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Subjective Well-Being and Universal Cultural Patterns:

A Cross-Cultural Study

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Abstract

Until now it has not been analysed in previous research if and how cultures affect the well-being of people. It was the aim of this investigation to find conform and different patterns of subjective cultural well-being in the examined cultures of Bulgaria, France, Germany and China. Overall, 280 test persons from these countries were surveyed, namely 70 persons from each country. These samples are connected with different cultural traditions. A cohort design was used with subject to age and sex to assure comparability and to be able to meet the demands for a variance analysis. Overall, the results show that the relationships between the cultural patterns and the subjective specific well-being are not as strong as assumed, but significant. The sociodemographic variables do not influence subjective well-being.

1. Introduction

Every culture has its paradise vision: desirable, external conditions that are infrequently observed inside the concerned culture or heavier to realise and that are linked to each other. This paradise vision influences the perception of luck. In this culture comparative investigation, it was determined, to what extent the cultural pattern has an effect on life-satisfaction and what the matters of the paradise vision in the different cultures are (Abele & Becker, 1994; Diener et al., 1995). Until now it is not analysed how culture affects the well-being of people. Subjective well-being is one of the latest research areas in psychology. There are different ways of analysing well-being. Nevertheless, well-being itself is only used as an auxiliary construct. They are more implicit than explicit approaches about well-being. Well-being can be connected to objective criteria like income as well as to subjective measurements. Subjective culture describes the way, how people experience their culture and how this affects their behavioral patterns (Triandis, 1994a). Moreover, subjective culture has an impact on the valuation of personality, life and life-satisfaction. Combining socio-psychological phenomena with culture-comparison is an almost new field of research. In

contrast to culture itself, it is a psychological construct because of its close relation to the people's paradigms and behavioral patterns.

In respect of the subjective culture, Triandis' "cultural syndrome" plays an important role (1993, 1994b). It describes tendencies within a country or a culture, which express themselves through a line-up of cultural characteristics (cultural syndrome). This line-up is characterized by the same language, area, time, social attitudes and rules et cetera. The main feature of that line-up is the differentiated view on individualism and collectivism. Different cultures cause different ways of using the terms individualism and collectivism. This is mainly caused by the way of organizing information.

In addition to Hofstede´s dimension of individualism vs. collectivism (sociocentrism), cultural syndromes also contain features like tight vs. loose cultures and simplicity vs. complexity (Triandis, 1994b). Individualism occurs mainly in complex but loose societies and collectivism in simple and tight societies (Triandis, 2000). Tight cultures have clear rules, low divergence from these rules is allowed, high divergences will be sanctioned and in contrast to that, loose cultures do not have such clear rules and they accept divergences.

Looking at heterogeneous and pluralistic cultures, it is difficult to identify specific rules and to enforce them. A geographic mobility stimulates an open society. A connection between the climate and a culture is obvious (eco-cultural valuation). Very warm climate boost looseness while in cold areas cultures are tight. This is caused by a better control over allocation of resources in cold areas. There are more implicit than explicit approaches about well-being. The socio-psychological construct of well-being can be connected to objective criteria like income as well as to subjective measurements. If cultures are compared, mainly objective criteria such as income or gross domestic product are used to get means. These criteria are used because of its good comparability. If cultures are compared, mainly objective criteria such as income or gross domestic product are used to get means. These criteria are used because of their good comparability.

Because of these conditions, a new questionnaire has been developed. The questionnaire contains especially questions dealing with the cultural differences in well-being. Developing a new questionnaire was essential due to no former survey contained questions about the subjective cultural differences. Moreover, the old well-being scales used in sanitary-psychology, only measured the limited quality of life of sick persons.

The existing surveys thus are not able to give a proper answer to the question how a fulfilled life can be achieved. The approaches using a cognitive access to well-being use processes of comparison as well. Thus, well-being arises through the comparison of the actual life-satisfaction with a relative life satisfaction (Abele & Becker, 1994; Perrig-Chiello, 1997; Veenhoven, 1991; Frey, Dauenheimer, Parge, & Haisch, 1993).Well-being arises only through the fulfilment of an individual aspiration level. A high aspiration level can be motivating and challenging but it can be a pressure and decrease the personal well-being as well. This means that someone is afflicted with wishes and goals he or she cannot achieve, for example to love someone or to gain a certain job. Nevertheless it is not a solution to just decrease the aspiration level (Bruggemann, Groskurth, & Ulrich, 1975). Job satisfaction cannot be achieved in that way. Especially women tend to give up their work goals just to oblige their families and children. If women do that because they want to and not because the society demands them to do so, it will not decrease their level of well-being. Michalos (1985) states that satisfaction is higher if performance is close to the claims. Expectations and needs base on comparisons with other people and past experiences. In this context, the public

opinion and the demanded social models in a culture play an important, maybe the most important role.

The theories of comparison state that the personal quality of life can go into two directions. Quality of life can be changed in a positive direction due to personal experience or the expectation of enjoyable social interactions and change. But quality of life can have a negative direction as well because of physical and psychological symptoms. State-variables play a more important role than trait-variables (Lewinsohn, Redner, & Seeley 1991). During critical events in someone's life, well-being depends on successful coping. Coping means a dynamic relationship between context and social support, age, sex and the structure of personality (Filipp & Klauer, 1991). Well-being is a result of satisfied needs. It is a balance between positive and negative experiences. The subjective actual condition is hence the perception of past, current or future experiences. The subjective valuation of this condition is a way of weighting upcoming feelings of dissonance and congruency (Mayring, 1991; Michalos, 1980, 1985). The higher the standard, the higher is the gap between current and target values. This gap decreases well-being. The level of the standard is influenced by personal experiences and wishes as well as social comparison and socio-cultural demanded models.

The importance of the assessment of the aspiration level can be explained by using the scheme of Bruggemann et al. (1975). In this scheme, a diffuse dissatisfaction according to a cut of the aspiration level can lead to pessimistic work satisfaction. The perpetuation of the aspiration level can on the other hand lead to pseudo-satisfaction or to a structural or fixed aspiration level, respectively (Bruggemann et al., 1975; Semmer & Udris, 1995). Pessimistic satisfaction means that someone gives up his/her goals and dreams. Nevertheless, the current condition is positively judged. The experience of satisfaction is determined by our way of harmonizing our perceptions, our attitudes, our expectations and our behaviour. That means we have to avoid dissonances between cognitive elements to stabilize our internal consistency (Frey & Gaska, 1993; Weber, 1994).

According to these ideas, it seems to be rather easy to say that the key to personal luck is a realistic perception and in addition to that to have realistic aims. However, empiric results show that not the frequency of positive events but the intensity of positive events are important for the creation of luck. For a longer period, luck was defined as the intensity of positive vs. negative emotions. But during some longitudinal selection studies it became obvious that 'being lucky' is caused by the frequency of positive experiences. However, these statements cannot be generalized. Young people need more intensive emotions while elder need a higher frequency of emotions (Diener et al., 1996).

The loss of resources and the need for a model of compensation is more present during the old age. During seniority, expected changes are less favourable and comfortable because one cannot have a fresh start every time (Heckhausen & Baltes, 1991; Heckhausen, Dixon, & Baltes, 1989). This model implicates the theory that there is a perfect timing for everything.

The relative deprivation theory (RDT) uses an actual-theoretical comparison of personal well-being. Moreover, this theory deals with compensation processes, because these include social and cultural schemes. Therefore, the impact on groups and social processes can be pointed out. As a result, this theory can explain the development of discrimination, moral indignation and anger which can lead to civil commotion. In the beginning, the relative deprivation theory observed that the feeling of discrimination and the objectively measured condition of a person do not always correlate. That means that not everyone who should feel objectively bad is really unsatisfied and vice versa.

2. Measures and Samples

A comparison of cultures is used to explain the theory stated above. The aim is to find conform and different patterns of subjective cultural well-being. These patterns are subject to universal cultural patterns. The range of samples only contained cultural heterogeneous samples. These samples are connected with different cultural traditions. Overall, 280 test persons from China, Germany, France and Bulgaria were surveyed, namely 70 persons from each country. This composition tries to cover a range of cultural areas. In that way, comprehensive, respectively universal tendencies can be observed. Bulgaria covers the Slavic culture, Germany the Germanic culture, China the Asiatic culture and France the Romanic culture. The research work in Germany and China was done by student assistants. They came from Germany or China and studied at the University of Passau. They were paid like student assistants. The interviews in Bulgaria and France were handled by colleagues. They were paid accordingly. At the end of the interviews the data was translated into German. All of them are native speakers so they paid attention to local peculiarities. It was required that the interviewers came from the middle class and from the same culture as the test persons. The interviewers were some kind of test persons themselves and therefore could help with their knowledge to understand specialties of the cultures. Moreover, to assure comparability, a cohort design was used with subject to age and sex. As a result, the comparability was assured and the demands for a variance analysis were met. The parallelization of the test persons according to relevant variables was conducted. The demographic variables are connected to a specific cultural evaluation. Only age and sex are the definite comparable variables. The allocation of age and sex is equal in every sample. The cohorts contain the following design: 18-25 years, 26-35, 36-45, 46-55 and 56 and above. The youngest person in all samples is 18, the oldest 89. The mean is 40.73. In Bulgaria, the range goes from 19 to 71 years with a mean of 40.66. The test persons in Germany range from 18 to 89 and have a mean of 41.4 years. In France, they range from 19 to 71 years. Their mean is 40.36. China goes from 18 to 89, having a mean of 40.73 years. Every sample contains 35 women and 35 men. The following methods were used to check the hypotheses: Individualism/collectivism (Triandis 1996), right-wing-authoritarianism (questionnaire by Altemeyer, 1988) and a questionnaire by Genkova (2003) containing some open questions. The question has to be examined differently because of the quantitative and qualitative approach. Therefore interviews about specific well-being were used. The survey (Genkova 2008) was conducted in terms of structured interviews and questionnaires about the life-satisfaction of each society. The following scales were constituted: subjective culture (internationalised cultural standards), as well as effort and society as a field of the subjective life satisfaction. The scale from Rosenberg (1965) about self-esteem was also used.

3. Hypotheses

The following hypotheses were stated:

Hypothesis 1: The determined cultures differ in the context of subjective life-satisfaction, society and effort.

Hypothesis 2: Subjective culture and self-worth shall predict the specific life-satisfaction and the positive relationship would then be cross-cultural.

Hypothesis 3: Subjective culture and self-esteem are cross-cultural moderators in the context of life-satisfaction.

4. Results and Discussion

Hypothesis 1: The determined cultures differ in the context of the subjective life satisfaction, society and effort.

An ANOVA was used to check whether the four cultures differed in the 'specific subjective' quality of life. With regard to the three scales, there are significant differences. In view of the scale 'sense of community' (F= 8.278; df 3; 279, p= .000; Levene-Test = 1.382, df 3; 276; p= .249) the German test persons have the highest means (4.92; SD= .86). The French test persons have the lowest (4.92; SD= .86). The Chinese (4.64; SD= .88) and the Bulgarians (4.69; SD= 1.05) show similar results (figure 1). Nevertheless, the standard deviation is in all cultures very high. That could be a result of very heterogeneous statements. But it is not obvious whether culture-related answers caused these results.

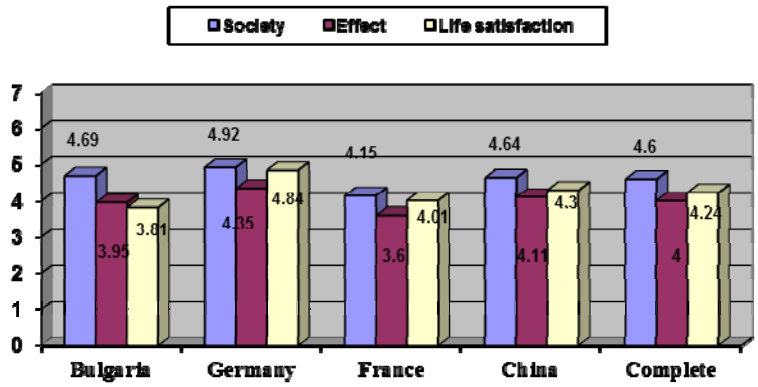

Figure 1: Mean differences in the determined cultures

While comparing the four cultures, significant differences referring to the scale of 'performance' are getting obvious (F= 10.58; df 3; 279, p= .000; Levene-Test .267; 3; 276 and p= .001). The highest value can be observed for Germany (4.35; SD= .75) and the lowest for France (3.60; SD= .86). China (4.11; SD= .85) and Bulgaria (3.95; SD= .81) differ as well. With regard to the 'subjective quality of life', the German test persons again show the highest values (4.84, SD= 1.04). The lowest values were observed in Bulgaria (3.81; SD= 1.47). In addition to that, the highest standard deviation occurred in Bulgaria, too. The Chinese (4.30; SD= 1.14) and French (4.01; SD= 1.09; F= 9.81; df 3; 279; p= .000; Levene-Test 4.058; df 3; 276; p= .008) values are in between. Thus, an interesting tendency occurs. Germany has the highest values referring to 'performance' and 'sense of community'. Stereotype attitudes, describing Germany as a welfare state and as a meritocracy support these results. Except 'subjective life satisfaction', France always shows the lowest data. To be able to compare the means, the Scheffe-procedure and the Bonferroni-adjustment was used. Looking at 'performance' and 'sense of community', China and Bulgaria have as traditional collectivist cultures similar values. No significant differences occurred during the whole survey. Referring to 'subjective quality of life', the four countries have similar values. At that point, the difficulty of the specific fill-out of the questionnaires becomes obvious. The complex problem of the explicit and implicit attitudes should not be handled by this survey. It could be a motive for further research work.

Hypothesis 2: Subjective culture and self-worth shall predict the specific life-satisfaction and the positive relationship would then be cross-cultural.

Subjective culture expresses the internalized cultural norms. Thus, a high acceptance for the particular culture is connected to the affirmation of its norms and rules. A culture also influences the construct of self. The self and the social relationships in a society base on mutuality and constitutively exist in a certain point of time. The self is a part of social relationships and the self and its functionality are defined in different ways (Kitayama & Markus, 1999). Persons in individualistic cultures are happier, when they have a stronger self-worth, optimism and a more intensive self-increase (Kitayama et al., 1997). In collectivistic cultures, people have a high self-worth when they work together with the group. They are more self-critical referring to the own performance and its significance (Kwan et al., 1997). The self-worth in individualistic cultures is a stronger predictor for life-satisfaction than in collectivistic ones (Diener & Diener, 1995). Previous investigations show that a higher self-esteem and a high shape of subjective culture positively correlate with the specific cultural conditioned life-satisfaction, because this implies an acceptance of the cultural norms and self-realization. Additionally, this counts as a cross-cultural relationship. Through the increase of self, important needs and motives are satisfied, like e.g. protection of self-worth and its increase, competence and internal consistence. Well-being is primarily promoted by positive life-experiences like e.g. self-affirmation und experience of success. To identify them, different regression analyses are analysed to include the influence of the particular culture and the demographic characteristics of the cultural-heterogenic samples on subjective life-satisfaction. For this purpose, a regression analysis first was conducted in the particular samples (*emic*-approach) and then with the whole sample. The dependent variable is the subjective specific life-satisfaction. As the independent variables, all demographic variables have been divided into three blocks according to the inclusion method. Block 1 consists of the following demographic variables: gender, age, family status, own children, siblings, self-rated religiousness, living status, partnership, education, occupation and place of residence. In the second block, self-worth and subjective culture have been inserted. In the third block are the cultural *patterns* of individualism, collectivism, pro-authoritarian and anti-authoritarian attitudes. Of special importance is here the change of the declared variance. To avoid redundancies, the description concentrates on the significant relationships.

In Bulgaria, there is only one significant relationship: the pro-authoritarian attitudes are predictors for subjective well-being (β= .406; p= .009). The following changes in R^2 have to be investigated: .172; model2 .100 and model3 .442 (whole explained variance). In Germany, also the demographic variables are no predictors for subjective life-satisfaction. This also counts for the cultural *patterns*. In contrast, subjective culture (β= .499; p= .000) and self-worth (β= .416; p= .003) are strong predictors. The following changes in R^2 have to be investigated: model1: .078; model2 .379 and model3 .502 (whole explained variance). As in Germany, also in France the predictors of subjective culture (β= .485; p= .000) and self-worth (β= .244; p= .049) have to be mentioned as significant relationships. The following changes in R^2 have to be investigated: model1: .180; model2 .264 and model3 .261(whole explained variance). Subjective culture (β= .683; p= .000) and self-worth (β= .476; p= .004) are in China predictors for life-satisfaction. Here, one also discovers, like in the other three samples, that the demographic characteristics have no influence. Also the cultural *patterns*, like in Germany and France, have no influence. Here, more explained variance than in the other samples is detected (changes in R^2 to be investigated: model1: .241, model2 .366, model3 .676- whole explained variance).

Table 1: ß-weights of the significant predictors from regression analyses with the dependent variable of subjective life-satisfaction in the investigated cultures

culture	**dependent variable**	**pro-authoritarian attitudes**	**subjective culture**	**Self-worth**	**Family status**
Bulgaria	subjective life-satisfaction	.406**	n.s.	n.s.	n.s.
Germany	subjective life-satisfaction	n.s.	.499***	.416**	n.s.
France	subjective life-satisfaction	n.s.	.485***	.244*	n.s.
China	subjective life-satisfaction	n.s.	.683***	.476**	n.s.
whole sample	subjective life-satisfaction	.215**.	.405***.	.234***.	-.254**

*p< .05 ** p< .01 *** p< .001

These relationships have been checked for the whole sample. As it can be seen in table 2, the demographic characteristics in the cultural-heterogenic sample have no significant influence on subjective life-satisfaction. This result complements the findings of the particular samples, because in this way, it becomes obvious that the specific, cultural-conditioned life-satisfaction in this regard is rarely influenced by the sociodemographic difference of the samples and the results thus should be rarely biased by this heterogeneity. Thus the results can be interpreted in spite of the heterogeneity. As the only significant relationship, family status (β= -.254, p= .005) has to be mentioned, whereas marriage proves to be promotional for well-being.

Table 2: Regression analysis with the dependent variable of subjective life-satisfaction in the investigated samples-model adjustment

model	**R**	**R^2**	**corrected R^2**	**changes in R^2**
1	.269(a)	.073	.026	.073
2	.535(b)	.286	.243	.213
3	.572(c)	.327	.274	.041

Further significant relationships can be found referring to self-worth (β= .234, p= .000), subjective culture (β= .405, p= .000) and pro-authoritarian attitudes (β= .215, p= .002). Overall, it can be said that the sociodemographic data have no great influence on life-satisfaction and thus the sample differences regarding these data are also not problematic. As the data show, the specific life-satisfaction with a culture is not influenced by the sociodemographic characteristics. The cultural *patterns* however have a significant influence.

It has to be considered that the four single analyses about the four cultures can be interpreted as an *emic*- (or *derived etic*- checking of culture-specific patterns in several samples, respectively) approach. They however offer no opportunity to test for cross-cultural differences.

To analyze these relationships more in detail, a further regression analysis was conducted. For the first step, the four nationalities were inserted as four variables (1/0). These explain the variance of life-satisfaction that the four cultures have. Thus, culture was designed as a multinominal variable. Their distribution is similar to a Chi-Square-distribution, which in turn is similar to a normal distribution. The cultural affiliation is a predictor for the subjective life-satisfaction (see table 2), the cultural variables (individualism/collectivism and pro- and anti-authoritarian attitudes) in contrast are not. Culture one is not being included, because this variable is completely explained by the other three. From the methodological point of view, some aspects have to be highlighted. In the multiple regression, only normal distributed variables should be included. Even if they are included as alternative data (e.g. age and education- high/low), these variables are technically thinkable to be normally distributed. Referring to gender, this is indeed problematic, but is applied in this way in research practice and proved itself; moreover, there are only two types of gender. The variable culture cannot be regarded as being normally distributed. Not the cultural affiliation as such is a psychological effective influence factor, but cultural-specific socialization-conditions / experiences (that are bundled in the specific value of the culture) are. These cultural imprints can of course occur more or less intensively-and thus also the psychological cultural affiliation can be always interpreted as a normally distributed variable. Furthermore it has to be mentioned, that, according to Field (2005), the normal distribution of data is not a mandatory necessary precondition for the execution of multiple, linear regressions, if the dependent variables are normally distributed, whereas the independent variables do not have to be.

Table 3: Regression analysis with the dependent variable of subjective life-satisfaction in the investigated samples- model adjustment

model	**R**	**R-square**	**corrected R-square**	**changes in R-square**
1	.341(a)	.116	.107	.116
2	.365(b)	.133	.110	.017
3	.384(c)	.148	.112	.014

a influence variables : (constant), culture4, culture3, culture2

b influence variables : (constant), culture4, culture3, culture2, gender, age, education, place of residence

c influence variables : (constant), culture4, culture3, culture2, gender, age, education, place of residence, individualism, collectivism, anti-authoritarian, pro-authoritarian attitudes

Table 4: Regression analysis with the dependent variable of subjective life-satisfaction in the investigated samples- model adjustment

model		non-standardized coefficients		standardized coefficients	T	Sign.
		B	Standard error	Beta	zeroth order	section ll
1	(constant)	3.629	.144		25.172	.000
	culture2	1.084	.204	.372	5.314	.000
	culture 3	.273	.205	.093	1.336	.183
	culture 4	.830	.205	.283	4.056	.000
2	(constant)	4.138	.498		8.311	.000
	culture 2	1.235	.230	.424	5.372	.000
	culture 3	.327	.215	.112	1.521	.130
	culture 4	.887	.210	.303	4.217	.000
	age	-.006	.005	-.074	-1.282	.201
	gender	-.145	.145	-.057	-1.000	.318
	education	.092	.158	.036	.582	.561
	place of residence	-.140	.118	-.078	-1.181	.239
3	(constant)	2.715	.929		2.922	.004
	culture 2	1.392	.246	.478	5.664	.000
	culture 3	.425	.252	.145	1.688	.093
	culture 4	.913	.215	.312	4.248	.000
	age	-.006	.005	-.072	-1.170	.243
	Gender	-.155	.149	-.061	-1.042	.298
	Education	.046	.162	.018	.282	.778
	Place of residence	-.158	.120	-.088	-1.320	.188
	pro-authoritarian attitude	.001	.060	.001	.018	.986
	anti-authoritarian attitude	.046	.069	.045	.672	.502
	collectivism	.094	.103	.062	.916	.360
	individualism	.149	.085	.110	1.751	.081

a dependent variable: subjective life-satisfaction

This was tested with two further analyses. Thereby, referring to the first regression analysis, instead of individualism/collectivism and pro- and anti-authoritarian attitudes, the scales of performance and companionship have been considered. During the second analysis, the subjective culture and self-worth were used as predictors. The results show furthermore, that the cultural affiliation with its socialization pattern predicts the subjective life-satisfaction. The *patterns* of performance (β= .526, p= .000) and companionship (β= .120, p= .019) are further predictors (table 5) and thus also significantly explain the additional variance (R2=.412).

Table 5: Regression analysis with the dependent variable of subjective life-satisfaction in the investigated sample- model adjustment

model	R	R-square	corrected R-Quadrat	changes in R-square
1	.341(a)	.116	.107	.116
2	.642(b)	.412	.402	.296

a influence variables : (constant), culture4, culture3, culture2

b influence variables : (constant), culture 4, culture 3, culture 2, companionship, performance

Similar aspects can be discovered referring to self-worth (β= .255, p= .000) and die subjective culture (β= .541, p= .000). Regarding this regression analysis, during the second step, subjective culture and self-worth have been included. The explained variance increases (R2 model1 .116; model2 .346; changes in R2 model1 .116, model2 .230). To analyze this on the cultural-specific level, the above mentioned relationships have been checked again in every sample (*emic* approach).

That subjective culture and self-worth predict the specific life-satisfaction and the positive relationship is cross-cultural, is a further part of the stated hypothesis. To test for this hypothesis, further regression analyses have been conducted (table 6). In Bulgaria, the confirmation of the relationship between subjective culture (ß= .252, p= .028) and self-worth (ß= .292, p= .012) can be found, whereas these overall only explain a small part of the variance (R2=.164). In Germany in contrast, these two variables explain a much bigger part of the variance (R2=.425) and show a much stronger relationship (subjective culture ß= .477, p= .000; self-worth ß=.382, p= .000) which express a rather individualistic view of this culture. This is the same for France (R^2=.340). However, specific life-satisfaction can only be predicted by subjective culture (ß= .561, p= .000). In China, self-worth (ß= .326; p= .003) and subjective culture (ß= .514, p= .000; R^2=.284) are both predictors for specific subjective life-satisfaction. This issue has been confirmed for the whole sample. The result is similar in the whole sample (R2= .270; subjective culture ß= .439, p=.000; self-worth ß= .216; p= .000). Thus one could, excepted in France, where no significant relationships regarding self-worth could be found, assume the universal relationship, that the subjective culture predicts a higher specific life-satisfaction. The subjective culture expresses a kind of adjustment and a positive attitude towards the cultural norms. Thus it is not surprising that in this case also the to culture related life-satisfaction is higher. The scale of subjective culture was generated as the positive perception of the own culture. Regarding the self-worth, there was the notion, that a person in the case of a higher self-worth is more able to assert him/herself and self-realize in the particular culture and thus also accepts this culture. Due to in this case, it is about a more person-related variable, this relationship can be understood with the help of subjective well-being, but is less relevant for the culture-related life-satisfaction.

Table 6: ß-weights of the regression analyses with the dependent variable of subjective life-satisfaction in the investigated cultures (emic- approach)

culture	**dependent variable**	**subjective culture**	**self-worth**	**R^2**
Bulgaria	subjective life-satisfaction	.252*	.292*	.164
Germany	subjective life-satisfaction	.477***	.382***	.425
France	subjective life-satisfaction	.561***	.120	.340
China	subjective life-satisfaction	.514***	.326**	.284
whole sample	subjective life-satisfaction	.439***	.216***	.270

* p< .05 ** p< .01 *** p< .001

Hypothesis 3: Subjective culture and self-esteem are cross-cultural moderators in the context of life satisfaction

The cultural patterns are supposed to predict the cross-cultural higher satisfaction. The interdependency between the cultural patterns has to relate to culture-specific tendencies. Subjective culture and self-worth are supposed to be cross-cultural moderators referring to subjective satisfaction. Moreover, performance and sense of community should be moderators referring to the specific satisfaction. It is the aim to prove this even under the influence of culture. This method is essential because of the cultural-heterogeneous samples. A normal distribution between 50 and 100 test persons is given. Therefore it is unproblematic to make separate interpretations. It is to be kept in mind that even proper models could be rejected. To assure comparability, a method is chosen which respects the technical developments of the actual statistic programs. 'Culture' for example was operationalized as a multinominal variable in regression analysis (four single variables with the values 1 and 0). This leads in the end to a chi-square distribution, which in the broadest sense is equal to the normal distribution. Therefore this method of analyzing is valid. Referring to the models of structural equation this method is impossible to use. Step by step, both models and their fits in the whole sample were reviewed by AMOS. The structural equation is not based on data but on theories. Therefore the models were modified until the fits suited to the data. In the first constituted model, the specific satisfaction will be predicted under the influence of the cultural patterns and throughout the moderator variables of subjective culture and self-worth. During the first construction, a small explained variance of self-worth is noticed. Furthermore, the expected correlations between the cultural patterns are partly not significant. The modelfit was improved by the elimination of the insignificant correlations.

Beyond that, it was considered that a theoretical justification should support this model. Thus, the regression arrows concerning individualism and collectivism in relation to subjective culture and self-worth are retained. The pro-authoritarian and anti-authoritarian attitudes are only connected to subjective culture. Moreover, it was tried to predict self-worth only by using individualism and collectivism, because only the adjustment to a culture causes the subjective culture. This is not valid regarding the pro-authoritarian and anti-authoritarian attitudes, because they are judgmental.

After the elimination of the insignificant regressions and correlations the following model containing proper fit-indices occurs: chi-square 12.152; df; p= .033; CMIN /df 2.430; CFI=.970, RMSEA .072 (LO 90 .019 und HI 90 .124). It is important to consider that the sample contains more than 200 test persons (280). Significance is very common above 200 test persons when using AMOS. Looking at CMIN / df values, a value < 3 seems to be fair. RMSEA < .08 is fair as well for a fit. CFI > .90 is good too. The fit-indices are used in relation to a model by Kline (1998) and as well in relation to AMOS. It has to be kept in mind that the fit-indices can indicate a lack of fit but not information about the plausibility vs. falsification of the model. The scientist him/herself has to do it by using theoretical, statistical and practical methods. Consequently, all these criteria are considered here. Furthermore, it was checked what possibly could be eliminated to improve the fits. The fits would also be better, if the arrow from self-worth to subjective culture could be eliminated. Another possibility is to eliminate the arrows from collectivism to subjective culture and self-worth. The decision not to do this is on the one hand based on the theoretical conception and on the other hand reasoned by the comparability. It is the aim to create a model which can show several correlations. Finally the model should allow to prove correlations concerning the four cultural-heterogeneous samples (figure 2).

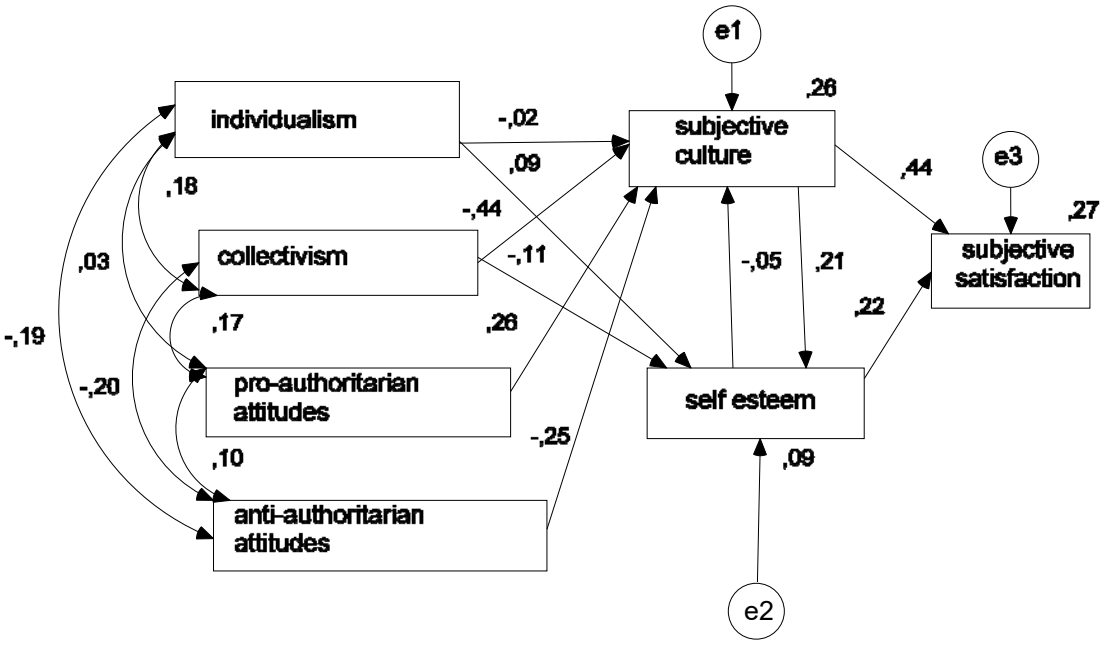

Figure 2: Structural equation 1 referring to the coherency between cultural patterns and specific, subjective satisfaction in the whole sample

This model was used to explain correlations within the cultures (derived etic). In Bulgaria the following results occurred: chi-square 5.731, df 5; p= .333; CMIN/df 1.146; CFI .975; RMSEA .046 (LO90 .000; HI .179). This rating seems fair. Obviously this model better suits to the Bulgarian sample. The German sample shows the following rating: chi-square 3.220 df 5 p= .666; CMIN/df .644; CFI 1.0; RMSEA .000 (LO 90 .000; HI 90 .132). The data for France are: chi-square 8.373 df 5; p= .137; CMIN/df 1.675; CFI .964; RMSEA .099 (LO90 .000; HI 90 .212,); and for Chinas fit-indices: chi-square 10.626 df 5; p= .059; CMIN/df 2.125; CFI .894; RMSEA .128 (LO90 .000; HI90 .235). The chi-square test shows

no significant results for all samples. All other ratings are fair too. In the figure 2, all standardized coefficients can be found.

Overall, it can be concluded, that the relationships between the cultural *patterns* and the subjective specific well-being are not as strong as assumed, but significant. The sociodemographic variables do not influence subjective well-being. The subjective theories about life-satisfaction are culture-specific, thus a cross-cultural comparability is not guaranteed. The areas of well-being like private happiness and career advancement are included in the subjective theories of people in all samples. Due to this, one could act on the assumption of a universal tendency. However, one discovers culture-specific opinions how these areas should be regarded to achieve more well-being. These views differ from each other not only regarding a traditional individualistic (France and Germany) or collectivistic (Bulgaria and China) orientation, but also regarding the authoritarian attitudes. The subjective theories indicate the fact that for this investigation, the selected cultural *patterns* are relevant for people and their patterns of thinking and behavior. Furthermore, the subjective theories of people reflect the in the perception of the participants important and relevant actual topics and problems that are connected to economical states or social structures. This became also obvious through the single mean value comparisons. The subjective culture and the descriptions of the own culture provide information that can serve as hints for the explanation of some of the detected relationships. This also affects the results referring to the dimensions of individualism/collectivism. The results indicate changed orientations, so that Bulgaria and China develop in the direction of individualism and Germany and France in comparison in a collective direction. However, it has to be considered, that in this case, it is about context-related answer-styles, what also becomes obvious from the checking of the single mean value comparisons. If a participant evaluates in an individualistic or collectivistic context to what extent he or she tends toward a competitive or collective orientation, he or she compares himself/herself in a context-related way with others. The cultures divided into two homogeneous groups, namely the traditional individualistic cultures (Germany and France) and the traditional collectivistic cultures (China and Bulgaria).

Due to with the same instruments, other values have been detected earlier in the particular cultures, it is obvious that the connotations changed with time in the particular cultures. The statements in the subjective theories show that in the Bulgarian and Chinese culture, still internalized collectivistic patterns are existent, like in Germany and France individualistic ones. Because- according to the results- another explicit orientation in every of the investigated cultures was expressed, the subjective theories are a hint for the fact, that the explicitly detected orientation maybe represents the changes in the public opinion and in the socially desired stereotypes. These changes however do not yet affect the individual personal patterns of thinking and behavior, which already have been internalized during the socialization process. The culture-specific expresses itself the strongest in the self-description of the own culture. While Germany is a bureaucratic country, France is a *taxed* country, Bulgaria in contrast is beautiful and poor, China is coined by greatness and many people. Furthermore, one can see that the social stereotypes who lives the better life, differ from each other according to culture. The responsibility for bad circumstances will always be ascribed to different social groups, according to the culture. If one applies a *Gender-Mainstream*-perspective, one can see that the gender stereotypes can be universally confirmed, except for France.

In France in contrast, it is stated that women live a better life than men. Due to the sample distribution referring to age and gender is alike, one should act under the assumption of a similar strong influence of these variables on the subjective theories of people. The further

demographic variables like e.g. education or the meaning of religiosity and occupation are also relevant and were included in the analysis referring to the universal cultural *patterns*. To what extent in consequence of different happenings in course of the historical development of a culture a positive or negative connotation for cultural and individual related patterns has established, is rather a question for Ethnology or Cultural Anthropology. The inclusion of data from public polls or sociological investigations can eventually provide hints for the explanation of some of the results. These data cannot be compared to concrete empirical results. This has to be considered, due to the area of cross-cultural research is interdisciplinary and Cross-Cultural Psychology is often seen as being superficial and only as a mean value comparison. In doing so, the complexity of an operationalization for a comparison of cultures as well as the higher reliability of a psychological investigation is ignored. The expectations referring to Psychology to provide concrete, results in recipe-style and with practical relevance, cannot be fulfilled due to the complexity of social processes and phenomena, but can only be detected with the help of reliable and valid empirical investigations. Additionally, one has to consider the equivalence and comparability as quality criteria in the case of Cross-Cultural Psychology. The culture-specific results are thus not to be neglected, but should serve as a basis for further research in other, eventually cross-cultural areas.

The subjective theories reflect two further cross-cultural tendencies. All persons from the investigated cultures wish a stronger collective orientation or more solidarity and support, respectively. Egoism, laziness and insufficient self-responsibility vary in all cultures as an answer to different questions and are the reasons for an insufficient culture-related well-being. Furthermore, income and democratic rights are also relevant areas of well-being. However, also here, the cultures differ from each other, depending on whether these areas are insufficient or are seen as being given, income influences well-being in poorer countries. In the economical richer areas, laziness and rights play a larger role. This also becomes obvious here. The focus on the national characteristics is different in all cultures, contains positive as well as negative characteristics and is critically interpreted. The mentioned categories reflect the national stereotypes that are understandably not cross-cultural. This is also the case for the paradise vision, which is connected to the insufficient areas of the culture-related well-being in the particular culture. Interesting are the acting-oriented subjective theories how to achieve more life-satisfaction. Here, culture-specific patterns of thinking and behavior are expressed, but these are always negatively connoted with regards to content. These patterns are felt to be a pressure to adjust, without accepting them as a person. However, one wishes from others exactly the opposite positive helpful patterns of thinking and behavior.

The notion that the cultural *patterns* culture-specifically predict the subjective life-satisfaction, could only be partially confirmed by the few significant relationships. In contrast to this, the cross-cultural tendency can be observed, that the subjective culture is a strong cross-cultural predictor for the culture-related well-being. This is similar to performance as a predictor, what can be traced back to the economic globalization processes. That the cultural patterns have less influence on the subjective life-satisfaction, but performance and subjective culture have a stronger influence and serve as moderators, indicates several tendencies. Some cultures have norms and *patterns* that make individual goal achievement and the fulfillment of wishes more difficult. However, people strive for a balance with the social environment, to be healthy and successful in the private and vocational area as well as in close social relationships and social networks. This striving is always conditioned by an original state as well as by the desired imaginations and paradise vision, amongst other things.

The two factors culture-specifically differ from each other. They determine the actual subjective theories and the insufficient areas of well-being. Thus, subjective culture, in this case a constructed scale according to the positive evaluation of the own culture, represents a kind of adjustment to the norms and rules of the own culture, independent from how difficult it is, to feel happy about this adjustment. In the everyday language and referring to lay theories, one would state that it is universal that people in all cultures want to be happy. To achieve this goal is easier, if one adapts to the cultural patterns. The adaptation is however coined by culture-specific contents and requires different efforts in the particular culture and depends on the regarded patterns and personalities. This should be investigated in detail in further research.

It was the innovative intention of this work to investigate universal cultural patterns that describe a culture similar to the Big Five of Differential Psychology and are relevant for well-being. The results and the methodological approach (qualitatively and quantitatively) lead to further ideas how to better investigate the culturally-conditioned influence on well-being. Additionally, also subjective theories about happiness were cross-culturally investigated, that have rarely been investigated before. It would be helpful to regard this considering the context of globalization, due to this would include kinds of universal cultural processes and frame conditions. There for this purpose developed instruments about the specific life-satisfaction proved to be very good and could be cross-culturally applied. Universal patterns referring to the specific life-satisfaction were detected and confirmed. The cultural *patterns* are in addition no predictors for the culturally-conditioned well-being, subjective culture and self-worth in contrast universally proved to be its predictors.

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