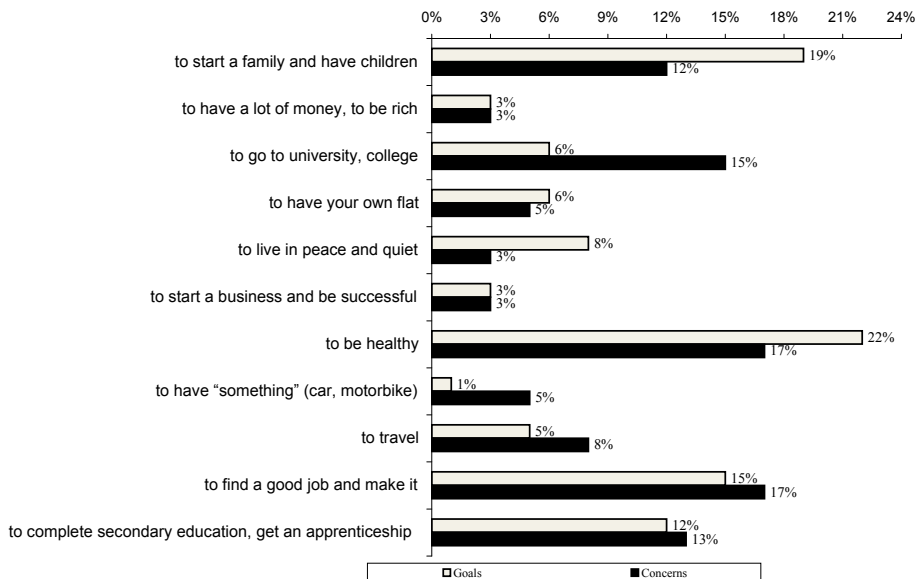
171 pubescent respondents and 204 adolescent respondents participated in the research (table 1).

Table 1. Age of respondents

Age	11	12	13	14	Total	15	16	17	18	19	Total
Year 2003, number	15	36	18	9	78	18	36	39	9	9	111
Year 2009, number	0	3	33	54	93	0	12	66	15	0	93
Total	15	42	51	63	171	0	48	105	24	9	204

The choices of life goals and sources of concern and threats during pubescence made

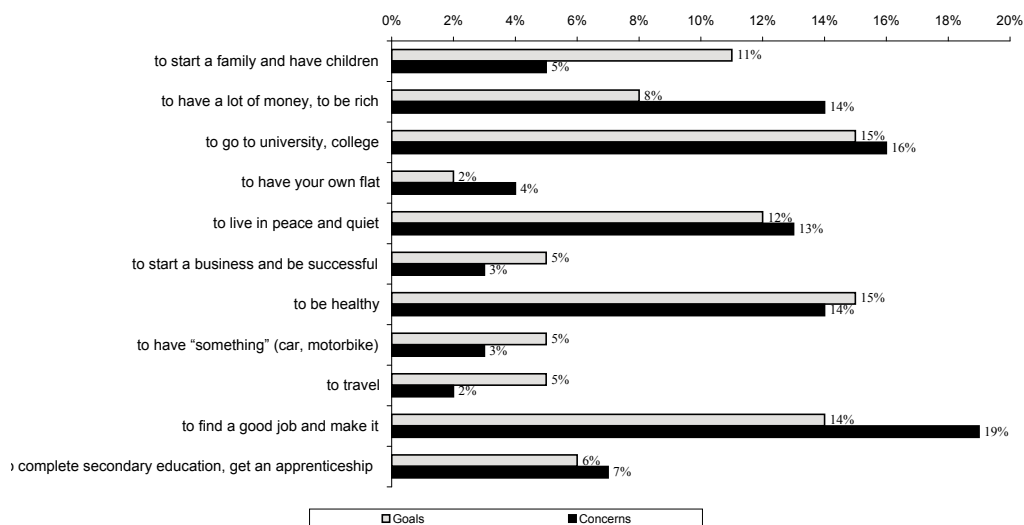
in year 2003 are shown in the following graph 1.



Graph 1. Year 2003 – the choice of life goals and sources of concern and threats during pubescence

In 2003 the nearest life objective for the pubescent was to be healthy. Health along with the need for having a good job and being successful proved to be the sources of their biggest concern.

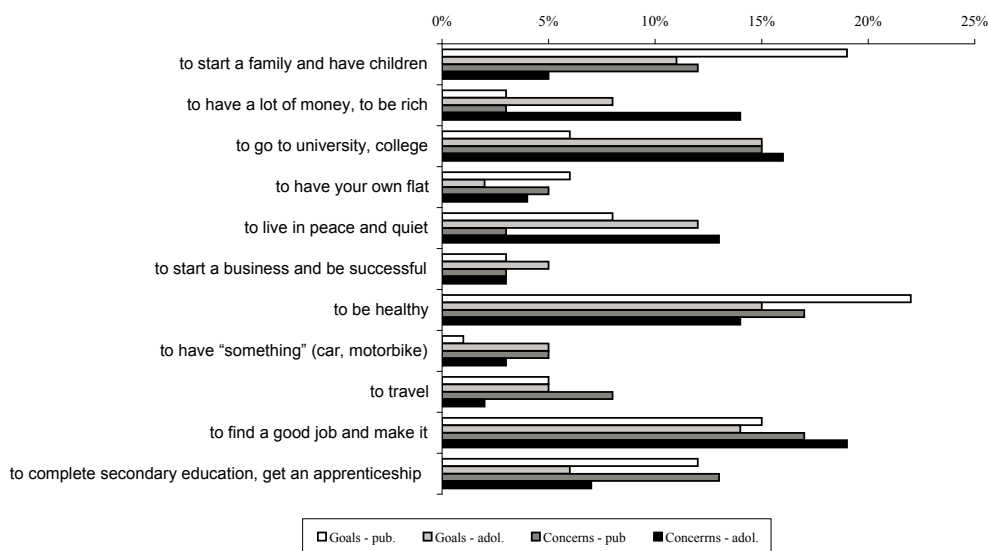
Graph 2 maps out the choice of life goals and sources of concern and threat during adolescence made in 2003.



Graph 2. Year 2003 – the choice of life goals and sources of concern and threats during adolescence

The need to be healthy was also priority number one along with a wish to get to university or college, and just like for the pubescent the biggest concern was the concern of finding a good job and making it.

The choice of life goals and sources of concern and threat during pubescence and adolescence in 2003 are shown in graph 3.

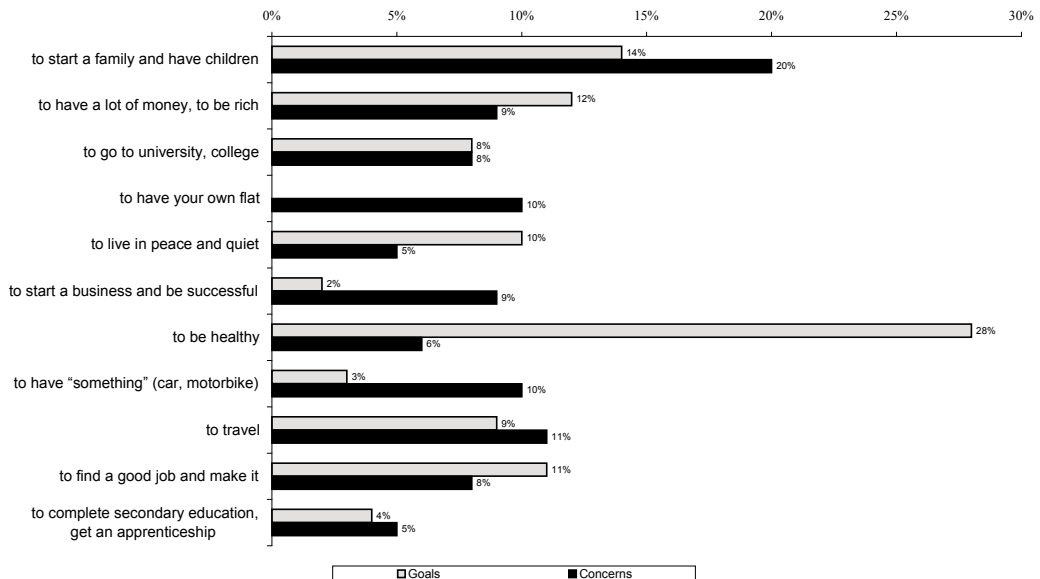


Graph 3. Year 2003 – summary of life goals and sources of concern during pubescence and adolescence

The summary graph clearly shows that in 2003 the choice of life goals during pubescence and adolescence was quite identical. During pubescence the choice of answers was as follows: “to be healthy” 22%, “to find a good job, to make it” 15% and during adolescence: “to be healthy” 15%, “to find a good job, to make it” 14%. The sources of concern were also identical, the only difference was their order. During pubescence the choice of answers was as follows: “to be healthy” 17%, “to find a good

job, to make it” 17%, to “go to university/college” 15% and during adolescence: “to find a good job, to make it” 19%, “go to university/college” 15%, “to be healthy” 14% and “to have a lot of money, to be rich” 14%. The results of the research confirmed the hypothesis that during adolescence and pubescence the objectives and concerns would be identical.

The choice of life goals and sources of concern and threats during pubescence as made in 2009 are shown in graph 4.



Graph 4. Year 2009 – the choice of life goals and sources of concern and threats during pubescence

The nearest life goals for the pubescent in 2009 were identical with 2003. The need to be healthy was significantly in the forefront of their needs. Their source of concern and threat was to start a family. This concern also ranked top in 2003.

Graph 5 shows the choice of life goals and sources of concern and threat during adolescence as made in 2009.

The need to be healthy and the concern of starting a family were at the forefront for the adolescent.

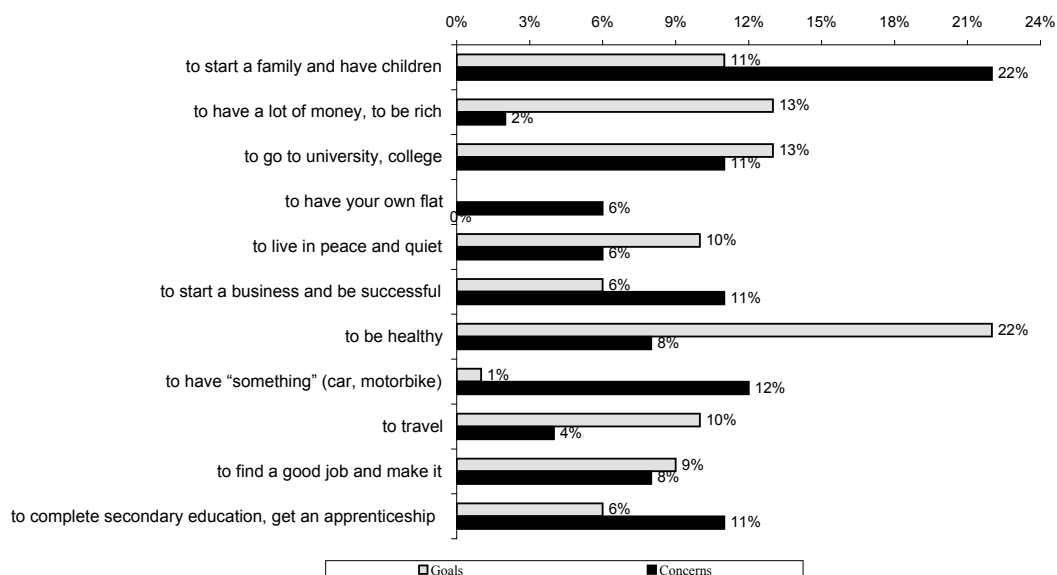
The summary graph maps out the choice of life goals and sources of concern and threat during pubescence and adolescence as made in 2009 (graph 6).

The summary graph shows a very significant concordance of the need to be healthy

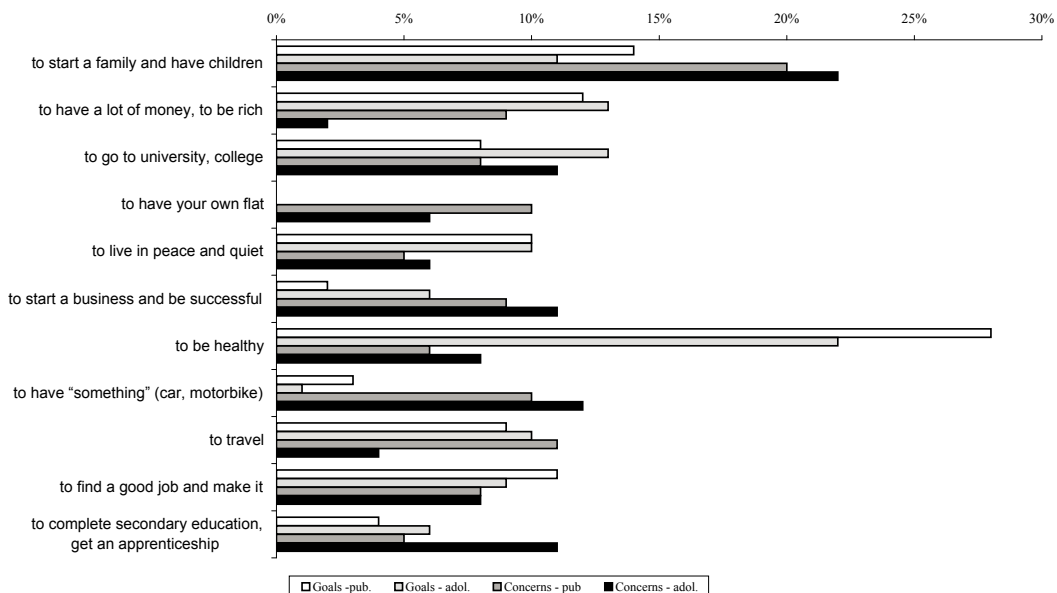
and the concern of starting a family in both monitored groups of respondents. In 2009 the answers with regard to life goals were as follows: during pubescence “to be healthy” 28%, “to start a family and to have children” 14%, “to have a lot of money, to be rich” 12% and during adolescence “to be healthy” 22%, “to have a lot of money, to be rich” 13% and to “go to university/college” 13%. In terms of concerns and threat the selection was as follows: during pubescence “to start a family and have children” 20%, “to travel” 11%, “to have something specific (car, motorbike)” 12%, “to go to university/college” 11%, “to start a business and be successful” 11%. The results of the research confirmed the hypothesis that during adolescence and pubescence the objectives and concerns would be identical.

The following graphs show the comparison of years 2003 and 2009, the pubescence period, the nearest life goals (graph 7) and

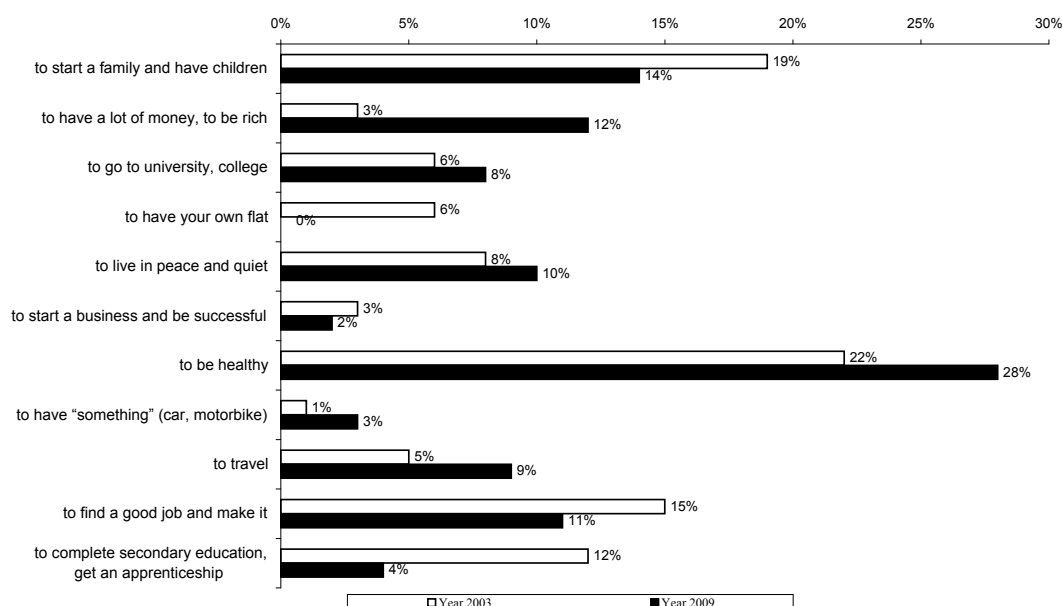
the comparison of years 2003 and 2009, the pubescence period, and the sources of concern and threat (graph 8).



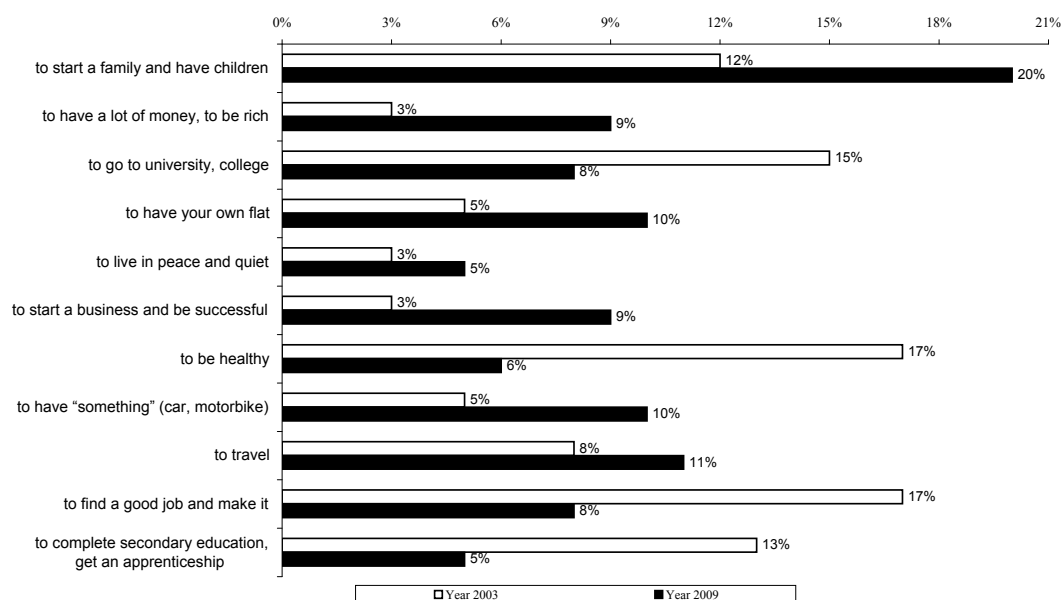
Graph 5. Year 2009 – the choice of life goals and sources of concern and threat during adolescence



Graph 6. Year 2009 – summary of choices of life goals and sources of concern during pubescence and adolescence



Graph 7. Comparative periods 2003 and 2009, the nearest life goals – pubescence



Graph 8. Comparative periods 2003 and 2009, sources of concern and threat – pubescence

The graph shows that the goal of “being healthy” increased in 2009 compared to 2003. It is worth noticing the significant increase in value of the money and wealth goal.

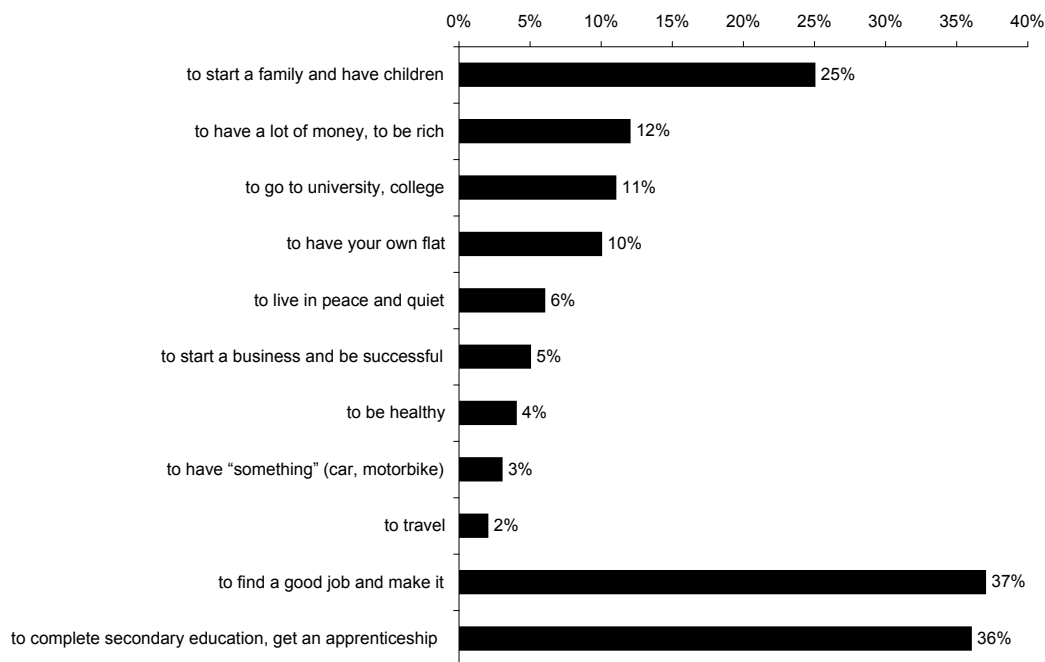
There were differences in evaluation of the sources of concern. In 2009 the concern

of starting a family was much higher and the overall distribution of other sources of concern was also significantly different compared to 2003.

The situation analysis according to Vágnerová (2000) “Children in the Czech

Republic, 1996 – the nearest life goals, sources of concern and threat for youngsters of 15–24 years of age” states that the goals and sources of concern of youngsters are absolutely identical (graph 9). The yearning for success is combined with fear. Vágnerová (2000) writes that each person has an essential need of being accepted by someone else. If a person is not positively accepted, the tendency to

reach satisfaction otherwise is reinforced. If a child grows up in an emotionally cold family environment, it will not learn to differentiate between close people and strangers, and it often does not perceive any difference between living and non-living beings and objects. The child is only focused on satisfying its current, mostly material needs.



Graph 9. Year 1996 – adolescence period – the nearest life goals and sources of concern and threat

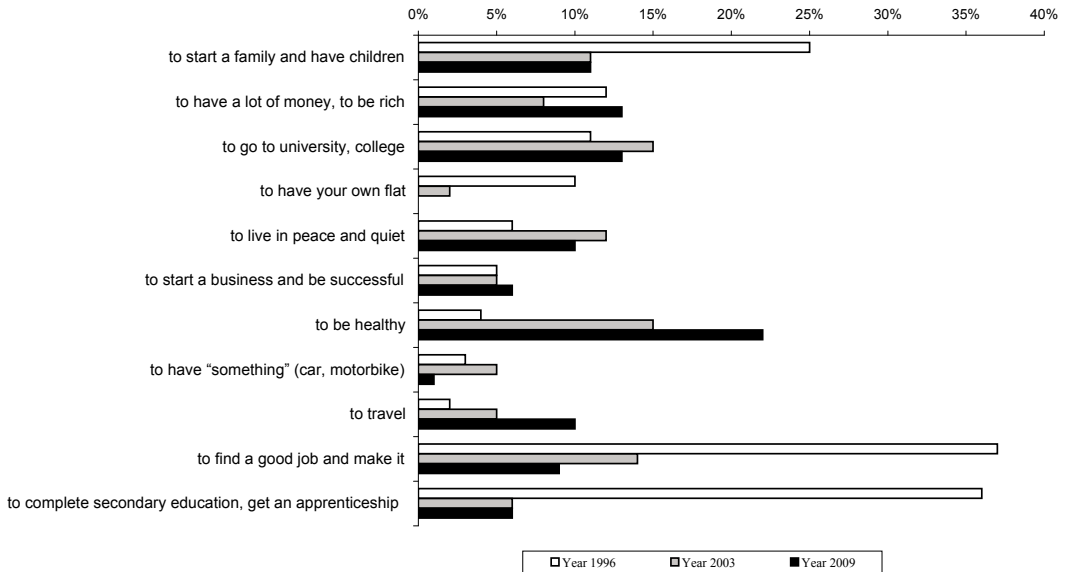
The following shows comparisons for years 1996, 2003 and 2009, adolescence, the nearest life goals (graph 10) and the sources of concern and threat (graph 11).

The comparison of situational analysis according to Vágnerová (2000) with the answers of adolescent respondents in 2003 and 2009 showed that their objectives and concerns in 1996 were markedly different. In 1996 the choice of life goals and the sources of concern and threat of the adolescent were identical. The provided answers were: “to find a good job, to make it” 37%, “to finish school, to get an apprenticeship” 36%, “to start a family, to have children” 25%. Some interesting facts

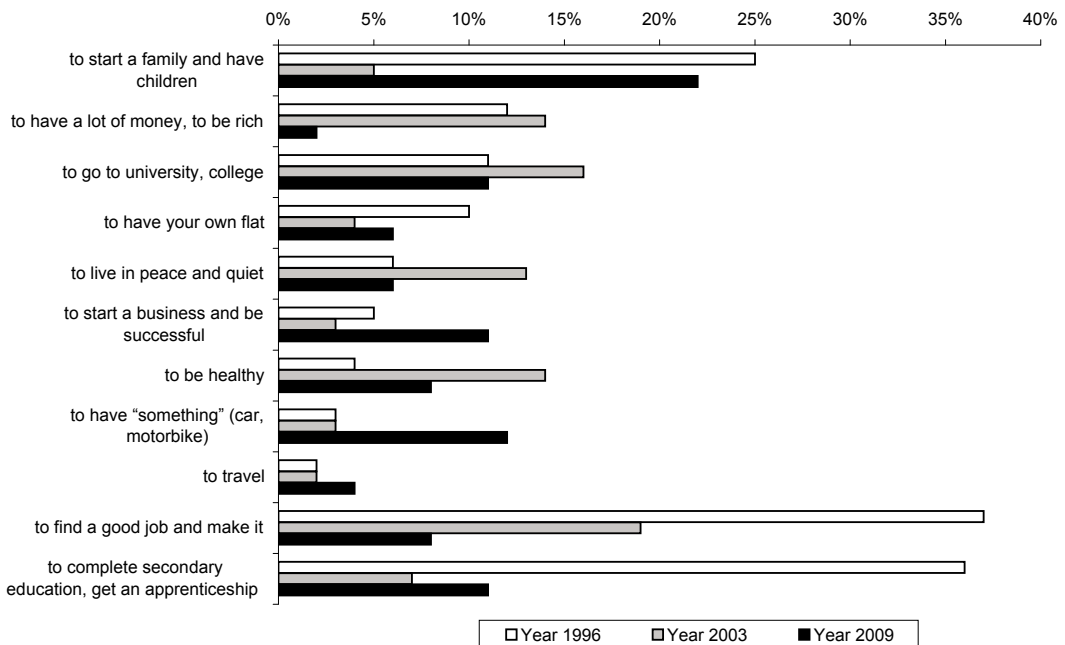
came to light when comparing the results of 2003 and 2009 with 1996. The goal “of being healthy” was significantly on the increase. In 2003 we can see a significant increase in value of the goal and also the concern to live a satisfied life in peace and quiet. This goal dropped slightly in 2009 but its value was still higher than in 1996. The goal “to travel” was also on the increase. In 1996 there was a major concern of starting a family but this concern significantly dropped in 2003 but in 2009 it was again on the rise. There was also a major increase in the value of the concern of living a peaceful life and being healthy in 2003. In 2009 the concern of starting own

business and owning property was on the increase. This comparison confirmed the assumption that there would be differences in the choice of life goals and concerns in individual years.

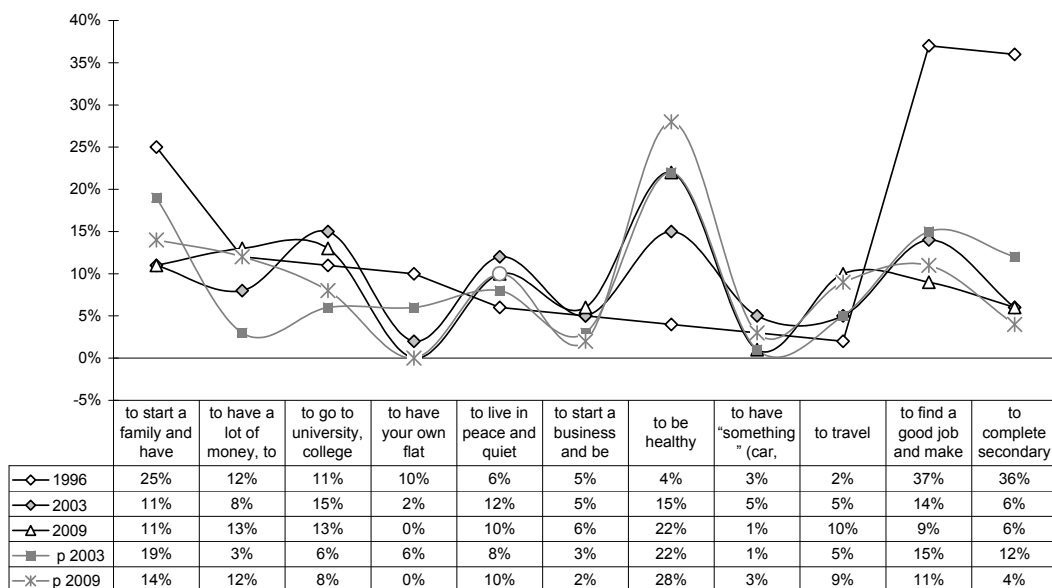
The comparison of all years and both groups of respondents in terms of their nearest life goals is shown in graph (12) and the sources of concern and threat are shown in graph (13).



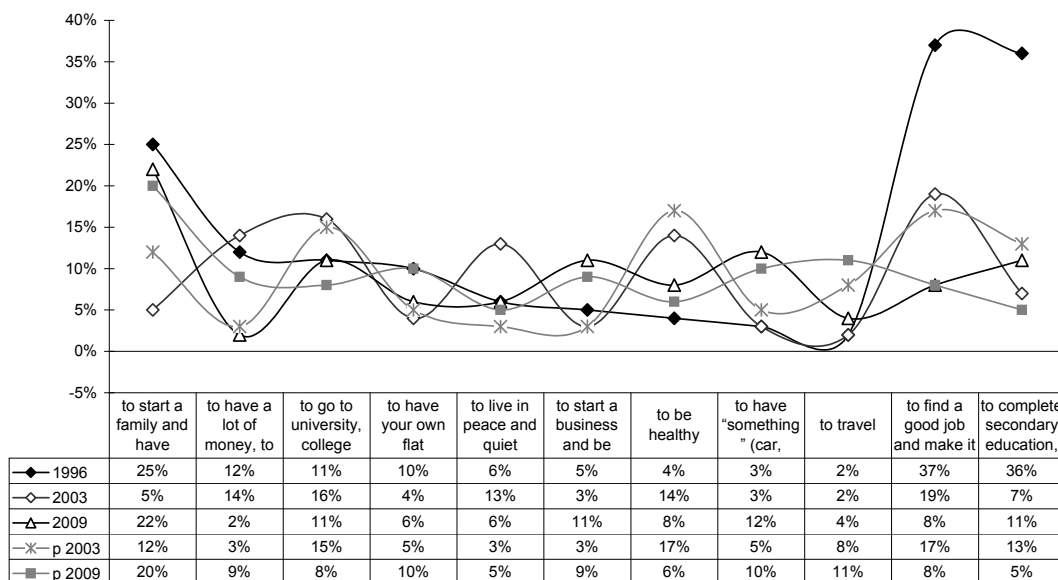
Graph 10. Comparative periods 1996, 2003 and 2009, the nearest life goals – adolescence



Graph 11. Comparative periods 1996, 2003 and 2009, sources of concern and threat – adolescence



Graph 12. Full-scale comparison – the nearest life goals



Graph 13. Full-scale comparison – sources of concern and threat

The answer “to be healthy” was the most popular choice amongst life goals. The second most provided answer was “to find a good job, to make it”, and the third most

common answer was “to start a family, to have children” and “to go university/college”. The most common source of concern and threat proved to be finding a good job and making

it. The second most common concern was to start a family and the third was the concern of being healthy and going to university/college. In total, the most common answer was “to be

healthy”, followed by “finding a good job and making it” and “starting a family and having children” (table 2).

Table 2. Full-scale comparison of answers

Period	pub.	pub.	pub.	pub.	adol.	adol.	adol.	adol.	adol.	
Year	2003	2003	2009	2009	1996	2003	2003	2009	2009	
Goals/concern	goals	concern	goals	concern	g+c	goals	concern	goals	concern	order
to start a family and have children	2		2	1	3				1	3
to have a lot of money, to be rich			3				3	2		5
to go to university, college		2				1	2	2	3	4
to have your own flat			3							8
to live in peace and quiet										9
to start a business and be successful									3	8
to be healthy	1	1	1			1	3	1		1
to have “something” (car, motorbike)				3					2	6
to travel				2						7
to find a good job and make it	3	1			1	2	1			2
to complete secondary education, get an apprenticeship					2				3	6

DISCUSSION

The development of personality during pubescence is characterised by emotional imbalance (Čačka 2000a). It is a period of vulcanism (hormonal storm) when the pubescent reacts in an irritated manner, his/her moods are instable, the pubescent finds it difficult to control him/herself, to act in an integral manner, to integrate their emotional lives (suicides), they also experience problems with self-assessment, acceptance of themselves, they resist and their emotions undergo rapid changes. Emotions are mostly negative. Thanks to the gradual definition and

stabilization of goals and values the instability of emotions and negative demonstrations of mood gradually leads to higher integrity and self-control of behavior (Čačka 2000b). Farková (2009) states that adults themselves very often do not understand these inner emotions and they watch these states with uncertainty and anxiety. Uncertainty thus takes over the whole of the adult world, teenagers are uncertain about their position in the world itself, in the world of work and about their vision of the future.

During our teenage years, our emotional lives change and we start to examine ourselves deeper and we experience deeper

emotions. Our social relationships also change. Peers have a bigger influence than parents, the teenager longs for a faithful friend, s/he is more critical of authorities and the relationships between boys and girls become of a more erotic nature (Vágnerová 2000). Křivohlavý (2006) states that the young ones long for friendship, marriage and family as these represent goals which are worth living for and which give them a sense of life fulfillment and emotional satisfaction. This fact was shown during the research made amongst pubescents and adolescents in 2003 (graphs 1, 2, 3) and also in 2009 (graphs 4, 5, 6) when the nearest life goal was to start a family and be healthy. Looking after the family and children is according to teenagers nearly exclusively a woman's job. The traditional family setting provides boys with a vision of having more freedom when they are adult, and maybe also liberation from domestic duties which they might have to do at home now. Girls are faced with an unpleasant afflux of duties and they probably do not even think that this arrangement could possibly change. The concern of having to look after children and ending up in an unhappy marriage is stated as major source of concern for growing up girls also in foreign bibliography, states Janošová (2008). The concern of starting a marriage was also demonstrated by this research (graphs 4, 5, 6). The biological and social maturity of an individual in the adolescent period can not go at the same pace, the biological signs of maturity come earlier than social, mental and character maturity (UP Olomouc 2009). Teenagers try to become independent but more often it is only the idea of their own independence than the reality as young adults do not turn down the material and financial help provided by their parents (Venglářová 2008). Vágnerová (2000) states the same, saying that a young person wants to look and live like an adult but s/he misses the important internal preconditions, for example experience and responsibility necessary for having an exacting job etc.

Changing schools or jobs brings new contacts and building up of positions. Teenagers put higher demands on their peers, they try to become independent, to be free of their parents and their authority, and sometimes they can even become solitary. Social relationships of a higher type

are established based on understanding, common goals, activities and mutual help. The feelings of uncertainty, concern, anxiety, underestimating or overestimating of oneself and concerns about future are common. This was also shown in the implemented research. The most common source of concern and threat for the pubescent and the adolescent in 2003 was finding a good job, making it, being concerned about their good health and not being accepted to university/college (graphs 1, 2, 3); for the pubescents and adolescents the most common source of concern was starting a family in 2009 (graphs 4, 5, 6).

According to Machová et al. (2009) the relationship of teenagers to their own health is a bit different. Sometimes the attitude to health is overanxious, sometimes it is not taken seriously. In general, teenagers are ashamed of their health problems, they do not want to admit them, they do not like taking medicine and they confide with their health problems in their parents much less often. The research of 1996 showed that for adolescents the choice of life goals and sources of concern were identical. Finding a good job – making it, completing one's studies and starting a family (graph 9) scored the highest. Lomas (2007) points out that the parents' ambition to have a healthy, self-confident child lead to the concern of failure, and teenagers feel that it is their duty to succeed and not hurt their parents. Failure is not acceptable and self-confidence inevitably suffers. The social environment of teenagers has an impact on their feelings of uncertainty, concern and anxiety. Harrisons (2004) states that everybody at the age of 18 and less should have not only the right to live, but also the right to food, clothes, housing, education, health, protection, good home etc, but for example people who leave their home country, homeless children living in the streets, orphans and poor children who must earn their living must overcome big obstacles to succeed and to fulfil these rights. The inconsistency in handling teenagers (as children, not adults) in the current complex, and ever changing society, results in a number of clashes which bring in the feelings of dissatisfaction and revolt against restrictions. Nowadays, the physical growth and sexual maturity moves towards the lower threshold of adulthood, but on the other hand the complexity of social requirements and

education requirements move further away social maturity, creating a clash between the physical and social maturity.

According to Langmeier and Krejčířová (2006) education, technical, scientific and social changes bring differences in opinion, values and generational attitudes, leading to a generational conflict. The older generation has a tendency to stick to past values, which the new generation refuses and starts collecting its own experience. This was also shown in the implemented research.

The comparison graphs 10 to 13 show the differences between the respondents' answers in 1997 and 2003 and 2009 (graphs 10–13). Teenagers critically view the values and standards of their parents, but they are still dependent on them. Social maturity stands against the economic independence of the students and it is a source of conflicts (Langmeier and Krejčířová 2006). The results of the research confirmed the hypothesis that during adolescence and pubescence the objectives and concerns would be identical. The difference in the choice of life goals and sources of concern for the pubescent and the adolescent was only slight (graphs 7, 8) and it can be stated that the only difference was in the order of the selected answers (table 2). Csikszentmihalyi and Csikszentmihalyi (2006) claim that more than a material success, popularity or power, personal goals and internal motivation are far more important, and that suffering and deprivation may not always make us unhappy but they may lead us to creating optimum values, potential for independence and freedom which are the most valued features of the human condition, and in the final result they improve the quality of life. Sedláčková (2009) points out that success evokes impression in a teenager that s/he can do anything and doesn't have to learn anything, but on the other hand failure knocks him/her down and they do not want to attempt anything anymore.

Being a successful student or apprentice is important, but according to teenagers they do not have any immediate profit from completing their studies successfully. At the time of growing up it is very important to have a good educational approach which is far from easy. A bad approach can slow down the development of the teenager and lead him/her to maladaptive behavior. Family

environment and peer support can help teenagers to overcome stress, but mostly it is personal maturity, self-control, value orientation, their own determination, skill to solve problems, the ability to be in self-control and to act realistically in accordance with one's convictions which helps. The best prevention is the atmosphere of openness, mutual affection and willingness to help. It is necessary to use all motivational means which are in the hands of teachers and parents, including the attempt to search and form a new identity and own future (Langmeier and Krejčířová 2006). The human being is an active factor in the system "The World and I" and what we manage and learn at the beginning of our life journey is the only thing we truly have (FI Masaryk University 2009). Knowledge and clarification of what I want and what I am concerned about can outline a suitable way of how to go about our lives. Quesnell (2002) claims that an optimistic approach to social changes has a positive impact on personal concerns of young people. We can be daring enough to state that the results of this research confirmed these statements and the results reflected the times we live in. In 2003 the research was made at the start of the war in Iraq which was slightly reflected in the increased concern to travel, and also in the concern for one's health, and for being able to lead a happy and peaceful life. Health was also the priority goal in 2009. In the same year the concerns of starting a business, owning specific things and starting a family, which became a major concern, were on the increase. The year 2009 was the year when we worried about the world crisis, instability of the government and various health and social policy reforms. Again we can dare to state that this fact was also reflected in the choice of the answers provided.

CONCLUSION

The aim of the research was to map out the choices of life goals and concerns of respondents during their pubescence and adolescence. The secondary aim was to focus on comparison of the choices made in 1996, 2003 and 2009. We were interested to see if the frequency of the following was on the

decrease or increase: the need for material values, the need for personal success, and focusing on the future and general welfare. The results of the research confirmed the hypothesis that during adolescence and pubescence the objectives and concerns would be identical. This comparison of 1996, 2003 and 2009 confirmed the assumption that there would be differences in the choice of life goals and concerns in individual years. The research showed that the nearest life goals which the respondents would like to reach at the time of pubescence was being healthy, starting a family, having a good job and being good at it, and also being wealthy. These life goals were in majority also the sources of concern. Already at the age of 11 we can see the concern of not being accepted to university/college, the concern of not being able to travel or the concern that they would not own their own flat and specific things. The goals and concerns of the adolescent were not very different from the goals and concerns of the pubescent, the only difference was their order. The goal of the adolescent was

to be healthy, to find a good job, to make it and to be accepted into university/college. The concerns of being able to make it, to be accepted into university/college, to be healthy, to start a family were clearly evident, and we could also see the yearning for becoming wealthy. The differences between selected answers clearly correspond with the times we live in. It is evident that over a certain time period the answers change. If we compare the situational analysis of adolescents from 1996 with 2003 and 2009, we can arrive at an interesting finding. We can see that the choice of being healthy, getting accepted into university/college, and living a peaceful, quiet life became very prominent amongst the selected goals. These goals reflect our society which favors healthy and prepared individuals but it also shows our desire to live a peaceful and quiet life. When comparing the concerns of the adolescent we can see an increased concern about being healthy, living in peace and quiet, the worry of not being accepted into university/college, not having enough money and not making it.

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QUESTIONNARY

Please select three options in the following two paragraphs and determine their order of importance (1, being the most important, 3, being the least important) Write down the order of importance onto the appropriate line.

The nearest life goals:

1. what do I want most
2. and after that
3. and after that (on the third place)

Sources of concern and threat:

1. what I am worried about most
2. and after that
3. and after that

Pubescence (11–14 years)

Age (write down how old you are):

The nearest life goals

to start a family and have children
to have a lot of money, to be rich
to go to university, college
to have your own flat
to live in peace and quiet
to start a business and be successful
to be healthy
to have “something” (car, motorbike)
to travel
to find a good job and make it
to complete secondary education, get an apprenticeship

Sources of concern and threat

to start a family and have children
to have a lot of money, to be rich
to go to university, college
to have your own flat
to live in peace and quiet
to start a business and be successful
to be healthy
to have “something” (car, motorbike)
to travel
to find a good job and make it
to complete secondary education, get an apprenticeship

QUESTIONNARY

Please select three options in the following two paragraphs and determine their order of importance (1, being the most important, 3, being the least important) Write down the order of importance onto the appropriate line.

The nearest life goals:

1. what do I want most
2. and after that
3. and after that (on the third place)

Sources of concern and threat:

1. what I am worried about most
2. and than
3. and after that

Adolescence (15–20 years)

Age (write down how old you are):

The nearest life goals

to start a family and have children
to have a lot of money, to be rich
to go to university, college
to have your own flat
to live in peace and quiet
to start a business and be successful
to be healthy
to have “something” (car, motorbike)
to travel
to find a good job and make it
to complete secondary education, get an apprenticeship

Sources of concern and threat

to start a family and have children
to have a lot of money, to be rich
to go to university, college
to have your own flat
to live in peace and quiet
to start a business and be successful
to be healthy
to have “something” (car, motorbike)
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