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PROACTIVE ORIENTATION AND INDIVIDUAL ACTIVISM AS CAUSES OF PERSONAL ACHIEVEMENT AND SUBJECTIVE WELL-BEING

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In this research the causal influences among proactive orientation, individual activism, personal achievement, and subjective well-being in the world as a whole and in three world-system zones based on the 5th wave World Values Survey dataset are examined. To test the first and second hypotheses, structural equation modeling in MPlus 6.12 was conducted. The SEM modeling results for the entire sample are the following. Hypothesis 1 was fully confirmed: 1) person's high proactive orientation leads to intense individual activism, which promotes high level of personal achievement and thus contributes to higher subjective well-being. Hypothesis 2 was only partially confirmed: 2.1) person's proactive orientation does have a direct influence on personal achievement; 2.2) however, proactive orientation and individual activism have a direct though tiny influence on subjective well-being. To examine the third hypothesis, a multiple group analysis in MPlus 6.12 was performed. The comparison of regression coefficients for the three world-system zones generated these findings. Hypothesis 3 was rejected: 3.1) there are relatively small differences between the degrees of influence of proactive orientation on individual activism, of individual activism on personal achievement, and of individual activism on subjective well-being in the three world-system zones; 3.2) the positive influence of person's personal achievement on subjective well-being is the strongest in the periphery and is weaker in the semiperiphery and core; 3.3) moreover, the degree of positive direct influence of person's proactive orientation on personal achievement and total influence on subjective well-being is the strongest in the semiperiphery and is weaker in the periphery and core.

Keywords: proactive orientation, individual activism, personal achievement, subjective well-being, inequality, modern world-system

JEL Classification: Z

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Introduction

The whole world is experiencing a global crisis, and scholars wonder: who and how will create *welfare* and *well-being* in the future? It is assumed that in the future neither states nor corporations will be the primary agents of development and social change. It is *individuals* who will become more active in the promotion of social change and thus will create new social institutions through *grassroots activism*. Small business, participatory democracy, open borders, and the free exchange of ideas are the emerging pillars of the globalizing world, and they require purposeful individual action. Decentralization, local initiatives, and personal engagement will be more adaptive mechanisms for people and for world economy, as well.

Yet there are at least two challenges: countries have different distributions of personal values; there is global inequality in terms of resources and possibilities. So quite probably, populations of *countries with less manifest values of personal achievement* are less inclined to practice individual activism and pursue goals of personal achievement. Also, supposedly, people from *peripheral and semi-peripheral countries* (with less capital accumulated) have less possibilities and therefore have weaker ties between individual activism and a sense of well-being than people from *core countries* (with more capital accumulated) have.

The primary research question is the following: *what are the cause-and-effect connections among proactive orientation, individual activism, personal achievement and subjective well-being?* There are several secondary research questions as well: Are there cause-and-effect influences among the constructs? If a causal influence exists, what are the directions of cause-and-effect influences among the constructs? What are the degrees of these influences? Are there differences in degrees of these causal influences between countries of core, semiperiphery, and periphery? What are the degrees of these differences?

Our study offers a new and perspective approach, applying world-systems analysis to the global distribution of values. We conduct a reinterpretation of the orientations-activism-achievements-well-being in pure positive terms, search for links between the four distinct constructs, and discover the differences in these links between the three structural zones of the modern world-system.

Theoretical Framework

A number of sociological approaches and findings cover the topic. There is an established interplay between social structure and personality argued in M. Kohn's theory (1999) related to *occupational self-direction* – the use of initiative, thought, and independent judgment in work; in general, individuals with higher social-stratification and class position possess greater occupational

self-direction, which can lead to less distress. This was further developed in the conception of proactive work behavior from the perspective of S.K. Parker and C.G. Collins (2010): *proactive behavior* includes active adjustment, using one's initiative, expressing voice, trying to bring about change, proactively solving problems and implementing ideas, etc. Proactive individuals perform their core tasks better so they often experience considerable career success. In search of sources of happiness, R. Inglehart, R. Foa, C. Peterson, and C. Welzel (2008) found out that levels of economic development, religion, tolerance to out-groups, and democracy positively influence the level of subjective well-being; the key intermediate mechanism is enabling people to have wider *free choice*. C. Welzel and R. Inglehart (2010) have proved that there is a positive link between emancipatory values and agentic life strategies, as well as between agentic life strategies and life satisfaction. And the notion that self-actualization leads to greater subjective well-being is an even stronger statement compared to ours (that the results of individual activism in the form of personal achievement contributes to higher subjective well-being).

In psychology, the basics of the phenomena studied lie in the M. Seligman's theory of learned optimism (2006): *learned optimism* is the skill of learning how to think more optimistically during failure; it is an explanatory style so it can be learned; optimists tend to perceive defeat as temporary, local and defined by external circumstances. When confronted by a bad situation, they perceive it as a challenge and try harder; thus in addition to being healthier, they succeed more at school, work, and sports. Also, M. Argyle (2001) suggested a theory of happiness: *happiness* relates to positive emotions and life satisfaction measured as *subjective well-being*; apart from physiological factors, communication with others, arts, relaxation, religion, application of skills, success and social approval bring joy – apparent indicators of happiness; simultaneously, family life, money, quality of life, social values and norms, social relations, living conditions, health, and work lead to satisfaction.

To explain these phenomena on a societal scale, including aggregated individual phenomena, we advocate the world-systems approach. It is described by J. W. Meyer, J. Boli, G. M. Thomas, and F. O. Ramirez as a macrorealist one, as far as it tends to view the nation-state as a product of global systems of economic and political power (1997). The benefit of such a perspective lies in understanding each structural part in the world-system and the cultural consequences of those dynamics. Mainstream world-systems approach is synthesized by I. Wallerstein (2004): economic agents in *core regions* create quasi-monopolies and oligopolies, and effectively protect them with support from strong core states; therefore economic agents in *semi-periphery* and *periphery* have less opportunities for winning a substantial share of world markets; citizens of core states enjoy a higher *quality of life* and have more opportunities for the protection of rights and the promotion of interests. This implication conforms to the thesis of C. Welzel and R. Inglehart (2010) that

economically advanced societies impose permissive existential conditions with multiple opportunities to thrive, which require emancipative values and agentic strategies, which in turn leads to a feeling of fulfillment – the basis for a sense of well-being. Global inequality findings of L. Beer and T. Boswell (2002) demonstrate an "expanding universe" model – correlation between international and intra-national inequality: economic inequality is substantial and it has increased in the last quarter of the 20th century between individuals within nations, between nations, and between individuals of the world. These considerations show that not only the level of economic development in itself is the crucial parameter of the connected inequalities, but the actual position of a society and the corresponding relations to other societies in the modern world-system.

Taking into consideration the theoretical visions above, we conceptualize the major concepts as follows. *Proactive orientation* is understood as valuing independent decision-making, initiative, change, and active behavior. *Individual activism* is defined as perceived independent decision-making, initiative, change, and active behavior. *Personal achievement* is the overall perception of individual financial and other accomplishments. *Subjective well-being* is conceptualized as a person's estimation of his or her own satisfaction with life in general.

Obviously, there is a tremendous amount of literature and research on this topic. Moreover, the connections between the key constructs can be very complicated. For instance, they might include reverse causal influences from the resulting variable (subjective well-being), or strengthening the source variables (personal achievement). For a cause-and-effect study, it is desirable that not all possible links are considered, but some are omitted – otherwise there would be an influence of all variables on all variables and there is little sense in inquiry of causal relationships between all the phenomena. Therefore, it is reasonable to select a specific research puzzle for study. Therefore, we narrow it by exploring only one direction of causal influences – towards subjective well-being.

Undoubtedly, some of the interconnections studied have been found in previous research, specifically, the direct influence of self-expression values on agentic life strategies and of agentic life strategies on subjective well-being (Welzel and Inglehart, 2010), and personal achievement on subjective well-being (Argyle, 2001). The connection between individual activism and personal achievement seems obvious, too. Still, not all the influences and relationships presumed in our study have been proven, especially for the sample – representative for such a great number of societies. This refers to a direct link between proactive orientation and personal achievement. Also, as far as we know, not all the mentioned interconnections have been tested in one model, especially for such a number of societies. The differences in degrees of causal influences among the studied phenomena have not been tested for the three structural zones of the world-economy, too.

Conceptual Models and Hypotheses

Combining all the arguments presented above, we come to the theoretical generalization that there is an indirect cause-and-effect path from proactive orientation to subjective well-being, mediated by individual activism and personal achievement.

H1: Person's high proactive orientation leads to intense individual activism, which promotes high level of personal achievement and thus contributes to higher subjective well-being.

Figure 1. Conceptual model and hypothesis 1
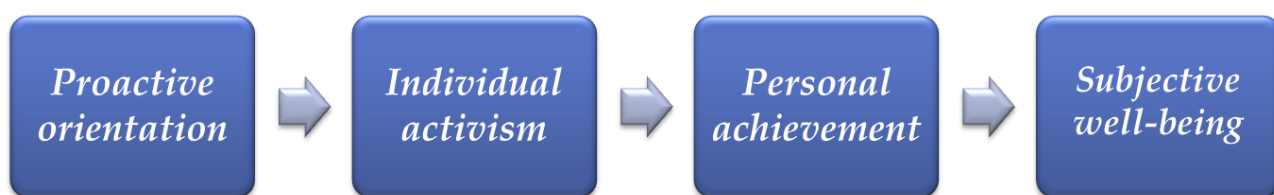
However, as it was already established, individual activism in itself promotes subjective well-being. If we apply the principle of Maslowian self-actualization to the manifestation of a person's beliefs and values, there might be some direct influence of proactive orientation on subjective well-being, as well. Finally, we assume that a person's proactive values themselves might appeal to other people and thus in some direct way contribute to personal achievement.

H2: Person's proactive orientation has a direct influence on personal achievement; while proactive orientation and individual activism have a direct influence on subjective well-being.

Figure 2. Conceptual model and hypothesis 2
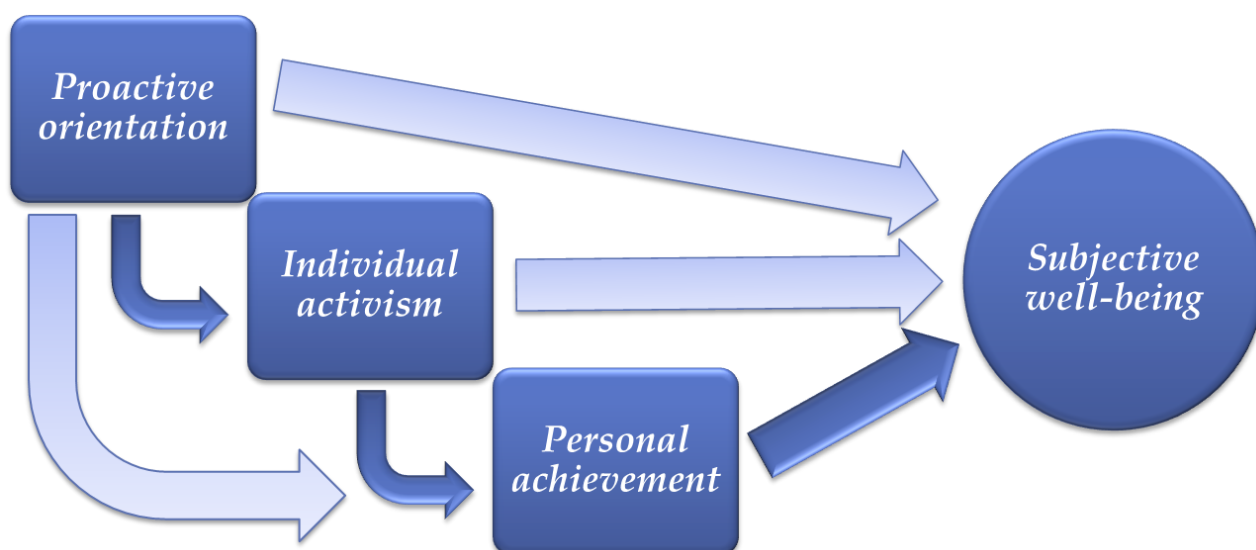
As we take into account the established more favorable conditions for individual agency in the semiperiphery than in the periphery, and in the core than in the semiperiphery it should be concluded, that the degrees of these causal influences should vary among the zones mentioned. Specifically, the strongest links between the constructs should be observed in the core, still stronger in the semiperiphery, and the weakest in the periphery.

H3: Degrees of causal influences among proactive orientation, individual activism, personal achievement and subjective well-being are higher in core societies than in semi-peripheral societies, and in semi-peripheral societies are higher than in peripheral societies.

Figure 3. Conceptual model and hypothesis 3
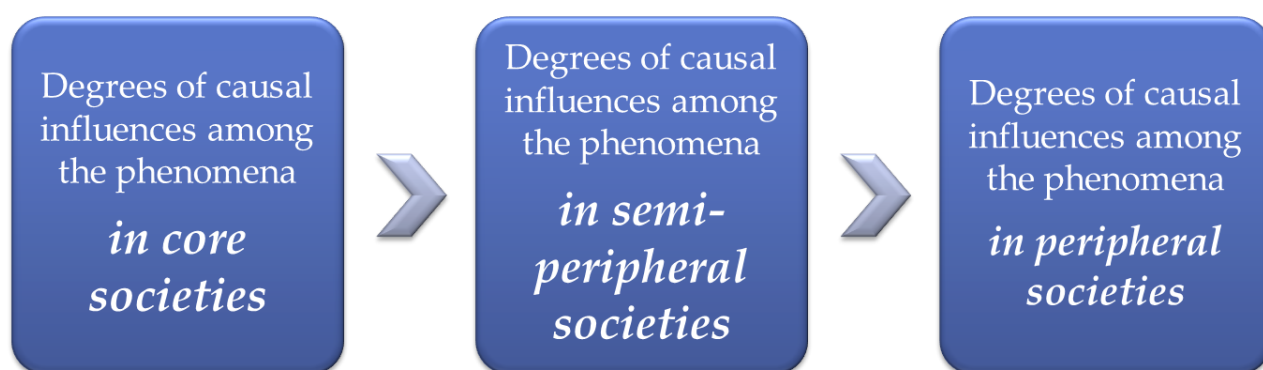
Methodology, Data, Sample, and Measurement

Data collection methodology is the use of secondary population *survey data*. Data collection methods *include standardized face-to-face interviews* or standardized face-to-face *CAPI* interviews. The *data sets* of *World Values Survey 5th wave* (2005-2009) were used for the inquiry. The *sample* includes *49 countries with up to 69,381 respondents*. All national samples are representative for the adult populations of the respective countries; each national sample is 1000 respondents or more. In addition to the total sample, three aggregate *subsamples* were analyzed: countries of core, semiperiphery, and periphery. Such an approach provides grounds for not merely statistical, but also substantial explanation of inter-country differences testing the theoretical implications. Strictly speaking, rigorous cause-and-effect research requires longitudinal data as its empirical base. Yet, if we take into account the absence of such a worldwide study and turn to the availability of non-longitudinal surveys, still covering all world-system zones with a huge representative sample, it is reasonable to analyze this data.

Certainly, there are many possible combinations of indicators and a number of approaches to the creation of the latent variables. So, in elaboration of our measurement models we follow two

fundamental principles: theoretical validity and methodological parsimony. Applying theoretical validity, we find reasoning for each indicator included in the analysis, ensuring they fully reflect the phenomena studied. Several models were tested with different variables and gradual adding of effects. Finally, aiming at methodological parsimony, we tried to exclude variables, which duplicate each other. It is a constant search of a balance between completeness and parsimony of measurement. One or two indicators might be too few for elaborate modeling while five or more might decrease the coherence of the construct measured. For all the latent variables in the data set analyzed, there were enough relevant indicators to measure them with acceptable completeness.

There might be critical objections to such operationalization on the grounds that the search for connections with the variables that obstruct proactive orientation (for instance, degree of religious faith and obedience) might assist in illuminating a fuller picture. In addition, there are studies, in which negative feelings and expectations are accounted together with positive ones. For instance, consideration of personal perception of threats – "Shalom Schwartz and Gila Melech… introduce worry as one aspect of subjective ill-being" " (Diener & Suh, 2000, p. 10). However, according to the theoretical psychological conceptions applied, rejection and counteraction to individual activism is a separate realm of behavior. People either hold proactive attitudes and behave accordingly, or think and act in the frame of conformism and submissiveness. There is no effective way to become proactive while rejecting and fighting a passive and conformist approach to life. Thus, the suggested analysis relates only to constructs, reflecting a positive connection with activism.

Especially worth noting are the individual and cultural variations of subjective standards of well-being and the respective self-evaluation of accordance to them. E. Diener and E. Suh discuss the point: "the concept of cultural relativism thus points to the need for internal standards when judging societies – are citizens able to accomplish their own values and goals, and therefore judge their own lives and community to be successful based on their own standards?" (2000, pp. 3-4). Their answer is – in general, yes. So, self-evaluation is already "weighted" by established cultural standards. This is especially relevant, as we compare not just average country values, but the connections between the constructs.

Concerning the endogeneity issues, there are three points. First of all, on the theoretical level, the differences between orientations, actions, achievements, and the consequent satisfaction are clearly stated. No doubt, for a person they might be perceived as a one holistic totality, because of timeless co-presence. Nevertheless, it does not undermine the cause-and-effect links. On the other side, there can be loops of reciprocal causal links between independent and dependent variables. They require additional studies.

Many variables seem to be suitable for the construct of proactive orientation, but few in fact fit. For instance, the values of determination and hard word are closer to conformism and are weakly connected with all other studied variables. Further, one might argue that the proactive orientation is closely connected with autonomy, especially in M. Kohn's meaning. However, proactive orientation requires something more than mere autonomy as a lack of external control and even more than self-determination in the activities already pursued – it also necessitates generation of new ideas and orientation towards new achievements. The normative values of independence and imagination for children are dichotomous variables, weakly correlating with other proactive orientation variables, and at the end producing models with worse model fit results. Therefore, these important elaborations are included into the operationalization.

Thus, the most relevant indicators for the proactive orientation construct include an assessment of the value of creativity, adventure and taking risks, and success as indirect indicators of a person's own proactive orientations (see Appendix 1 for details of measurement).
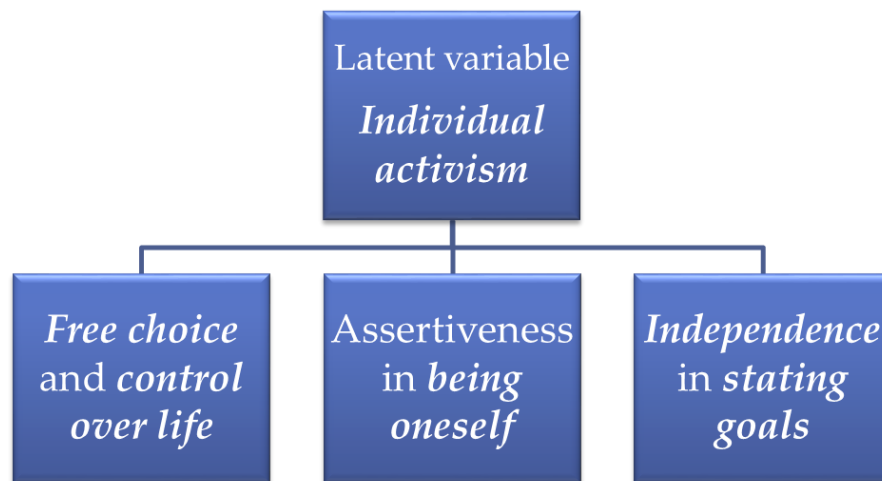
Figure 4. Proactive orientation measurement
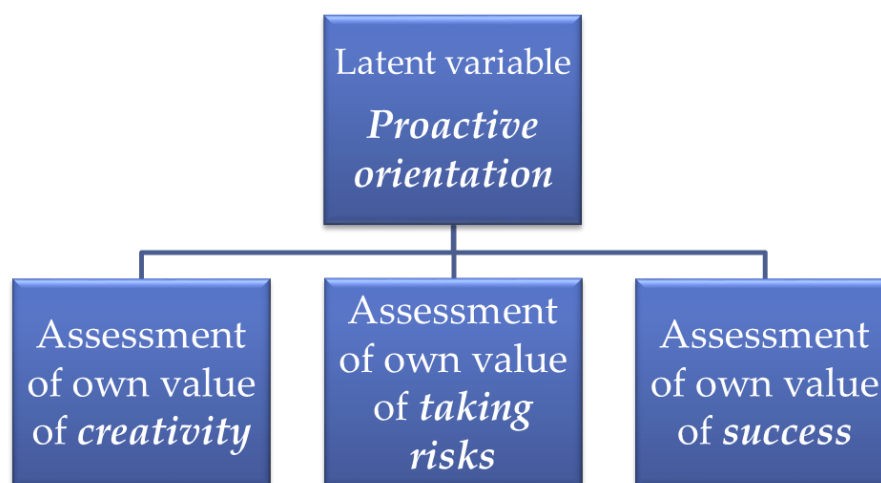
There were a number of variables, seemingly suitable for the construct of individual activism. For instance, "involvement in associations can be understood as a manifestation of internalized social values related to participation" (Voicu, 2013). However, in this case there are a number of associations, depending on personal interests. A dichotomous variable of mere belonging or not belonging to an association provides little information about actual activism.

There is an important methodological point: "disposition towards positivity does not have as large an influence towards a person's satisfaction with narrow life domains, which might be more grounded in concrete reality, as on global ratings in which there is more latitude of judgment" (Diener & Suh, 2000, p. 7). Therefore, where possible, we try to utilize not universal synthetic parameters, but distinct indicators from smaller domains.

So, the indicators selected to measure the individual activism construct are self-evaluation of free choice and control over life, assertiveness in being oneself, and independence in stating goals.
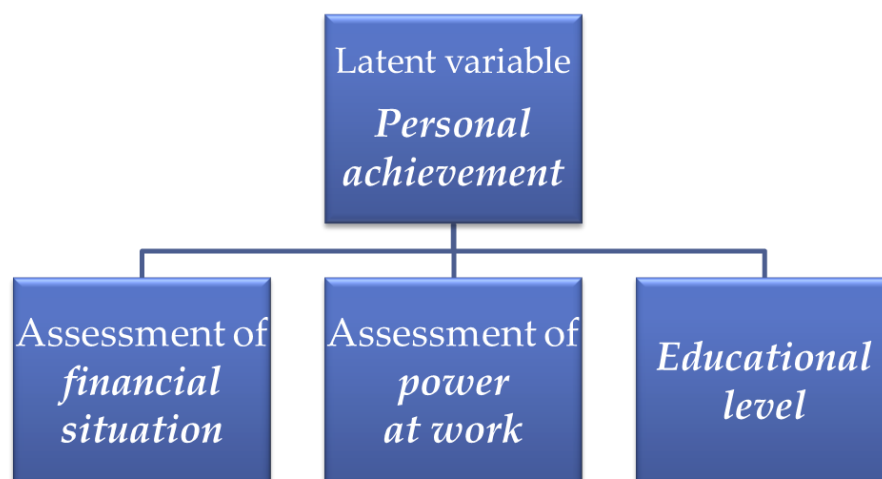
Figure 5. Individual activism measurement

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                    ┌─────────────────┐
                    │ Latent variable │
                    │   Individual    │
                    │    activism     │
                    └─────────────────┘
         ┌───────────────────┼───────────────────┐
┌─────────────┐     ┌─────────────┐     ┌──────────────┐
│ Free choice │     │Assertiveness│     │ Independence │
│ and control │     │  in being   │     │  in stating  │
│  over life  │     │   oneself   │     │    goals     │
└─────────────┘     └─────────────┘     └──────────────┘
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Definitely, personal achievement is a relative concept. One could value high income while an other value happy marriage or righteous way of life as accomplishments. In order to have some grounds for comparison, we will not employ an interpretive approach – trying to understand subjective importance of various spheres of life – but apply a postpositivist perspective defining the most substantial spheres and examining a kind of objective achievements in them. To make appropriate comparisons, there should be some universal domains of life, desirable by a reasonable majority of people, having a profound influence upon their lives, and demonstrating sufficient variation. From our point of view, they are: financial situation as a result of all income-generating activities, power at work, and education level. The other possible variables are not considered universal as desired achievements.

Thereby, in order to have a kind of all-embracing measurement, the personal achievement construct includes the assessment of financial situation, power at work, and education level.

Figure 6. Personal achievement measurement

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                    ┌─────────────────┐
                    │ Latent variable │
                    │    Personal     │
                    │   achievement   │
                    └─────────────────┘
         ┌───────────────────┼───────────────────┐
┌─────────────┐     ┌─────────────┐     ┌──────────────┐
│Assessment of│     │Assessment of│     │  Educational │
│  financial  │     │    power    │     │     level    │
│  situation  │     │   at work   │     │              │
└─────────────┘     └─────────────┘     └──────────────┘
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Sometimes subjective well-being is measured by only one indicator, usually perception of personal happiness (Inglehart, Foa, Peterson, & Welzel, 2008) or satisfaction with life as a whole (Welzel & Inglehart, 2010). However, good health is also one of the most important sources of happiness (Argyle, 2001). Additionally, E. Diener and E. Suh claim that "human health and happiness are two good standards with which to start in judging a society" (2000, p. 5). Therefore, it is reasonable to consider health as an indicator of subjective well-being, too.

Accordingly, the measurement of subjective well-being construct includes the perception of own health, happiness and satisfaction with life.

Figure 7. Subjective well-being measurement
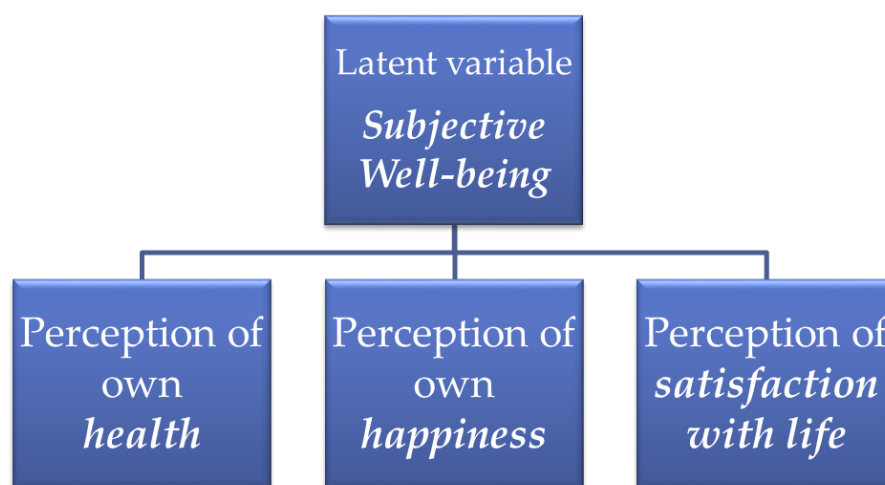
Defining the World-System Zones

Scholars do not possess widely accepted *criteria for clustering societies* and the respective lists of societies placed within structural zones of the modern world-system. There are general descriptions, like the following: core countries have greater economic and political military power, while peripheral countries are poor and have weak states; in between is a group of countries (the semiperiphery) that has intermediate levels of power either because of their large size or because of their intermediate levels of development (Chase-Dunn, Kawano, & Brewer, 2000, p. 79). Nevertheless, few scholars suggest an applicable measurement, relevant for all countries. A number of criteria are applied: relational analyses of the system-wide division of labor, network analyses of patterns of trade, network analyses of economic, political, and military relationships, and distributional analyses of income levels (Babones, 2005, p. 29). For our study of personality manifestations, for the position of a society in the world-system structure, it is not political weight of the state as a whole on the macro level, which matters, but chances of individual activism on a micro level, connected with the conditions on a personal level, reflected in PPP GNI. Among the approaches, methodologically the most promising are *income-based approaches*, as they are not

very data-intensive; they require little specialist knowledge; they can be applied to almost all countries of the world with statistical reporting; plus they can be updated annually (Babones, 2005, p. 30). One of the most methodologically justified is the clusterization provided by Babones (2005). Basically, it utilizes World Bank's (2004) World Development Indicators database, employing the GNP per capita indicator. Unfortunately, the precise measurement tool, applied in 2005, has older data and is no longer available for use.

Therefore the most theoretically and methodologically sound and practically applicable decision is to use the criteria of PPP GNI per capita values. For almost all cases, World Bank's World Development Indicators online database was used (2013). Only Taiwan, included in the survey, was not presented in the World Bank database. Thus, for this society, we took the International Monetary Fund (IMF) World Economic Outlook (WEO) data (2013). The surveys in the selected societies were conducted from 2005-2009. We required defined cutting points for each structural category, relevant not merely for the societies surveyed, but for all societies as a whole. First of all, we selected the year with the majority of surveyed societies – 2006. For this year, all the countries (even those not covered by WWS) with available data were listed and stratified by PPP GNI per capita values; the percentages of increase of these values were calculated, too. Then, starting from the highest values, we searched for the two most considerable increases. They equaled 12% from Greece to Spain and 11% from Colombia to Macedonia. This meant that for the year 2006 in terms of PPP GNI per capita, Spain, with $29,820, was categorized as core society; Greece, with $26,120, a semiperiphery society; Macedonia with $8,510 a semiperipheral society, whereas Colombia, with $7,610, a peripheral society. Thus, the rounded PPP GNI per capita values of the delimiting societies ($29,500 and $8,500) became the cutting points for clusterization of societies. After that, for each society, we took the PPP GNI per capita values for the year corresponding to the survey year and classified into zones of core, semiperiphery, and periphery using the cutting points.

Thereby, the sorting of societies for the structural zones according to their PPP GNI per capita values (WB and IMF data) produced the following clusters:

Table 1. Societies of the three world-system zones

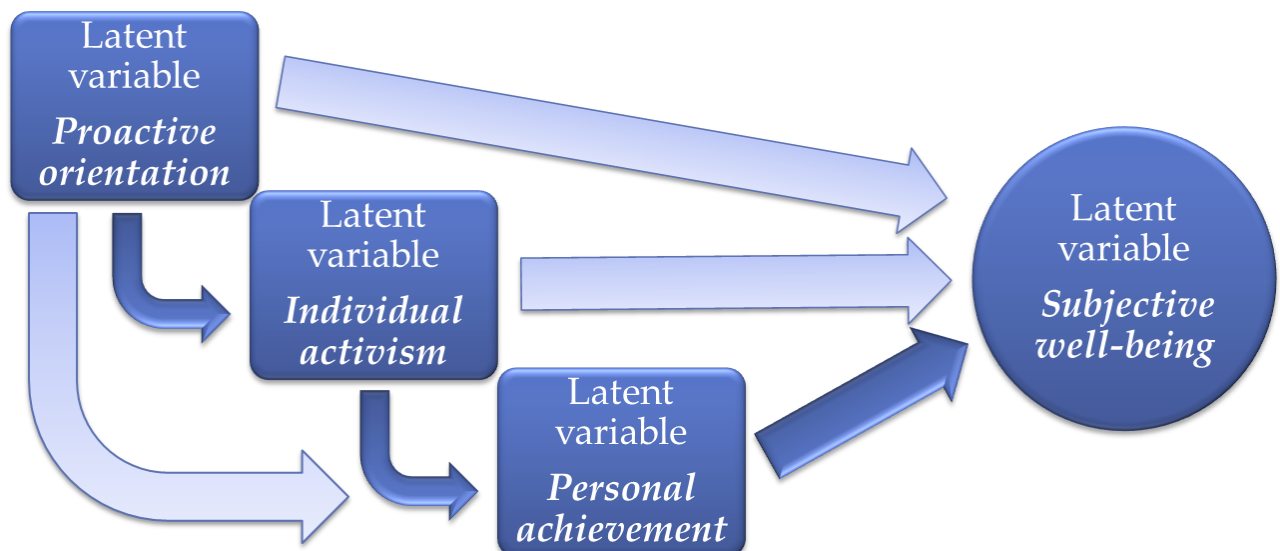| Core	Semiperiphery	Periphery
(over $29,500 PPP GNI pc)	(over $8,500 PPP GNI pc)	(lower $8,500 PPP GNI pc)
Andorra, Australia, Canada, Finland, France, Germany, Great Britain, Japan, Netherlands, Norway, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, United States	Argentina, Brazil, Bulgaria, Chile, Cyprus, Malaysia, Mexico, Poland, Romania, Russian Federation, Serbia, Slovenia, South Africa, South Korea, Taiwan, Trinidad and Tobago, Turkey	Burkina Faso, China, Egypt, Ethiopia, Georgia, Ghana, India, Indonesia, Jordan, Mali, Moldova, Morocco, Peru, Rwanda, Thailand, Ukraine, Vietnam, Zambia

Operational Models and Hypotheses

H1: The higher values of the latent variables of proactive orientation have a positive causal relation with higher values of latent variables of individual activism, which in turn have a positive causal relation with higher values of the latent variable of personal achievement, which finally have a positive causal relation with higher values of the latent variables of subjective well-being.

Figure 8. Operational model and hypothesis 1
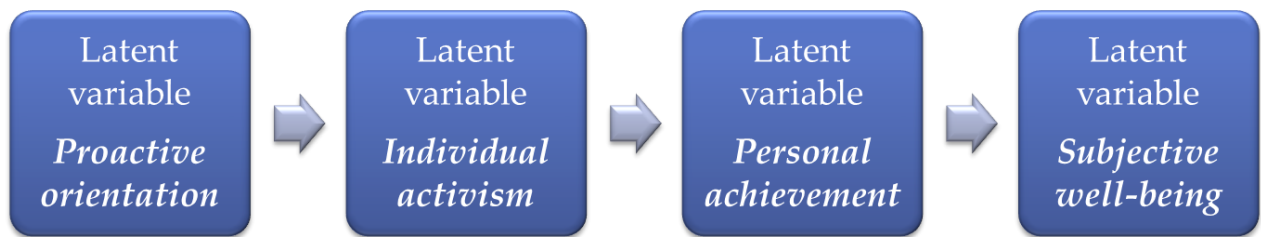
H2: The higher values of the latent variables of proactive orientation have a direct positive causal relation with higher values of the latent variables of personal achievement, and higher values of the latent variables of proactive orientation and of the latent variables of individual activism have a direct positive causal relation with higher values of the latent variables of subjective well-being.

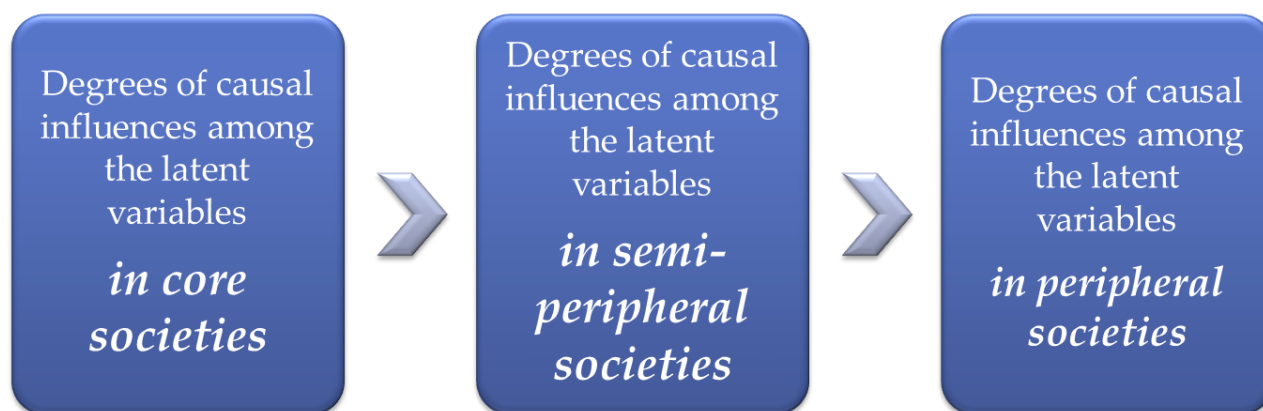Figure 9. Operational model and hypothesis 2

H3: Degrees of casual influences among the latent variables of proactive orientation, individual activism, personal achievement and subjective well-being are higher in the subsample of

core societies than in the subsample of semi-peripheral societies; in the subsample of semi-peripheral societies they are higher than in subsample of peripheral societies.

Figure 10. Operational model and hypothesis 3

Data Analysis Methodology

To estimate causal influences among proactive orientation, individual activism, personal achievement and subjective well-being, reflected in the first and in the second hypotheses, a *structural equation modeling in MPlus 6.12* with continuous and categorical indicators using WLSMV estimator was conducted. STDXY standardized coefficients were used for analysis. In order to evaluate the model fit, the following tests were used: Chi-Square model of fit test, R^2, RMSEA, WRMR, SRMR, AIC, BIC, CFI, and TLI. To examine the third hypothesis a *multiple group analysis in MPlus 6.12* with continuous and categorical indicators using WLSMV estimator was performed. As it was discovered in the analysis, there is a non-linear statistical relationship between PPP GNI per capita and the degrees of causal influences between the constructs. Therefore, in contrast to the regular two-level analysis utilizing PPP GNI per capita as an independent variable, the multi-group analysis turned out to be a more accurate and fruitful method of analysis, somewhat reducing statistical power, but gaining explanatory power (see Appendix 2).

Several Alternative Rejected Models:

In order to come to the best model, more than 14 models with various indicators and levels of analysis were tested.

Statistical control of independent socio-demographic variables on subjective well-being was performed. Controls for biological sex age have shown that the links are somewhat stronger for men and for younger people. Standardized regression coefficient for biological sex is b1=-0.04, and for age is b2=-0.01. There is some influence, but it is negligible, and such a model has a smaller CFI (0.80 vs. 0.84) and TLI (0.75 vs. 0.78) than the principal one. An additional model considering type

of settlement produced no convergence. In search of more detailed differences, we planned to compare *country-specific models*, but the convergence levels were low. We also tested a *two-level SEMs with 0-1 links fixed,* but probably due to the small direct influence of proactive orientation and individual activism on subjective well-being models, including them on both levels demonstrated low convergence levels. There is a common hypothesis that the level of economic development conduces varying degrees of well-being, therefore another option was to check a *two-level SEMs including the between-level PPP GNI variable*. However, hypothetically, due to the nonlinear influence of PPP GNI, the model with this independent variable was unidentified.

One model that did produce some results was the *two-level SEM with 2 links fixed*.

Figure 13. Model graph for two-level SEM. Entries are standardized regression coefficients and factor loadings. Significance levels: * p<.10; ** p<.01; *** p<.001
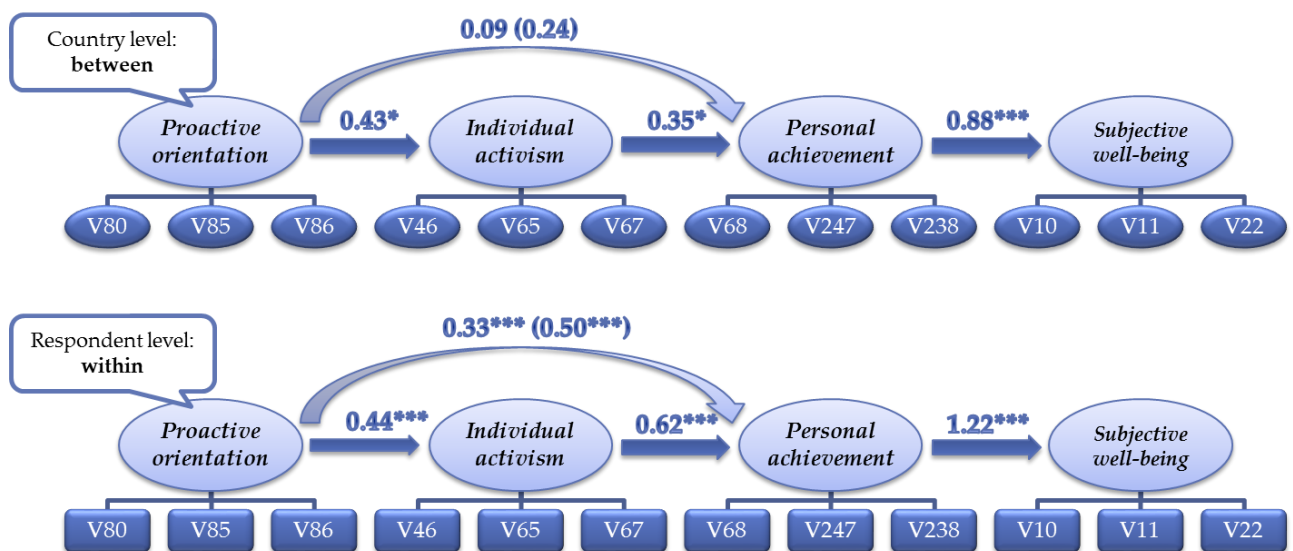

In fact, *this model fit is ambivalent:* Chi-Square model of fit test P-Value<.001, RMSEA = 0.14, WRMR = 33.32, subjective well-being R^2 within = 0.78, R^2 between is unidentified, SRMR within = 0.05, but SRMR between = 0.20, CFI = 0.83, TLI = 0.78. And *the model produced somewhat contradictory results*. At first glance, it looks like some effects are better explained with this model: some within-level links are stronger than the one-level model shows. However, according to some tests, the two-level model is worse than the one-level model: RMSEA is higher (0.14 vs. 0.08) and between-level WRMR is higher (0.20 vs. 0.06). This model makes it impossible to consider the direct effects of proactive orientation and individual activism and has too high RMSEA, and thus should be declined.

The One-level Model:

Therefore, our major findings are based on the one-level model using SEM. The modeling results are presented below (see Appendix 3 for model statistics details).

Figure 11. Model graph for SEM for the entire sample. Entries are standardized regression coefficients. Direct effects are given first and total effects second (in parentheses). Significance levels: * p<.10; ** p<.01; *** p<.001.
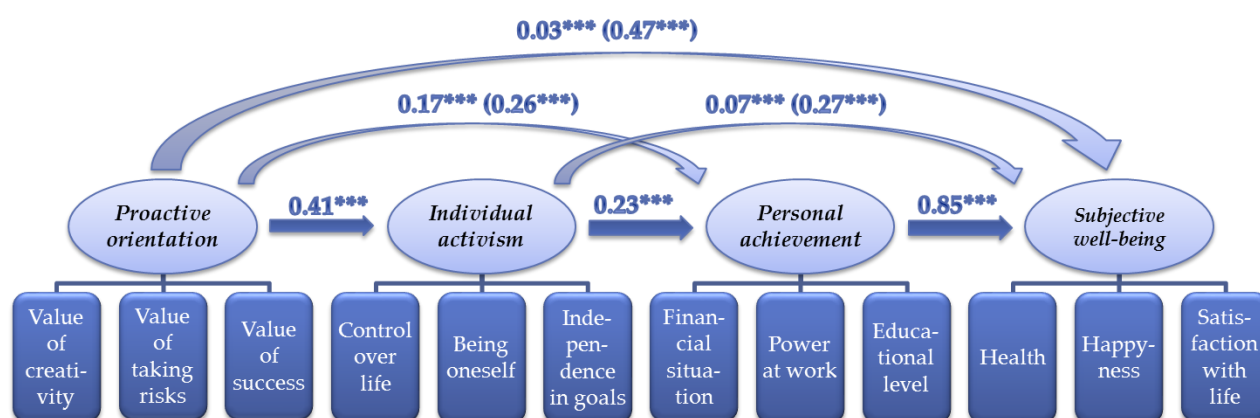
This figure shows the indicators; however, for a clearer picture of the key results, it is better to concentrate on the links between the latent variables.

Figure 12. Model graph for SEM for the entire sample. Entries are standardized regression coefficients. Direct effects are given first and total effects second (in parentheses). Significance levels: * p<.10; ** p<.01; *** p<.001.
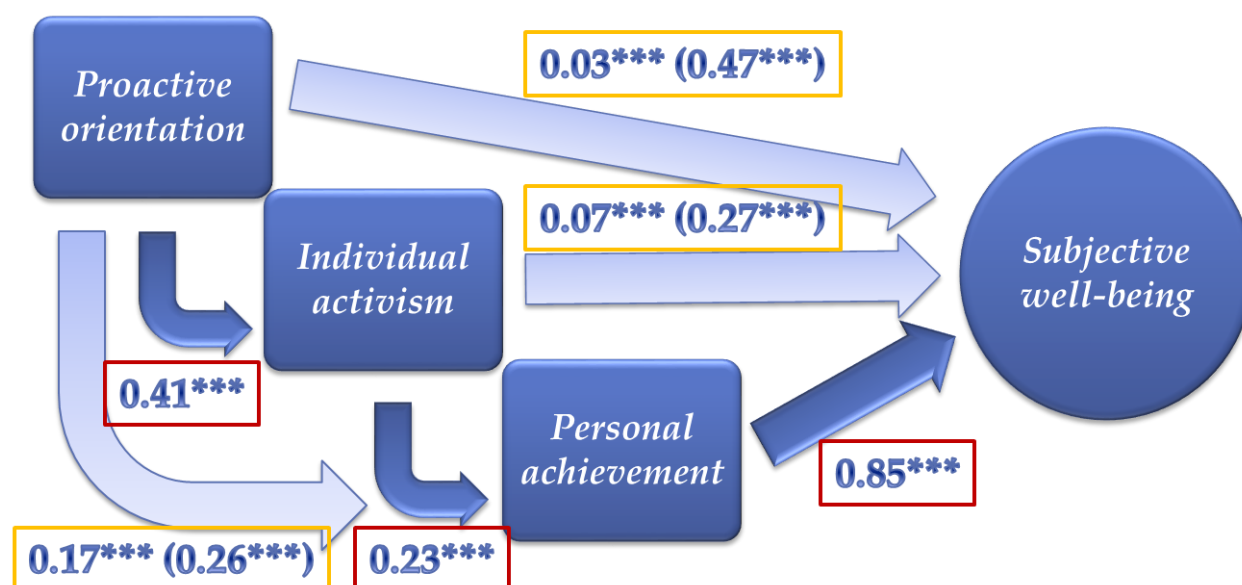
This model shows a reasonable model fit: Chi-Square model of fit test P-Value<.001, RMSEA = 0.08, SRMR = 0.06, CFI = 0.84, TLI = 0.78, Subjective well-being $R^2 = 0.77$. *Hypothesis 1 has been fully confirmed*: a person's high proactive orientation leads to intense individual activism, which promotes a high level of personal achievements and thus contributes to higher subjective well-being. *Hypothesis 2 has been partially confirmed*: a person's proactive orientation does have a direct influence on personal achievement; proactive orientation and individual activism have a direct though tiny influence on subjective well-being.

The obtained results give answers to the questions raised, so our explanations are the following. Proactive orientation does lead to individual activism, individual activism does lead to personal achievements, and personal achievements do contribute a lot to subjective well-being – therefore, the conception in general is confirmed. The influence of proactive orientation and individual activism on subjective well-being seems to operate contrary to some statements of the theories of emancipative values and agentic strategies (Welzel and Inglehart, 2010) – it is not so much their influence by themselves, but the influence mediated by the activities and their results

Comparison between the Three World-System Zones

However, the general results do not present the full picture. We predicted specific differences between the three world-system zones, so it is essential to test them.

Figure 14. Model graph for SEM for the three zones. Entries are standardized regression coefficients. Direct effects are given first, and total effects second (in parentheses).
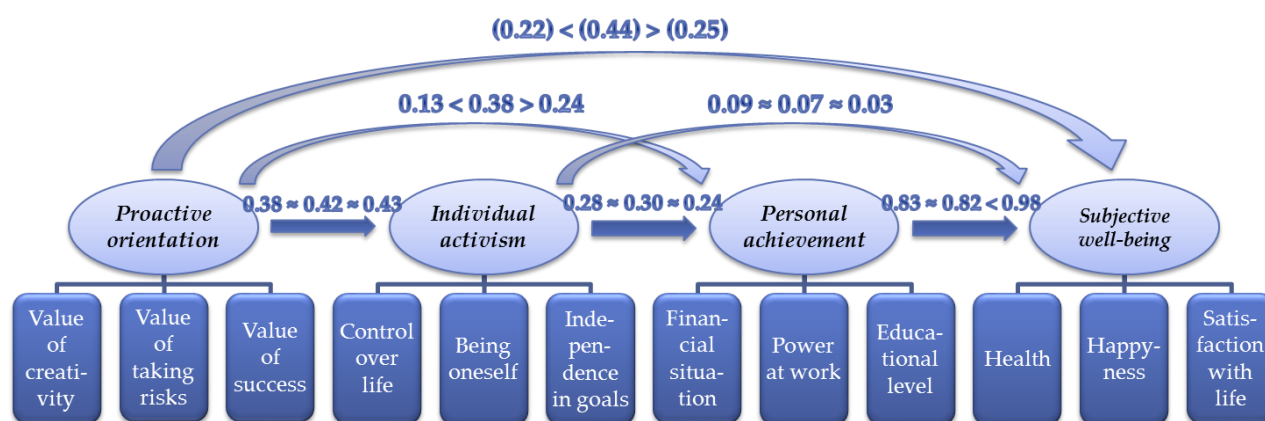
Here, all the links but the direct one between proactive orientation and subjective well-being are statistically significant. To understand the major results, we should look at the largest differences – over 0.1 points differences in regression coefficients. They are presented below (see Appendix 4 for model statistics details).

Figure 15. Model graph for SEM for the three zones. C – Core, S – Semiperiphery, P – Periphery. Direct effects are given first and total effects second (in parentheses).
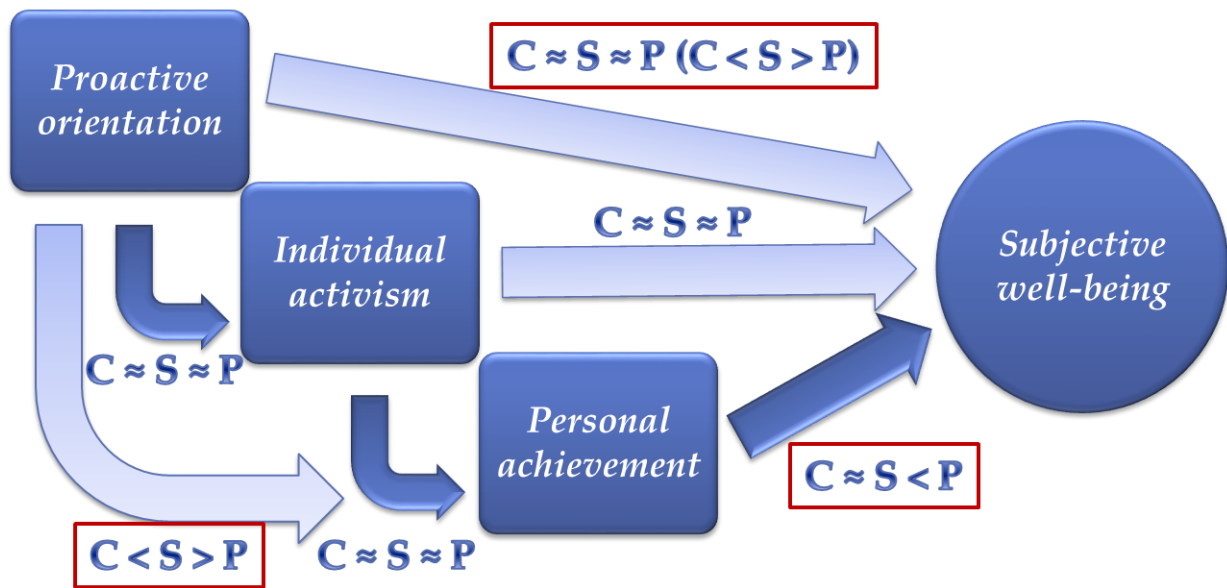
The SEM modeling shows *a reasonable model fit:* Chi-Square model of fit test P-Value<.001, RMSEA = 0.085, SRMR = 0.08, subjective well-being R2 periphery = 0.99, R2 semiperiphery = 0.72, R2 core = 0.73, CFI = 0.74, TLI = 0.70. Surprisingly, *hypothesis 3 has been rejected*. There are relatively small differences between degrees of influence of proactive orientation on individual activism and of individual activism on personal achievement in the three world-system zones. The positive influence of person's personal achievement on subjective well-being is the strongest in the periphery and is weaker in the semiperiphery and in the core. The positive direct influence of person's proactive orientation on personal achievement and total influence on subjective well-being is the strongest in the semiperiphery and is weaker in the periphery and core.

This does not undermine the importance of the findings, as they bring new understanding to the differences between the relationships and illuminate several important regularities. Degrees of influence of proactive orientation on individual activism, of individual activism on personal achievement, and of individual activism on subjective well-being are strikingly similar across all zones, so this is likely a kind of *psychological and structural universal*. Higher degrees of influence of personal achievement on subjective well-being might mean *the higher importance of socially accepted external attributes connected with status* in the periphery, compared to *self-expression values* in other zones. One reason probably lies in the general idea of having more resources for the satisfaction of human needs. "Wealthy nations are happier on average than poor ones, and yet SWB increased very little in the richer nations over the last several decades, even though wealth expanded

spectacularly" (Diener & Suh, 2000, p. 10). Higher degrees of direct influence of *proactive orientation* on *personal achievement* and of total influence on *subjective well-being* in the semiperiphery compared to other zones probably signifies that in that the zone social structure is more open to change and person's proactive orientation does matter more there.

Conclusions and Discussion

The obtained findings answer some questions and raise new ones. We confirmed the links between proactive orientation, individual activism, personal achievement, and subjective well-being and figured out their quantitative contributions. We also discovered that links between proactive orientation and individual activism, between individual activism and personal achievement, and between individual activism and subjective well-being are relatively similar for all world-system zones. However, it was found that the links between proactive orientation and personal achievement, between personal achievement and subjective well-being, between proactive orientation and subjective well-being are not equal in different world-system zones. Therefore, we should conclude that the structural global inequality is reflected in these links, too. This means, that these differences should be considered in other subjective well-being studies, especially in the international comparative perspective. Not only personal peculiarities, and not only country-level variables, but the world structure of inequality itself causes unequal links between individual aspirations and achievements.

One huge challenge discovered in cultural studies is the different societally imposed standards of independence and activism. One study assumes that in North America and Japan general good feelings and a sense of well-being have different degrees of links with individualism (Kitayama, Markus, & Kurokawa, 2000, p. 95). Therefore, it is reasonable to argue that "Euro-American theories of SWB are firmly based on a highly individualistic self-concept" (Lu & Gilmour, 2006, p. 37). This idea is empirically corroborated by Shigehiro Oishi, who demonstrated that "feelings of autonomy are correlated with well-being in individualistic cultures, but not in collectivistic cultures" (Diener & Suh, 2000, p. 10). Therefore, until the debatable issue of varying cultural standards is solved, there is a question of comparability of international comparative studies of individual activism and subjective well-being. Only positive variables contributing to latent constructs were considered in our inquiry. It was reasonable, nevertheless a wider list of indicators might produce different results. We also did not take into account certain structural factors, for example, social classes of parents, as they were not available in the data used. Also, hypothetically, the higher rate of social change might weaken structural constraints and create more opportunities for activism, and thus contribute to stronger links between the constructs studied. Further research would benefit from the consideration of more individual and country-level variables.

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Appendices

Appendix 1. Constructs and empirical indicators

Constructs	Empirical indicators
Proactive Orientation	
Assessment of own value of *creativity*	V80. It is important to this person to think up new ideas and be creative; to do things one's own way. (Varies from 1 – "very much like me" to 6 – "not at all like me", is reversed and normalized as a scale from 0 to 1).
Assessment of own value of *taking risks*	V85. Being very successful is important to this person; to have people recognize one's achievements. (Varies from 1 – "very much like me" to 6 – "not at all like me", is reversed and normalized as a scale from 0 to 1).
Assessment of own value of *success*	V86. Adventure and taking risks are important to this person; to have an exciting life. (Varies from 1 – "very much like me" to 6 – "not at all like me", is reversed and normalized as a scale from 0 to 1).
Individual Activism	
Free choice and *control over live*	V46. Some people feel they have completely free choice and control over their lives, while other people feel that what they do has no real effect on what happens to them. Please use this scale where 1 means "no choice at all" and 10 means "a great deal of choice" to indicate how much freedom of choice and control you feel you have over the way your life turns out. (Varies from 1 – "no choice at all" to 10 – "a great deal of choice", is normalized as a scale from 0 to 1).
Assertiveness in *being oneself*	V65. I seek to be myself rather than to follow others. (Varies from 1 – "strongly agree" to 4 – "strongly disagree", is reversed and normalized as a scale from 0 to 1).
Independence in *stating goals*	V67. I decide my goals in life by myself. (Varies from 1 – "strongly agree" to 4 – "strongly disagree", is reversed and normalized as a scale from 0 to 1).
Personal Achievement	
Assessment of *financial situation*	V68. How satisfied are you with the financial situation of your household? (Varies from 1 – "completely dissatisfied" to 10 – "completely satisfied", is normalized as a scale from 0 to 1).
Assessment of *power at work*	V247. Do you or did you supervise other people at work? (Varies from -3 – "never had a job", to 1 "yes" and 2 – "no", is reversed and normalized as a scale from 0 to 1).
Educational level	V238. What is the highest educational level that you have attained? (Varies from 1 – "no formal education" to 9 – "university-degree education, with degree", is normalized as a scale from 0 to 1).
Subjective Well-Being	
Perception of *own health*	V11. All in all, how would you describe your state of health these days? Would you say it is very good, good, fair, poor. (Varies from 1 – "very good" to 4 – "poor", is reversed and normalized as a scale from 0 to 1).
Perception of *own happiness*	V10. Taking all things together, would you say you are very happy, rather happy, not very happy, not at all happy. (Varies from 1 – "very happy" to 4 – "not at all happy", is reversed and normalized as a scale from 0 to 1).

Perception of *own satisfaction with life*	V22. All things considered, how satisfied are you with your life as a whole these days? (Varies from 1 – "completely dissatisfied" to 10 – "completely satisfied", is normalized as a scale from 0 to 1).

Appendix 2. Comparison of two models fit statistics

	Model Fit Statistics		
Model	RMSEA	CFI	TLI
2-level model with 2 links fixed	0.14	0.83	0.78
1-level model with 3 subgroups	0.09	0.74	0.70

Appendix 3. SEM for the entire sample statistics

	SEM statistics			**SEM statistics**	
Variable	**Estimate**	**2-tail. P**	**Variable**	**Intercept**	**Res. Var.**
Proactive orientation by V80	0.59	0.000	V80	2.43	0.66
Proactive orientation by V85	0.58	0.000	V85	2.02	0.67
Proactive orientation by V86	0.54	0.000	V86	1.34	0.71
Individual activism by V46	0.30	0.000	V46	2.62	0.91
Individual activism by V65	0.56	0.000	V65	3.75	0.69
Individual activism by V67	0.60	0.000	V67	3.44	0.64
Personal achievement by V68	0.74	0.000	V68	1.91	0.45
Personal achievement by V247	0.22	0.000	V247	1.43	0.95
Personal achievement by V238	0.27	0.000	V238	1.69	0.93
Subjective well-being by V10	0.63	0.000	V10	2.86	0.61
Subjective well-being by V11	0.49	0.000	V11	3.27	0.76
Subjective well-being by V22	0.78	0.000	V22	2.46	0.40

Appendix 4. SEM for the entire sample 3 world-system zones regression coefficients

Entries are standardized regression coefficients (total effect in parenthesis)

Significance levels: * p<.10; ** p<.01; *** p<.001

Variable	SEM statistics		Variable	SEM statistics	
	Estimate	2-tail. P		Intercept	Res. Var.
Proactive orientation by V80	0.59	0.000	V80	2.43	0.66
Proactive orientation by V85	0.58	0.000	V85	2.02	0.67
Proactive orientation by V86	0.54	0.000	V86	1.34	0.71
Individual activism by V46	0.30	0.000	V46	2.62	0.91
Individual activism by V65	0.56	0.000	V65	3.75	0.69
Individual activism by V67	0.60	0.000	V67	3.44	0.64
Personal achievement by V68	0.74	0.000	V68	1.91	0.45
Personal achievement by V247	0.22	0.000	V247	1.43	0.95
Personal achievement by V238	0.27	0.000	V238	1.69	0.93
Subjective well-being by V10	0.63	0.000	V10	2.86	0.61
Subjective well-being by V11	0.49	0.000	V11	3.27	0.76
Subjective well-being by V22	0.78	0.000	V22	2.46	0.40

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