

What Individualism Is and Is not

Or the ideals of Pippi Longstocking and Lisa Simpson

Abstract

It is often suggested that the distinguishing characteristic of public opinion in contemporary Western societies is a lack of shared moral guidelines in life: everything goes. The only ideal left is what is often called individualism, namely that of *not* accepting any given roles, values or ideals in life but instead striving towards being as free as possible to behave as one pleases. In this paper, I shall question this understanding of individualism. I shall argue that, both conceptually and empirically, individualism is also a set of specific ideals, as opposed to the lack thereof. In this paper, I back up my argument both by theorizing and presenting two new empirical studies, one on Dutch and the other on Swedish survey data. These indicate there are no reasons to assume that just because one is an individualist in the sense that one values individual freedom, one would also condone egoism, freeriding and hedonism. Neither do individualists need to be alienated and lacking a larger goal in life than the pursuit of self-interest. Finally, one of the studies also suggests there are two types of individualistic ideals: one external and oriented towards freedom of action (exemplified by Pippi Longstocking) and another more internal and focused on freedom of thought (exemplified by Lisa Simpson).

Introduction

At the turn of the 21st Century, we are surrounded by ideals of individual freedom. Most of us are familiar with some of the children's heroes Pippi Longstocking, Lisa Simpson, Ugly Betty, Huckleberry Finn and others from popular culture, who in many ways epitomize the value of individual independence. Whether it is the freedom to follow one's own mind instead of the rules dictated by the grown-up world (Pippi Longstocking), or the freedom to hold different opinions and tastes from one's peers (Lisa Simpson) that matters most to them; these widely influential children's heroes all share a commitment to individual freedom of some kind. We can choose to cheer them on and call them upright, authentic, original and self-reliant. Or we can disapprove of their behavior and call them egoistic, pig-headed, subversive or disobedient. But we cannot deny that these children's heroes all *present* individual freedom as something desirable. In that sense, I argue, they are essentially individualistic heroes.¹

¹ Someone may of course question whether children's books can really tell us anything at all about our culture. Here, I believe it is safe to answer that, although much of their popularity is certainly due to the narrative style in which they are told, these stories also carry an undeniably normative content. Their moral message may be less subtle than those from Grimm's fairy tales or Slovenly Peter, but it is nevertheless there, supplying children with role models, solutions to problems they have to deal with, inspiring them to do what is considered admirable actions and to develop what is

Yet, we have surprisingly little systematic examinations of people's values concerning individual freedom. We know much more on how people behave; for example, we have ample evidence that more and more Americans go bowling alone, which is often considered a sign of increasing individualism. We also know, or at least we know that many social scientists are concerned with what they see as a general trend, namely, that new generations in many Western countries seem to focus more and more on their own careers, lives and interests than in collective issues such as politics; trends that are also often labeled as tendencies towards increasing individualism.²

The argument in this paper is that these investigations only present us with far from the full picture – both when it comes to describing politically relevant trends in public opinion and when addressing the general issue of individualism. We still need to investigate what I believe is a resonant theme in public opinion in many societies (not least in the United States but also in many of the Scandinavian countries), and in fact also makes up an essential part of individualism: the ideal of individual liberty, to which extent it is spread and which kind of liberty is valued.

My aim in this paper is to start disentangling this normative side of individualism. In the last pages, we meet Pippi Longstocking and Lisa Simpson again. I shall there show that they each represent a particular ideal of individualism. I begin, however, by addressing previous conceptualizations of individualism and then pointing out what I consider to be their weaknesses. I then suggest another definition of individualism, and this discussion results in five hypotheses that are tested on Dutch and Swedish data. The results support my claims that there is more to individualism than much previous research has acknowledged.

Previous work on individualism³

One of the first social scientists to discuss the phenomenon of individualism in public opinion was the French aristocrat Alexis de Tocqueville. In his second book on *Democracy in America* (first published in 1840), he argues that individualism manifests itself in that most Americans citizens

“feel no longer bound to their fate by a common interest; each of them, standing aloof, thinks that he is reduced to care for himself alone”⁴

considered valuable character traits, David Jack Zipes, *Sticks and Stones - the Troublesome Success of Children's Literature from Slovenly Peter to Harry Potter* (London: Routledge, 2002).

² See for example Robert D Putnam, *Bowling Alone the Collapse and Revival of American Community* (New York: Simon and Schuster Paperbacks, 2000).

³ This section does not contain all of the discussion of previous research that is needed. I am still working on much of this text.

He further notes that whereas selfishness “originates in blind instinct”, individualism is more of “a mature and calm feeling” that originates in the mind just as much as in the heart. Finally, he also points out a worrying paradox: although individualism is essentially “of democratic origin”, it also forms the greatest threat to democracy, since it leads people to identify less and less with other people and society at large:

“...individualism, at first, only saps the virtues of public life; but in the long run it attacks and destroys all others and is at length absorbed in downright selfishness”⁵

In French, the term *individualisme*, as opposed to the English *individualism*, has always been laden with negative associations.⁶ Thus, considering the French origins of the sociological tradition, it is not very surprising that sociologically oriented scholars have often assumed individualism to be if not threatening then at least deeply troublesome.⁷ Consider for example one of the most influential recent works on individualism, completed by a cross-disciplinary team under the title *Habits of the Heart, Individualism and Commitment in American Life* (first published in 1985). The authors believe that the distinguishing trait of contemporary American individualism is

“its readiness to treat normative commitments as so many alternative strategies of self-fulfillment. What has dropped out are the normative expectations on what makes life worth living”.⁸

Another example of this negative outlook on individualism is given in Christopher Lasch’s *The Culture of Narcissism*. Under the heading “The Apotheosis of Individualism”, Lasch asserts that contemporary individualism consists of a “present-oriented hedonism”, a “cult of consumption with its immediate gratifications” and “a search for pleasure and psychic survival”:

⁴ Alexis de Tocqueville, *Democracy in America* (Ware: Wordsworth Editions, 1998), 208.

⁵ *Ibid.*, 205.

⁶ Steven Lukes, *Individualism, Key Concepts in the Social Sciences* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1973).

⁷ When I say ‘assumed’, it is because I am not questioning that the phenomenon many sociologists call individualism may indeed *lead* to troubling consequences. Instead, what I criticize is the way they have conceptualized individualism to begin with.

⁸ At times, the authors also use a wider and more positive definition of individualism as a belief in the inherent dignity of human beings Bellah et al., *Habits of the Heart, Individualism and Commitment in American Life*, 334. However, this definition is, I believe, too broad to be useful for empirical categorization. Indeed, although the authors claim they use it, they do not in fact try to capture this broader and more positively loaded individualism empirically, but tend to study individualism as a synonyme to privatism and ego-centrism after all, Robert N Bellah et al., *Habits of the Heart, Individualism and Commitment in American Life* (London: California University Press, 1996), 48. This interpretation is supported by George Kateb, “Democratic Individualism and Its Critics,” *Annual Review of Political Science* 6 (2003): 301.

*“The pursuit of self-interest, formerly identified with the rational pursuit of gain and accumulation of wealth, has become a search for pleasure and psychic survival”.*⁹

In fact, I believe it can be said that de Tocqueville’s alarm for the future of democracy in individualistic societies has come to dominate a considerable amount of the studies on individualism; not only in sociology and political science, but also in anthropology, psychology and philosophy. On most accounts, just as we saw here above, individualism is equated to amorality and selfishness, or the idea that such behavior is somehow justifiable. Individualism is taken to mean, or be inherently linked to, materialism, hedonism and even alienation; since individualists are defined as people who believe that they have no duties towards others, scholars expect their understanding of the meaning in life to consist of little more than striving towards one’s own self-fulfillment. Furthermore, since individualists lack a greater goal than their own self-fulfillment, it is sometimes even suggested that in the long run, their refusal to compromise this goal and their disinterest in “normative commitments” results in psychological malaise, depression and, some scholars have suggested, even in growing tensions within society -- and on the most radical version a risk for full-blown anarchy.¹⁰

Another trend in scholarly attention towards individualism is a tendency to neglect *individualists* and focus on the phenomenon at the society level only. For example, Robert Putnam sees individualism as “the opposite of a sectarian community”. In a similar vein, Ulrich Beck and Zygmunt Bauman, who examine what they call individualization or institutionalized individualism, state that “individualization is a fate, not a choice”. This indicates that individualism is more like a disease or a climate than a characteristic one can have at the individual level. Likewise, anthropologists such as Geert Hofstede and Mary Douglas use the term individualism to denote a

⁹ Lasch, Christopher. *The Culture of Narcissism, American Life in an Age of Diminishing Expectations*. New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 1978. p.66-69.

¹⁰An example of the idea that individualism leads to depression can be found in for example Seligman, Martin E., Gilham, Jane, ed., *The Science of Optimism and Hope: Essays in Honour of Martin E. Seligman*, Philadelphia: Templeton Foundation Press, 2000; chapter 25. The idea that individualism leads to tensions and anarchy can be found for example in Scott C. Flanagan and Aie-Ree Lee, "The New Politics, Culture Wars, and the Authoritarian-Libertarian Value Change in Advanced Industrial Democracies," *Comparative Political Studies* 36, no. 3 (2003): 267. Also see Richard M. Merelman, *Making Something of Ourselves: On Culture and Politics in the United States* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1984); Robert D Putnam, *Bowling Alone the Collapse and Revival of American Community* (New York: Simon and Schuster Paperbacks, 2000), 351-52. Christopher Lasch, *The Culture of Narcissism, American Life in an Age of Diminishing Expectations* (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 1978).(More refl. Giddens, Habermas...)

moral climate, or a society's ideology, quite independently of what ideologies or ideals individuals in these societies encompass.¹¹

Psychological research does of course often examine individualists as such rather than individualistic cultures. Most psychological studies, however, explore individualistic behavior and worldviews; they investigate whether individuals in fact are, or experience that they are, independent. For example, individualism is often measured by asking people to agree or disagree with statements such as "I rely on myself most of the time; I rarely rely on others" or "When another person does better than I do, I get tense and aroused".¹² Indeed, in a recent meta-analysis of individualism and collectivism, the authors contend that "the core element of individualism is the assumption that individuals are independent of one another".¹³ The key word here is 'assumption'. When it is not an assumption, psychologists tend to view and study individualism either as a "worldview", a certain kind of "self-concept", a certain definition of "well-being", a specific "attribution style" or a type of "relationality".¹⁴

Finally, consider the rather few existing studies of individualism as an individual *ideal*. While individualism is often equated to hedonism, as we indeed saw here above; it is also considered to be linked to achievement-values, to the entrepreneurial spirit, the American myth of rugged individualism and self-reliance. Thus, we see individualism measured both by asking people to rate

¹¹ Bauman, Zygmunt. "Foreword: Individually, Together." In *Individualization*, edited by Ulrich Beck and Elisabeth Beck-Gernsheim. London: Sage Publications, 2002, p. (p.xvii); Douglas, Mary. *Risk and Blame*. London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1992. (p.106?); Geert Hofstede, *Culture's Consequences: Comparing Values, Behavior, Institutions and Organizations across Nations* (Thousand Oaks, Calif.: Sage, 2001); Robert D Putnam, *Bowling Alone the Collapse and Revival of American Community* (New York: Simon and Schuster Paperbacks, 2000), p.355.

¹² Harry C Triandis, "Converging Measurement of Horizontal and Vertical Individualism and Collectivism," *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology* 74, no. 1 (1998), p.120. Shalom H Schwartz, "Mapping and Interpreting Cultural Differences around the World," in *Comparing Cultures: Dimensions of Culture in a Comparative Perspective*, ed. Henk Vinken, Joseph Soeters, and Peter Ester (Leiden: Brill, 2004); Harry C Triandis, "Dimensions of Culture Beyond Hofstede," in *Comparing Cultures: Dimensions of Culture in a Comparative Perspective*, ed. Henk Vinken, Joseph Soeters, and Peter Ester (Leiden: Brill, 2004).

¹³ Daphna Oyserman, Heather M Coon, and Markus Kimmelmeier, "Rethinking Individualism and Collectivism: Evaluation of Theoretical Assumptions and Meta-Analyses," *Psychological Bulletin* 128, no. 1 (2002).

¹⁴ For example, and also building on previous studies (thereamong Rokeach's seminal work on the nature of human values from 1973), Harry Triandis states that being individualistic (or 'idiocentric' as he prefers to call the phenomenon on the individual level) can be summarized in four points: (a) having an individual self-definition that relies more on personal than collective aspects, (b) prioritizing one's own personal goals over those of one's group, (c) emphasizing rationality over relatedness in relationships and (d) being guided more by attitudes than by social norms, Harry C Triandis, "Converging Measurement of Horizontal and Vertical Individualism and Collectivism," *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology* 74, no. 1 (1998). Also see Anu Realo et al., "Three Components of Individualism," *European Journal of Personality* 16 (2002). Valery Chirkov et al., "Differentiating Autonomy from Individualism and Independence: A Self-Determination Theory Perspective on Internalization of Cultural Orientations and Well-Being," *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology* 84, no. 1 (2003).

the importance of industriousness and hard work, but also on answering how much they value pleasure, excitement and variation in life.¹⁵

Let me summarize this brief overview of existing research on individualism in the following points. I argue that in the social sciences:

- A. The most common view of individualism is to equate it with the pursuit of self-interest, so individualism means mainly letting egoism take overhand over altruism
- B. Also, individualism is equated to alienation, i.e. having no larger goals in life than one's own self-fulfillment
- C. Moreover, individualism is often analyzed as a cultural and not an individual characteristic
- D. When individualism *is* studied at the individual level, it is most often studied as a behavior, assumption or attribution styles
- E. In those cases when individualism is studied as a set of *ideals* individuals can adhere to or not, it is either defined as achievement-values or hedonism, or sometimes both

The empirical gap

Given what was said above, I believe there is an important empirical gap: we still know little of what people think about individualism as a set of *ideals*, of how individualistic *values* are related to each other for an *individual*. In what follows, I shall try to spell out this argument more in detail.

Influential scholars such as Ronald Inglehart have assumed that the syndrome of individualism is as coherent at the individual level as it seems to be at a country level, and that the links to democratic attitudes and behavior are the same at both levels.¹⁶ However, the fact that individualism consists of, say, ten attitudes at the national level and that these have a positive relationship to democracy at the country level, based on country average scores on some survey questions, does not of course mean that this is the true relationship at the individual level. For the individual citizen, the individualistic ideology itself may be less coherent and consist of other variables; and its impact on civic virtues might even be reversed, or simply non-existent. Therefore, when it comes to individual level

¹⁵Shalom H Schwartz and L Sagiv, "Identifying Culture-Specifics in the Content and Structure of Values," *Journal of Cross-Cultural Psychology* 26 (1995); Boaz Shulruf, John Hattie, and Robyn Dixon, "Development of a New Measurement Tool for Individualism and Collectivism," *Journal of Psychoeducational Assessment* 25, no. 4 (2007): 385-6; Harry C Triandis, C McCusker, and C H Hui, "Multimethod Probes of Individualism and Collectivism," *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology* 59 (1990); P.J. Watson and Ronald J. Morris, "Individualist and Collectivist Values: Hypotheses Suggested by Alexis De Tocqueville," *The Journal of Psychology* 136, no. 3 (2002): 265. Also see Henrik Oscarsson, "Om Individualisering," in *Det Hyperindividualiserade Samhället?*, ed. Bjereld. Ulf, et al. (Umeå: Boréa, 2005).

¹⁶Inglehart and Welzel, *Modernization, Cultural Change and Democracy, the Human Development Sequence*, 2004.

opinions, we suffer both from a lack of knowledge, and from the fact that the knowledge some claim to have is often based on ‘ecological fallacies’.¹⁷

Also note the internal incongruence among the studies that assume individualism to consist of both hedonism and achievement-values. At least in theory, we tend to think of determination and perseverance as the very opposites of relaxed pursuit of pleasure. Thus, at the very least, we need to explain how it can be that individualism consists of both these things and whether or not they are in fact interrelated.

Most importantly, however, in the less empirical and more philosophical tradition, it is generally recognized that individualism is used both for ideas that specify “a value or ideal” and ideas that specify “a way of conceiving the individual”, as Steven Lukes puts it.¹⁸ The ideals and values he regards as individualistic are, however, neither hedonism nor achievement-values. These values, I shall argue in a couple of pages, may be related to individualism but should not be defined as the same thing as individualism. Individualistic ideals, I shall argue in what follows, all share a common core that hedonism and achievement-orientation lack.

Instead of hedonism or achievement-values Lukes mentions autonomy, privacy, and self-development, which all specify substantial individualistic ideals regarding how one ought to live, what one ought to strive for. However, regarding these values, very little work has been done. Also note that these values are not the same as practices. They are, quite simply, what political philosophers would call ‘conceptions of the good’.¹⁹

In a similar vein to Lukes, George Kateb states that individualism is both “a normative doctrine and a set of practices people engage in”:

¹⁷ Robert W Jackman and Ross A Miller, "A Renaissance of Political Culture?," *American Journal of Political Science* 40, no. 3 (1996): 635. This predominance of aggregate level focus is also reported in Eva G T Green, Jean-Claude Deschamps, and Dario Páez, "Variation of Individualism and Collectivism within and between 20 Countries: A Typological Analysis," *Journal fo Cross-Cultural Psychology* 36, no. 3 (2005): 322. For an explanation of the well-known ‘ecological fallacy’, see W S Robinson, "Ecological Correlations and the Behavior of Individuals," *American Sociological Review* 15, no. 3 (1950).

¹⁸ Lukes, *Individualism*, 73. Others who discuss different ideas that are often called individualism are Douglas Baer et al., "What Values Do People Prefer in Children? A Comparative Analysis of Survey Evidence from Fifteen Countries," in *The Psychology of Values: The Ontario Symposium*, ed. Clive Seligman, James M. Olson, and Mark P. Zanna (1996), 302., who argue that individualism is not to be equated with narcissism, egotism and selfishness. On their view, these are components of individualism, which also includes other, normative components. This is also the conclusion in Oscarsson, "Om Individualisering.", 2005.

¹⁹ Rawls, John. *A Theory of Justice*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1973., p?

*“As a doctrine, it is not meant as a rationalization for self-assertion of the person who propounds it. It is meant for all people or, in its antidemocratic variant, for only certain sorts of people who may be few in number”*²⁰

Using Kateb’s terminology, we recognize that most previous empirical investigations have addressed only individualism as “a set of practices”, seemingly unaware of the fact that they hereby neglect the values of individualism. Yet, there is considerable consensus that values are different from predispositions. People’s idea of what is right and desirable differs from what they experience as facts, just as it differs from what they actually do.²¹

Moreover, given that the neglected side of individualism can be seen as a normative doctrine in itself, it seems particularly unfortunate that so many previous studies have defined the set of practices they call individualistic as the very *opposite* of values, morality, self-discipline and principles. By doing so, they have cut off fruitful potential exchanges with the discussions on individualism in ethics and political theory.

Finally, by relating individualism so close to the feeling of meaninglessness and the spread of moral relativism – in one word alienation - previous research also fails to address what individualism is taken to mean in its empirical ‘home’: the United States. After all, de Tocqueville coined the term when describing what he saw as a specifically American character trait and ever since then individualism has been considered “the most fundamental of American values”.²² However, although they are supposedly the most individualistic people in the world, numerous reports show that Americans have very clear opinions on what is right and what is not and are not at all skeptical towards the existence of universal moral values and a meaning in life. They value individual freedom, but not necessarily the freedom to do *whatever* one likes, nor the freedom from universal moral *principles*. Rather, they seem to value freedom in specific substantial forms, such as self-expression or the famous self-reliance. People are often proud to be individualists. Indeed, as Yehoshua Arieli

²⁰ Kateb, George. "Democratic Individualism and Its Critics." *Annual Review of Political Science* 6 (2003), p. 275-6.

²¹ Naturally, the boundaries between ideology and predispositions or cultural frames are sometimes blurred, and this is not the place to reach a clear-cut dichotomy between the two. But I believe that the issue of how much a person *values* independence can still be separated both from how much independence he believes to have in his own existence or whether he actually lives up to his own ideals of striving for independence. Gian Vittorio Caprara et al., "Personality and Politics; Values, Traits, and Political Choice," *Political Psychology* 27, no. 1 (2006); Wolfgang Jagodzinski, "Methodological Problems of Value Research," in *Comparing Cultures: Dimensions of Culture in a Comparative Perspective* ed. Henk Vinken, Joseph Soeters, and Peter Ester (2004), 98-101.

²² Sears and Funk 1991: “The Role of Self-Interest in Social and Political Attitudes”, in Mark P. Zanna (ed.), *Advances in Experimental Social Psychology*, Vol.24, San Diego: Academic Press, p.77.

stresses in his *Individualism and Nationalism in American Ideology*, individualism in the United States is far from descriptive, it is normative – something good.²³

Given all this, I believe it is unfortunate to start by claiming that only those who believe there is no greater goal in life than pursuing short-term pleasure, excitement and a varying life. The fact that someone may reject externally imposed moral ideals does not necessarily mean they reject universal moral ideals as such and only live for the sake of pleasure. Contrary to what many psychological studies of individualism presuppose, self-discipline may not always be related to collectivism but also exist in an individualist version, as something an individual perceives as *self-imposed* (I need to discipline myself for my own sake, in order to cultivate my true/real/best self). These empirically quite possible combinations need to be examined, not just assumed to be true.

Thus, we must open up for empirically examining whether people who believe in individualistic ideals are also by default alienated and hedonistic. There are some such studies that for example explore the support for self-reliance among different social classes. Yet, to my knowledge, there are few systematic *cross-cultural* comparisons that investigate Ralph Waldo Emerson's ideal of self-reliance, or Henry David Thoreau's ideal of non-conformity. When these issues are discussed, it is only within an American context, and seldom are they related to the larger phenomenon of individualism to which they, philosophically at least, can be said to belong.²⁴

The up-shot is that if we are indeed concerned with the amount of individualism in public opinion (as most social scientists are), it should be rewarding to turn focus to individualism of a normative kind. What do people think of what philosophers have called the normative doctrine of individualism? What do they think of self-reliance, autonomy and anti-conformism? And are there empirical reasons to believe that people who believe in self-reliance also believe in anti-conformism; or that valuing individual independence comes together with valuing hedonism and becoming a moral relativist? That is the empirical gap I want to explore in this paper.

A definition of normative individualism

As I have suggested here above, one of the reasons for the empirical gap on individualism as a normative doctrine, I believe, is that both political scientists, sociologists and psychologists have

²³ Yehoshua Arieli, *Individualism and Nationalism in American Ideology* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1964), Ch.9,12,13. Also see Gregory B. Markus, "American Individualism Reconsidered," in *Citizens and Politics, Perspectives from Political Psychology*, ed. James H. Kuklinski (Cambridge University Press, 2001), 402; Herbert McClosky and John Zaller, *The American Ethos, Public Attitudes toward Capitalism and Democracy* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1984), 288. Gilens 1999 Why Americans hate welfare (ref.); Sniderman, Paul M., Brody, Richard A, "Coping: the Ethic of Self-Reliance", *American Journal of Political Science*, Vol.21, No.3 (1977):501-521.

²⁴ Sniderman and Brody, 1977. Other ref. missing due to Endnote problems, see those above.

departed from a faulty theoretical definition of individualism to begin with. To put it poignantly, individualism is often a name scholars use to label whatever they consider to be a *deficit* in something; whether in self-discipline, altruism or morality.

Strangely enough, not even among the theorists who have studied individualism analytically have I found a proper discussion of what it is that makes certain doctrines individualistic, as opposed to something else. Yet, we do not want to be comparing apples and oranges. Therefore, it is important to find their common core.

Autonomy, privacy and self-development, that are all three forms of individualism,

“can be seen, so to speak, as the ‘three faces of freedom’ – by which I mean that, while distinct from one another, all three are basic to the idea of freedom and that freedom is incomplete when any one of them is absent or diminished”²⁵

claims Lukes. Also, he continues:

“liberty is an amalgam of personal autonomy, lack of public interference and the power of self-development”²⁶

Although I believe Lukes starts in the wrong end by first deciding (based on what?) which sub-categories of liberty there are and then deciding the category (liberty) to which they all belong, I do believe he is on to something here. Individualism as a normative doctrine, it seems to me, is the same as an *ideal of individual freedom*, i.e. the belief that individual freedom of some kind is inherently valuable.²⁷ This is the definition I shall use from now on. Any ideal that stresses the value of individual freedom, liberty or independence (which I shall here use synonymously), is therefore an individualistic ideal.

My definition of individualism resonates with recent conclusions from meta-analyses of psychological research on individualism, which have argued that “the most salient feature of individualism, as defined by the majority of studies, was valuing personal independence”.²⁸ However, there are also considerable differences from those previous definitions discussed earlier.

²⁵ Lukes 1973 p.127.

²⁶ Ibid., p.131.

²⁷ This is not to deny that individualism cannot be correctly used for other phenomena outside the scope of public opinion, such as for example methodological or religious individualism.

²⁸ Oyserman, Coon, and Kimmelmeier, "Rethinking Individualism and Collectivism: Evaluation of Theoretical Assumptions and Meta-Analyses."

Contrary to what most previous analysts of individualism have done, I do not delimit the phenomenon to a specific commitment to the freedom to do whatever one wants, or to freedom from duties or universally binding moral values. Instead, the concept I offer includes any commitment to individual freedom, whether it consists of valuing duty over pleasure or vice-versa. By doing so, I get a tool for recognizing the individualistic aspect of what contemporary social scientists have called anti-authoritarian, emancipatory or libertarian values. To the extent these trends reflect normative commitments to the value of individual freedom of for example developing one's authentic talents, or of committing entirely to a certain ascetic ideal that one believes in, I believe it is correct to say they are all essentially individualistic trends.²⁹

Thus, by defining the core of individualism as adherence to an ideal of individual freedom, I exclude egoism, alienation, alienation, general hedonism and achievement values from what individualism *is*. Hereby, I open up for examining how these ideals relate to individualism, and whether valuing freedom of one kind or another is related to for example, valuing pleasure or success. Instead of treating this as something we already know *per definition*, I make this a question we must explore empirically.

Theory and hypotheses

It is not enough, however, to simply say that being an individualist means valuing individual liberty. We must also define this liberty; which means we must address a long tradition of controversy regarding its true nature. Obviously, I shall only be able to scratch the surface of such a discussion in this paper. However, even my very brief attempt of doing so here results in a hypothesis concerning what different individualisms there might be.

One of the most common understandings of freedom is the dyadic one, in which freedom is a good a person has whenever he is unconstrained by someone or something (no matter what one does or wants to do with this good). Theorists such as Isaiah Berlin and John Gray propagate this

²⁹ In fact, there are indications in existing surveys of the existence of this normative doctrine of individualism that I am out to capture. The problem has been that, due to the lack of conceptual and theoretical clarity I have stressed here above, these values have remained entangled with more abstract, descriptive and even behavior-oriented attitudes that these surveys measure simultaneously. Zygmunt Bauman, "Foreword: Individually, Together," in *Individualization*, ed. Ulrich Beck and Elisabeth Beck-Gernsheim (London: Sage Publications, 2002); Flanagan and Lee, "The New Politics, Culture Wars, and the Authoritarian-Libertarian Value Change in Advanced Industrial Democracies."; Richard L Florida, *The Rise of the Creative Class: And How It's Transforming Work, Leisure, Community and Everyday Life* (New York: Basic Books, 2002); Ronald Inglehart and Christian Welzel, *Modernization, Cultural Change and Democracy, the Human Development Sequence* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2005); Lasch, *The Culture of Narcissism, American Life in an Age of Diminishing Expectations*; Milton Rokeach, *The Open and Closed Mind* (New York: Basic Books, Inc., 1960).

definition of liberty, and they seem to have inspired many of the empirical studies on public opinion regarding individual liberty.³⁰

Indeed, if we relate back to the heroes from popular culture that were mentioned in the introduction, it is easy to see that they differ in the obstacles they seek freedom from. Pippi Longstocking mocks everything from police officers to teachers, rebelling against superiors of any kind and constantly making fun of them and their authority. Yet, she seems to have no problems getting along with or being respectful towards her peers; in fact she often helps them by using her supernatural forces. Lisa Simpson, on the other hand, has in some ways more in common with Pippi Longstocking's obedient neighbor girl Annika than with Pippi herself. She does not rebel against authorities but rather against her peers, their group pressure and popular opinion as such; and seeks understanding and encouragement from adults.

However, I believe there is one more aspect in which Lisa and Pippi differ, namely in what *area* they want to be free; and this is an aspect that the dyadic view of freedom fails to account for. Lisa Simpson cares much more about being free to think for themselves and have her own original tastes than about being able to actually do whatever she likes, to sleep with their feet on the pillow or to skip school, as does Pippi Longstocking. It seems we automatically limit the area in which freedom is most valuable to us to certain aspects. Few would agree that it is equally valuable for an individual to be free in all areas of life at the same time. It is hard even to imagine what it would mean for someone to be free to do every conceivable action there is.

Thus, I suggest we need to think of freedom as a triadic rather than a dyadic concept, as Gerald MacCallum once suggested. According to this view, freedom is not an empty good one has whenever one is unconstrained. It is a relationship one has to a certain *activity* when one is un-constrained in engaging in it.³¹ This view adds an extra dimension to individualism: while we may agree with each other on the type of obstacles individual freedom should be freed from, we may still disagree on what individuals should be free to do. This means that there are a number of differing ideals that we can agree all extol freedom, but still differ in emphasizing different areas to be free in, different obstacles to be free from, and even different agents whom freedom is sought for. When it comes to individualism, I have already per definition limited it to apply only to ideals of freedom concerning

³⁰ Berlin, "Two Concepts of Liberty."; Gray, "On Negative and Positive Liberty." The empirical work on individualism in public opinion often departs from this view on the ideal of freedom as only one of being free from others without specifying in what, Flanagan and Lee, "The New Politics, Culture Wars, and the Authoritarian-Libertarian Value Change in Advanced Industrial Democracies.", Inglehart and Welzel, *Modernization, Cultural Change and Democracy, the Human Development Sequence*; Putnam, *Bowling Alone the Collapse and Revival of American Community*.

³¹ MacCallum, Gerald. "Negative and Positive Freedom." *The Philosophical Review* 73, no. 3 (1967): 312-34.

the individual – but we should still expect these ideals to differ along the two first dimensions, i.e. concerning *from* what and *to* what freedom individual freedom is most valued.

Let me summarize what has been said hitherto into four hypotheses:

Hypothesis 1: Individualists (in the normative sense employed here) do not necessarily condone the pursuit of self-interest at other people's cost.

Hypothesis 2: Individualists are not necessarily alienated (i.e. think there is no universal or objective meaning in life).

Hypothesis 3: Individualists are not necessarily hedonists (i.e. value pleasure and excitement in life).

Hypothesis 4: Individualists are not necessarily achievement-oriented.

Hypothesis 5: There are different kinds of individualists, depending on what they value individual freedom *from* and what it is that they value individual freedom in *doing*.

Testing the theory: the Dutch case

In what follows, I shall investigate my hypotheses by conducting two preliminary factor analyses. Both were performed on the basis of the correlation matrix, using listwise deletion, so that only those respondents who answered all of the questions were included. I used Varimax rotation, the most common rotation for so-called orthogonal design, in which the underlying factors are assumed to be independent of each other. I did, as is common in factor analysis, find that some of the factors (from the first study especially) were rather highly correlated, which suggests there are reasons to also test a so-called non-orthogonal design, in which the factors are allowed to be interrelated. However, since such designs are less intuitive to interpret and explain, I here only include these very first non-orthogonal analyses: they are simply more parsimonious.³²

Also note that I have several variables that cannot be considered continuous (i.e. they are measured at less than a seven-level scale). Strictly speaking, these should be factor analyzed on the basis of other, more sophisticated correlation coefficients than 'Pearson's r' that I use here. However,

³² The purpose of a factor analysis is to find meaningful patterns between numerous observed variables. The basic assumption is that many 'manifest' variables are linear combinations of a few 'latent' variables (preferably as few as possible). In other words, the goal is to explain as much as possible of the variance in several existing variables with a few non-observable, hypothetical variables or 'factors', Kim and Mueller 1978, p.43, p.68.

since the bias I might be having here is likely to make any existing factor loading appear smaller than it really is, the factor loadings that I do find can still be considered robust, and can be expected to be even larger in a more sophisticated model.³³

The first study relies on data from Religion in Dutch society, a survey on world views and values in Holland from 1990. I chose these data because they contain a number of question items that are considerably close to my theoretical framework, which is somewhat rare in large-N surveys, given that they focus on behavior and worldviews rather than values. However, it is very hard (if not impossible) to find the perfect questions for any theory, and especially mine which departs distinctly from so many previous studies. Thus, I have had to settle for quite many questions phrased not in general but in personal terms here, hoping that these can serve as proxies for measuring not only what people want for themselves but also what they think is universally valuable. In order to get at this in the best possible way, I have also chose to look at questions concerning what people think “we should pay more or less attention to” and also, in the second study, on what people believe are important qualities to teach their children. These latter questions are, I believe, as close as we get at people’s idea of what is not only their personal taste but their *values*.³⁴

³³ See for example Kim, Nie and Verba: *Factor Analysis, Statistical Methods and Practical Issues*, Sage University Press, (1977): p.56.

³⁴ Also, my hypotheses here are rather general and deal with whether or not people make a general difference between different ideals; they are meant to apply universally rather than to specific cultures or time periods. So what we see in Dutch data may hold true for other nations aswell.

Table 1 : Types of Individualism and Related Concepts

Data source: Religion in Dutch Society, 1990

	<i>Type I Individualism</i>	<i>Type II Individualism</i>	<i>Hedonism</i>	<i>Alienation</i>	<i>Achievement</i>
HOW IMP.: NOT BEING TO RULES	,732				
HOW IMP.: DOING WHATEVER YOU LIKE	,729				
HOW IMP.: DECIDE FOR ONESELF	,726				
HOW IMP.: BEING INDEPENDENT OF ANYONE	,656				,341
HOW IMP.: NOT TO BOTHER ABOUT OPINION OF ENVIRONMENT	,467				
ATTENTION TO PERSONAL FREEDOM		,725			
ATTENTION TO FREEDOM OF SPEECH		,705			
ATTENTION TO BE OPEN TO NEW IDEAS		,689			
ATTENTION TO ALLOWING PEOPLE TO HAVE MORE SAY		,602			
ATTENTION TO STRIVING FOR PERSONAL DEVELOPMENT		,571			
HOW.IMP.: ENJOYING LIFE			,819		
HOW IMP.: HAVING FUN			,813		
HOW IMP.: EATING AND DRINKING WELL			,568		
HOW IMP.: EXPERIENCING NEW EVENTS			,536		
MEANING OF LIFE IS TRY TO MAKE THE BEST OF IT			,353		
DOUBT WHETHER LIFE HAS A MEANING				,798	
DIFFICULT TO SAY WHETHER LIFE HAS A PURPOSE				,771	
LIFE HAS LITTLE MEANING				,749	
HOW IMP.: GETTING ON IN LIFE					,761
HOW IMP.: FEELING TO HAVE ACCOMPLISHED SOMETHING					,716
ATTENTION TO MAKING SOCIETY LESS MATERIALISTIC		,382			-419

Extraction Method: Principal Component Analysis. Rotation Method: Varimax with Kaiser Normalization. Rotation converged in 6 iterations. Factor loadings under 0.3 have been suppressed. This is not an entirely arbitrary cutoff value, but based on the recommendations in the literature on factor analysis that usually suggest a minimum of 0.3 or 0.4. However, it is a general problem that there is no commonly agreed upon criterion for what a high factor score is (Lambert, Wildt and Durand 1991, p.421).

Cases were used by a listwise deletion process – i.e. this analysis is based only on the answers of those respondents who answered *all* of the above questions.

The variables were measured by asking people to rate the importance of a given issue; for example “At the moment I consider important in my life: getting on in life” on a 1-5 point scale. The items on “attention to...” were measured by asking people to rate whether “we should pay much more or less attention to...”, also on a 1-5 point scale.

The first factor, which accounts for over 20% of the explained variance, seems to deal with a specific kind of individualistic ideal. All the variables loading heavily on this factor deal with valuing individual independence from other people: “not being tied to rules”, “doing whatever you like” and “deciding for oneself” all have what is generally considered very high factor loadings in the social sciences (0,726 and above). This dimension also seems to tap a rather action-oriented, as opposed to mental or reflective, ideal of individual liberty. More ‘soft’ versions of individual liberty such as freedom of speech and self-development do not load at all on this factor, and neither do the questions measuring hedonism, alienation or achievement values. This suggests that valuing individual freedom of this ‘tough’ and self-reliant kind is in fact a stand people take quite independently of how hedonistic or alienated they are.

The second factor, *Individualism II*, explains an additional 9,6% of the variance in the data. This is where we find very high loadings on issues such as personal freedom (0,725), freedom of speech (0,705) and openness towards new ideas (0,689). It seems that here we are dealing with a ‘softer’ dimension of individualism, one that extols not so much one’s active freedom from other people’s rules, but rather a kind of larger mental freedom that we might call autonomy or maybe anti-conformism; the liberty to develop and think for oneself. It is also worth noting that postmaterialism loads on this factor – indicating that valuing normative individualism of this reflective and internal kind is not at all related to materialism but in fact to its very opposite.

The third factor, *Hedonism*, which explains an additional 9,3% of the variance, is quite straightforward. Here we find all the issues pertaining to pleasure, excitement and enjoying life. Just as hypothesized, hedonism is its own dimension. People’s answers concerning hedonism do not correlate with their answers on normative individualism, and only to some degree with their beliefs concerning the meaning and purpose of life.

The fourth factor, *Alienation*, which explains only an additional 6,5% of the variation in the data, is also rather easy to interpret. Here we find items that measure a lack of belief in meaning in life;

which is often thought to be closely related to valuing individual independence, Yet, here we find that these issues form their own dimension.

Finally, consider the fifth factor, *Achievement*, which only explains 5,3% of the remaining variation in the data. Interestingly enough, we see that valuing “being independent of anyone” not only loads heavily (0,656) on the first factor, but also on this last factor (0,341). The highest loadings here, however, come from “getting on in life” (0,761) and “feeling to have accomplished something” (0,716).

I believe we have found more or less confirming evidence of four out of five hypotheses here. Hypothesis 1 can not be answered, since there were no items that measured the pursuit of self-interest in this survey. However, I believe it is fair to say that Hypothesis 2 did get quite a lot of support, since alienation turned out to be its own factor. This indicates that a person’s adherence to individual freedom does not have much to do with whether or not they are also alienated. Seemingly, these are simply different things. Also, since none of the hedonism values loaded on either of the individualism factors and vice-versa, I believe we can conclude that Hypothesis 3 was confirmed and hedonism is separate from individualism, of both types we found here. Concerning Hypothesis 4, there are reasons to be more cautious in our conclusions. Although the two main achievement items only loaded on their own factor, the question measuring the importance of individual independence did so as well. Clearly, individual independence seems tangled up with issues of achievement rather than hedonism. However, this issue seems worth looking further into.

Finally, and most importantly, these results taken together indicate some confirmation of Hypothesis 5: there do indeed seem to be internally different dimensions of normative individualism. Just because one values individual freedom from others and in one’s actions (Type I Individualism) does not mean that one also values the more mental and internal kind of freedom we also found evidence of (Type II Individualism), and vice-versa. It is worth noting that I did not just find any kind of dimensionality here but indeed indications of a dimensionality along lines that make theoretical sense, given the framework I discussed earlier, according to which ideals of freedom can vary both according to the area and the obstacle they specify.

The Swedish case

I have also included a second factor analysis based on Swedish data from World Values Surveys in 1990. Apart from the fact that this allows me to test my hypotheses on another sample (and a substantially even more interesting one for Scandinavian readers), this second case also includes quite

different measures of individualism. Nevertheless, the results of this study support the ones from the first, which suggests the results may actually be part of a larger trend and worth investigating further.

Table 2 : Individualism and Egoism

Data source: World Values Survey, Sweden, 1995

	<i>Type I</i>	<i>The Justifiability</i>	<i>Achievement</i>	<i>Imagination</i>	<i>Tolerance</i>
	<i>Individualism</i>	<i>of Self-interest</i>	<i>Values</i>		
JUSTIF:DIVORCE	,821				
JUSTIF:ABORTION	,795				
JUSTIF:HOMOSEXUALITY	,712				
JUSTIF:EUTHANASIA	,542				-,317
JUSTIF:PROSTITUTION	,444	,395			
CHILD.QUAL: INDEPENDENCE	,367				
JUSTIF.AVOID FARE ON PUBLIC TRANSPORT		,723			
JUSTIF:CHEATING TAXES		,723			
JUSTIF:CLAIM		,601			
GOVERNMENT.BENEFITS					
JUSTIF:ACCEPT BRIBE		,527			
CHILD.QUAL: DETERMINATION, PERSISTENCE			,891		
CHILD.QUAL: FEEL. OF RESPONSIBILITY				-,697	
CHILD.QUAL: IMAGINATION			-,373	,520	
CHILD.QUAL: TOLERANCE & RESPECT					,842

Extraction Method: Principal Component Analysis. Rotation Method: Varimax with Kaiser Normalization. Rotation converged in 8 iterations. Factor loadings under 0.3 have been suppressed. The questions here are either "How justifiable do you find...?" on a 1-9 point scale; and "Pick a child quality from the list that you find is very important" (this is a dummy variable: mentioned or not mentioned).

I suggest the first factor, which explains almost 20,5% of the variance, deals with liberty of the external and action-oriented kind that we found in the first factor also in the previous study (*Type I Individualism*). However, since we are here dealing with broader measures, this factor is more complex and harder to interpret. In fact, it might at first glance seem as if we are seeing a dimension of conservatism vs. liberalism or perhaps even religious morality vs. secularized morality, rather than a

dimension concerning individual liberty. This is because the highest loading items here are the justifiability of divorce (0,821), abortion (0,795) and homosexuality (0,712). However, do not forget that we also find the importance of raising a child to have the quality of independence.³⁵ That this variable loads together with homosexuality and abortion is interesting; and suggests that this factor has got something to do with how much one values individual independence after all. My suggestion is that, in the Swedish case at least (knowing that Sweden is a secularized country and known for its liberal attitudes in these matters), this factor does indeed deal with how much a person values the freedom to be able to live as one pleases as long as one do not hurt anyone else. This is also indicated by the fact that the justifiability of tax cheating or bribery, that do indeed involve other people, do not load heavily on this factor at all.

The second factor, explaining an additional 11,89% of the variance, seems to measure another type of 'freedom'; a disillusioned or egoistic freedom to put it poignantly. Here, we find items that measure the justifiability of doing whatever you want when it *does* affect others negatively. I suggest we call this factor *The Justifiability of Self-Interest*, since the items here clearly deal with prioritizing one's own good over that of others. Note, however, that the justifiability of prostitution has a medium loading on this factor too, and not only on the first factor together with issues of individual liberty. Perhaps this suggests that, at least in Sweden (given its rather strict legislation against prostitution), condoning prostitution is connected to condoning self-interest. It might be of interest to follow up on this issue, and compare with data from other countries.

The remaining factors only explain an additional 7,8%; 7,6% and less than 7,3% respectively of the total variance. It is questionable whether we should interpret them at all, since there are only two variables on each of them with more than medium factor loadings.³⁶ However, we can note that the typical achievement-values of determination and perseverance yet again load on their own factor; they are clearly separate both from liberty-oriented values and from valuing tolerance and imagination. This suggests, yet again, that valuing achievement and success is a separate thing from valuing individual liberty; a person can attribute great importance to one of them and not the other.

³⁵ This item loads considerable lower but still high (0,367); however we may expect this number to be deflated by the fact that child independence is measured as a dichotomous variable; so in fact, we can expect the real factor loading to be even higher.

³⁶ The recommended cut-off point here is held to be three; i.e. if a factor has less than three variables with high loadings, it does not make much sense to interpret it substantially, Kim, Nie and Verba: *Factor Analysis, Statistical Methods and Practical Issues*, 1977, p.?

To summarize, I believe this second study affirms Hypothesis 1, i.e. that individualists do not necessarily condone the free pursuit of self-interest when it comes at the expense of others. Also, we find some but rather weak evidence in favour of Hypothesis 4, i.e. that just because one values individual liberty one does not necessarily value achievement and getting ahead in life.

Two dimensions of individualism

In what follows, I shall focus on what was explored in relation the the fifth and perhaps most interesting hypothesis, namely the dimensionality within individualism. What is hidden under the vague names of Type I and Type II Individualism?

Type I Individualism: the Pippi Longstocking Factor

As I have already touched upon earlier, ideals of individual independence are often understood as a *lack of* ideals. This seems to be particularly true for the ideal I have called *Type I Individualism*, valuing freedom from other people in doing what you want.

However, in both studies, the variables that load heavily on this dimension do not tell us a story of a ‘negative’ ideal that only asks for certain constraints to be removed. It is just as much an ideal concerning what it is that one must be free from something *to do*, and this something is to take action in one’s life.

I believe we can characterize this ideal as the Pippi Longstocking dimension of individualism. Pippi sleeps with her feet on the pillow, refuses to go to school and ‘medicates’ herself and her neighborhood children with imaginary pills that she believes will *prevent* children from growing up and never having fun anymore. As many have argued, Pippi displays a specific ideal concerning what *is* a virtuous life, and both her critics and defenders seem to agree that the core of Pippi’s ideal is to be free to follow one’s impulses instead of having to conform to what others, especially authorities of different kinds, tell you to do.³⁷

Pippi wages war on the specific idea that children need to be pruned and disciplined to curb their own will, that their imagination and innate instincts needs to be disciplined by rules. Considerable part of her outlook on life consists of preserving her authenticity, the freedom to do what she really *wants* instead of what the rest of the world, and in particular the grown-ups, tell her to do. Also, the kind of freedom she represents is mostly oriented towards doing, as opposed to thinking, what she

³⁷ For a discussion, see for example Paul Binding, "Long Live Pippi Longstocking: The Girl with Red Plaits Is Back," *The Independent*, 26 August 2007.

wants. Thus, I believe Pippi is a good representative of the ideal of external freedom of action – of individualists who value being able to act un-restrained by other people.

This ideal of active other-oriented individualism is not only to refuse to take orders from others but also to refuse passivity, to stand up where others crouch, to act. It is thus important to see that the ultimate hero representing this type of individualistic virtue is not only an individual who defies anyone who tries to constrain him, but also a person who is free to do what he wants; to change his surroundings, master the nature around him, get on in life and simply *get things done*. Instead of Pippi, the representatives of this dimensions may also be the settler, the cowboy, the Viking, or even Nietzsche's 'Übermensch' – all of them are not only un-constrained by others, but un-constrained by others in their *actions*.

Type II Individualism: the Lisa Simpson Factor

The second type of individualism we found in the Dutch study was more oriented towards internal, mental freedom in comparison with the 'Pippi-dimension'. I believe this makes theoretical sense. The ideal of being autonomous and self-directed in one's thoughts is different from that of showing originality and freedom in one's actions.

Historically, these two kinds of virtues have been extolled by different thinkers. At times at least, John Stuart Mill and Jean-Jacques Rousseau approved of the former but not of the latter. For Mill, it was of little value to be free to go to a boxing game if one wanted to – what mattered much more to him was being free in the sense of living as a self-directed person, one who makes up his own mind about his preferences without following the crowd, without compromising his originality. Likewise, and contrary to a common misperception, Rousseau (just as Immanuel Kant) emphasized that the most valuable freedom man could have consisted not of being unconstrained by others in following his own instincts; but rather in mastering his own instincts and living according to moral principles he has chosen autonomously. He points out that "la fureur de se distinguer", to show originality at any cost, paradoxically enough makes you very dependent on others. What matters instead is to think your own thoughts, to form them in an autonomous manner.³⁸

³⁸ One of the reasons I believe Mill does not demand the same amount of external freedom in actions as he does in thought is that he is very much against the cult of assertive and powerful men who take power by force and force others to obey him. Those few dissenters who are the 'salt of the earth' that he praises are not made up of an assertive minority of super-humans but rather a minority of anti-conformist thinkers, who are free to cultivate their own character, their own unique personality, John Stuart Mill, *On Liberty and Considerations on Representative Government* (Oxford: Blackwell,

A slightly different version of this ideal consists in what has been called anti-conformism. Society, anti-conformists such as Henry David Thoreau claim, "is everywhere in conspiracy against the manhood of everyone of its members". John Stuart Mill also argues in typically anti-conformist terms when he says that enemies of free thought primarily consist of the shackles of public opinion. If we are not original but merely follow the opinions of the crowd, we are not humans but cattle, Mill disdainfully concludes. For him, those few who dare hold original opinions are "the salt of the earth". Each human being, Mill seems to assume, has a unique personality; and thus it makes sense to underline the need for each to cultivate what makes him special and separate from the rest: his 'individuality'.³⁹ Note that these thinkers are not saying that the main reason we must fight political correctness, tradition, moral codes and the prevailing cultural consensus are that they physically prevent us from doing this or that. Rather, the biggest threat to individual freedom, according to them, comes from the fact that society colonizes our minds with *thoughts* and *desires* that, if we reflected upon it and asked ourselves truthfully we would find out, are not really ours. "Imitation", says Thoreau, "is suicide".⁴⁰

A contemporary representative of this kind of individualism is Lisa Simpson. Contrary to Pippi Longstocking, she is the very opposite of a popular girl. She is a precocious nerd and a teacher's pet, who refuses to compromise her ideas and thus often gets isolated from her peers. In fact, she is the favorite character of the creators of Simpson. This is because Lisa, as they say, epitomizes "idealism and stubbornness" at the same time.⁴¹ Whereas her brother Bart simply rebels against any authority, Lisa struggles for the freedom of having her own original tastes and hold opinions that are unaffected by the mediocre majority of Springfield.

Summary

In this paper, I have explored what I claim is a neglected yet highly important kind of individualism in public opinion. This individualism, I have argued, consists of the idea that individual liberty is inherently valuable, and that exercising individual liberty is a virtue, something to be strived for.

1946), Ch.III. Beckman, "Personal Independence and Social Justice: Contradictions of Liberal Virtues," 76. Rousseau, ref. missing!

³⁹ Mill, *On Liberty*, 1946: p.?

⁴⁰ Henry David Thoreau, *Walden, or Life in the Woods; on the Duty of Civil Disobedience* (New York: Collier Books, 1986).page?

⁴¹ ref!

The discussion of previous research boiled down to four hypotheses, concerning the relationship between valuing individual liberty and the pursuit of self-interest, alienation, hedonism and achievement-values. I suggested that previous research has been wrong in assuming, more or less explicitly, that there is an inherent link between individualism on the one hand and these concepts on the other. Finally, I also hypothesized that there would be several types of individualisms. This is because, at least theoretically, individual freedom can vary depending on what one values freedom *from* and what one wants freedom *to* do and thus it should be possible for ideals concerning individual freedom to emphasize different kinds of constraints as well as different kinds of areas of freedom.

Several of the hypotheses were at least partly confirmed by two empirical studies, one on Dutch and the other on Swedish data. Neither of them showed an inherent relationship between hedonism and individualism. There was also some confirmation of my suggestion that individualists do not necessarily condone free riding and pure selfishness, and that individualism is a different thing in people's minds than achievement values and alienation.

Finally, and most interestingly, the first study indicated the existence of two types of individualistic ideals. One of them, which I call the *Pippi Longstocking Factor*, emphasized other-oriented freedom of action. The other, which I labeled the *Lisa Simpson Factor*, focused more on inner-oriented freedom of thought.

The reason I call the above ideals conceptions of individualisms is simply, to repeat, that they both emphasize the inherent value of individual freedom. Yet, they also differ depending on what area of freedom they stress and from whom. The questions they provide answers to are, in that sense, rather different. Supporters of the Pippi Longstocking Factor ask: "Am I free to act as I please or are other people holding me back?". Supporters of the Lisa Simpson Factor ask: "Am I free to think for myself? What do *I*, really, want?".

To some extent, I believe both ideals are present in our contemporary culture. However, there may also be a third and a fourth dimension of individualism that we can only discover using different questions. Also, it is of great interest to know which groups (women vs. men, younger vs. older generations etc.) subscribe to which individualistic ideals. These and other questions will be investigated in my dissertation. What I have done in this paper is to provide some preliminary evidence in favor of my hypotheses, showing that it is indeed fruitful to approach individualism as a set of ideals concerning individual independence.

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