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⬣ ## Research

▲ ## Experiences & Tools

Proactive personality, Social well-being and civic participation in emerging adulthood

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♟ *ABSTRACT*. La fase dell'adultità emergente viene definita come una nuova fase di vita che va dalla fine dell'adolescenza all'inizio dell'età adulta (Arnett, 2004). Essa è considerata, dalla ricerca evolutiva, una fase di vita critica, i cui esiti positivi sono legati alla presenza di risorse quali il capitale sociale e la partecipazione civica (Masten et al., 2004; Hawkins et al., 2009). Lo studio ha analizzato il ruolo della personalità proattiva, una disposizione stabile verso un intervento agentico nell'ambiente e la perseveranza fino a che l'individuo non ha raggiunto cambiamenti significativi su due dimensioni dello sviluppo positivo, il Benessere sociale e la partecipazione civica nella fase dell'adultità emergente. 388 studenti del Campus universitario di Rimini (età media = 20.08; DS = 1.72, range 18-31; 19% maschi e 81% femmine) hanno preso parte allo studio. Essi hanno compilato tre questionari self-report, la Scala sulla Personalità Proattiva (Bateman & Crant, 1993), il Questionario sulla Partecipazione Civica (Albanesi et al., 2007), il Questionario sul Benessere Sociale (Keyes, 1998). I modelli di Regressione Gerarchica hanno evidenziato che le due componenti della personalità proattiva, la persistenza proattiva di fronte agli ostacoli e l'agenticità costruttiva ambientale costituiscono i più importanti predittori del Benessere sociale globale e dell'Integrazione sociale e Contributo sociale come suoi sotto-componenti. Esse inoltre danno un importante contributo alla partecipazione civica dopo aver controllato le variabili età, genere e corso di laurea.

♟ *SUMMARY. The phase of emerging adulthood is defined as a new life stage from late teens to early adulthood (Arnett, 2004). It is considered, by developmental research, a critical life-phase, whose positive outcome is related to the presence of resources such as social capital, civic engagement and civic participation (Masten et al., 2004; Hawkins et al., 2009). The study has analyzed the role of proactive personality, a stable disposition toward an agentic intervention in the environment and persevere until the individual is able bring about meaningful change, on two facets of positive development, namely Social well-being and civic participation in the stage of emerging adulthood. 388 undergraduates of University Campus of Rimini (mean age = 20.08; SD = 1.72, range 18-31; 19% males and 81% females) participated in the study. They filled in three self-report questionnaire, the Proactive Personality Scale (Bateman & Crant, 1993), the Civic Participation Questionnaire (Albanesi et al., 2007), the Social Well-being Questionnaire (Keyes, 1998). We found positive correlations between proactive personality, civic engagement and Social well-being. Hierarchical regression models highlighted that the two dimensions of proactive personality, proactive persistence in front of obstacles and proactive constructive environmental agency constitute the most important predictors of overall Social well-being, Social integration, Social contribution as its sub-components. They also give an important contribution to civic engagement after controlling for structural variables age, gender and degree course.*

Keywords: *Emerging adulthood; Proactive personality; Social well-being; Civic participation*

INTRODUCTION

The phase of emerging adulthood and its central role for positive development in the life course

The developmental period between adolescence and adulthood, that is called emerging adulthood, is now recognized as a distinct developmental stage in the industrialized countries (Arnett, 2004), lasting from the late teens through the mid-to late twenties. This period, as suggested by Arnett, is not simply an "extended adolescence", because it is much different due to the extended freedom of the emerging adults to explore the world. Nor, it is really "young adulthood", because people in this stage of life have not made the transitions historically associated with adult status (e.g. marriage or stable cohabiting, parenthood).

Emerging adulthood is characterized by five main features: identity exploration; instability; self-focus; perception of "feeling in between" (neither adolescents, nor adults); possibility (opportunity to transform their lives). As stated by Arnett (2004), the period of emerging adulthood extends to this phase of life the processes of identity exploration that were previously limited to adolescence. Thus, the three main features of adulthood, accept responsibility, make independent decisions and become financially independent are not achieved at the same time, instead are "gradual, incremental, rather than all in once" (p. 15) due to the inner instability of this life period and the need to acquire a stable sense of identity through exploration of different opportunities and possibilities (Crocetti, Rubini & Meeus, 2008). Tanner & Arnett (2009) suggest that emerging adulthood is not only a distinct, but also a critical juncture in human life development. They introduce the concept of recentering as primary psychosocial task of emerging adulthood. It assumes the interdependence of development, and considers the individual-in context as an unit that evolves across time. Recentering comprises the shift toward relationships where power is shared rather than imposed or controlled by parents and the exploration of new roles and commitments. This new and crucial life phase of human development requests, for these reasons, special attention for its psychosocial outcomes. It also raises the question of how to identify indexes or criteria for its positive development and positive outcome.

The concept of positive development in emerging adulthood is examined and defined by several contemporary theoretical models that have taken into account the complex interaction between individual resources and characteristics of the social contexts. Life-course and life-span developmental theories highlight the dynamic interactions between the persons and their context that underpin positive development (Lerner, 2006). Thus, young people are influenced by events and roles that occur both concurrently and in earlier stages of development (Elder, Caspi, & Burton, 1988), including their functioning and satisfaction in social roles, their role transitions, and social networks.

Masten et al., (2004) sustained that the period of transition from adolescence to adulthood presents, in our contemporary society, both risk factors and opportunity factors. They highlighted in the construct of individual agency a set of resources and fundamental competencies for a positive transition toward adult roles. Among these competencies authors pose the future temporal orientation, problem solving, the ability to plan personal life objectives and civic engagement.

Kosterman et al. (2005) sustains that several indicators may be useful for describing positive behaviors in this phase of life: volunteerism, group involvement, neighborliness, interpersonal connection, constructive engagement, financial responsibility, honesty. Hawkins et al. (2009) have proposed a theoretical model that comprises five constructs: civic engagement and active responsibility (group participation, group donation, civic action); trust and tolerance of others; trust in authorities; social competences (responsibility, self-control, empathy), life satisfaction (for personal social life and for achievement/direction).

Civic engagement and social well-being: two facets of positive development in the stage of emerging adulthood

Flanagan (2004) argued that adolescence and young adulthood have long been considered the period in which individuals develop attitudes and habits of civic participation that last for their lifetime. Although civic engagement is considered a crucial component of positive development (see above), research find that adolescents and emerging adults are generally more politically disengaged than previous generations of citizens (Putnam, 1995). A study that has taken into account the generational differences in young adult's civic orientation has highlighted that the generation of "baby boomers", born in 1946-1961 possessed higher level of civic

engagement compared to the generation of "millennials" (born after 1982), especially in the area of political involvement, while the only exception at this trend was represented by the involvement in community service such as volunteering in the stage of late adolescence (Twenge, Campbell & Freeman, 2012). Another study (Barber & Torney-Purta, 2012) has shown that today's youngest generations are less interested in politics compared to previous one, but that, at the same time, they are attracted by voluntary associations and social movements.

Explanations for this lack of civic engagement especially for political questions are rooted into different theoretical perspectives: those that address explanations for civic engagement as related to behaviors and practices, those that address explanations as related to beliefs and communications and those that take into consideration the processes connected to identity formation that are specific of these developmental life-stages.

Smith (1999) found that close familial relationships early in life facilitate civic engagement for adolescents and emerging adults later on. Having also extensive role connections outside the family early on, result in greater political participation later. The lack of civic engagement in the stage of emerging adulthood for Fishman (2004) would be due to a lack of family, friendship and social connections that support and introduce involvement in the political system.

Arnett & Jensen (2002) sustained that several social contexts such as family and its political beliefs, society, with the growing presence of people from different backgrounds and the relevance of new digital technologies (and their opportunities for new friendships) all contribute to the formation of political knowledge and political participation. They also found that emerging adults are shifting their organization in values from a more collective-centered to a more individualistic-centered value organization. Also, emerging adults who are politically disengaged demonstrate the possession of high level of individualism and materialism. Kelly (2008) connected youth who believed they could trust in others and trust in society to those who tend to volunteer and participate in political activities. Snell (2010) examined political engagement among North American emerging adults aged 14 to 18, highlighting that individualized moral beliefs are a significant predictor of political engagement.

Crocetti et al., (2012; 2014) have investigated the relationships between identity style and civic engagement in adolescents. They found that adolescents in information-oriented identity style (characterized by seeking information

and actively exploration of identity alternatives) reported high level of civic engagement, compared to the adolescents that found themselves in normative-oriented style (adherence to standard and social values that derive from significant others) or in diffuse-avoidant identity style (procrastination and/or avoidance of identity issues).

An important question related to civic engagement is about gender differences. Several studies have indeed highlighted the existence of gender differences, especially for the political participation. Snell (2010), Cicognani et al., (2012) have shown that females resulted less involved in this type of civic participation. Coffè & Bolzendahl (2010) found that women are more likely to engage in activities such as signing petitions and donate money, while men are more likely to engage in political traditional participation (e.g. belong to political parties).

Another central dimensions of overall positive functioning is represented by Social well-being, that could be defined as one of the most important index on relational quality between individual and society (Albanesi et al., 2007; Zambianchi & Ricci Bitti, 2014). Social well-being is described also as part of the complex model of flourishing, or positive mental health (Keyes, 2007). Keyes (1998) maintains that Social well-being is a fundamental part of human functioning and consists of five dimensions that, together, indicate whether to and to what degree an individual is functioning well in his/her social life: *Social integration* (the evaluation of the quality of one's relationship to society and the community); *Social contribution* (the evaluation of one's value to society and the belief that one is a vital member of society); *Social coherence* (the perception of the quality, organization, and operation of the social world, including a concern for knowing about the world); *Social actualization* (the evaluation of the potential and the trajectory of society); *Social acceptance* (the construing of society through the character and qualities of other people as a generalized category). Cicognani, Albanesi & Berti (2001) noted that those who were committed to voluntary social work have higher levels of Social well-being than those who were not. Albanesi et al. (2007), in a study on a sample of adolescents, investigated the relationships between Sense of Community (the feeling of belonging to different kind of community such as formal and informal social organizations, town, neighborhood), civic engagement and Social well-being. Results have shown that involvement in formal groups is associated with increased civic involvement and increased Sense of Community. Furthermore, they highlighted that pro-social civic engagement positively predicts high rates of Social

well-being. Cicognani et al., (2008) analyzed the relationships between Social well-being, civic participation and Sense of Community in Italian, Iranian and American young people. They found that, as previously emerged from other studies (O' Toole et al., 2003), the involvement in political activities was low, and that this was true, in their study, especially for Italian young people. In contrast to this low level of political participation, a higher rate of involvement in other activities such as volunteering, sport, cultural, religious and recreational events was highlighted. Civic engagement proved to be a predictor of high level of perceived well-being among Italian young people. A study of Zambianchi & Ricci Bitti (2014) on the influence of perceived self-efficacy, emotional regulation, divergent problem-solving and proactive coping on Social well-being in the stage of emerging adulthood highlighted the role exerted by proactive coping (defined as the actualization of talents and potentials, Schwarzer & Taubert, 2002) on the level of perceived overall Social well-being. Another study (Zambianchi & Ricci Bitti, 2013) has shown significant gender differences for Social well-being, where females score higher than males on several sub-component of this construct and on overall score of well-being.

The advent of Second Modernity (or Post-Modernity society), that is characterized by a growing uncertainty about future and by processes of individualization of life-course requests, with growing relevance, the agentic intervention of individuals for shaping personal career, for giving a positive contribution to society and for high level of perceived Social well-being (Leccardi, 2009; Zambianchi, 2015). While the modern society (or First Modernity society) was characterized by clear roles and clear timing of development (e.g. The age for acquiring a stable job career; the age for being a parent), the Second Modernity or post-modern society leaves individuals the task of identifying suitable roles, social contexts and institutions for their fulfillment (Beck & Gernsheim, 2002). Thus, a stable personal disposition toward active and agentic intervention can help the emerging adults in achieving objectives and projects, and in giving a valuable contribution to the growth of the society.

The proactive personality

The proactive personality is defined by Bateman & Crant (1993) as a stable disposition toward proactive behaviors. According to Bateman & Crant conceptualization, people who are highly proactive are able to identify opportunities, take the initiative to modify the surrounding environment and persevere until they bring about meaningful change. They are able not only to transform the environment (eg. the workplace) but also to find new solutions to problems. Being proactive is defined also taking control to make things happen rather than watching things happen. The common core of proactivity concepts include the following aspects: action orientation – being active and self-starting activities instead of passively reacting to situations; change orientation–influencing and changing situations or procedures instead of waiting for changes to occur; the change is intended to be constructive and meaningful; future focus–proactivity, that refers to future opportunities and anticipated problems (Parker, Bindl & Strauss, 2010). Bateman & Crant (1993) constructed the Proactive Personality Scale to measure individual differences in the inclination to take action in order to change the environment. They demonstrate, in a study on university students, that this scale possesses a unidimensionality feature, with good internal and test-retest reliability. The unidimensionality of the scale is confirmed by Trifletti et al., (2009) in a Italian sample. Another concept, the Proactive Attitude, is introduced by Schwarzer, (1999) and denotes a personality characteristic which has implications for motivation and action. It represents a belief in the rich potential of changes that can be made to improve oneself and one's environment.

Research has demonstrated that the proactive personality influences positively the individual-environment interaction. This theoretical perspective (Magnusson & Endler, 1977; Terborg, 1981) focuses on the complex processes through which individuals select, interpret, and change the situations and the environments where they live. As stated by Elder jr. (1994), adopting a life-span perspective on human development, individual biography is shaped by a mutual interaction between individual characteristics (e.g. personality, resources) and the characteristics of the environment (e.g. constrains, opportunities, resources). Proactivity refers to the ability to select, create and influence the situations that individuals are experiencing. This active and complex proactive behavior improves the probability to realize own projects and desires.

A large amount of research on proactive personality as stable disposition has focused its attention on career development, work engagement and work organization. Kirman & Rosen (1999) showed that the positive effect of proactivity on job performance is not only on a single

individual, but can be extended to the level of the work team. The presence of proactive personalities is associated to several indicators of team performance, such as productivity and quality of customer service. In another study, Kim, Hon & Crant (2009) found that proactive personality uses creativity to shape its work environment, and this leads to greater satisfaction, together with the perception of being valued and contributing member of the organization. Other studies have examined the relevance of proactive dimensions for psychological well-being, social participation and other relevant positive outcomes. Hill, Sumner & Burrow (2014) in a sample of emerging adults and a sample of adults found that individuals that are proactively engaged reported greater well-being than those who were not. Greenglass & Fiskenbaum (2009) showed the role of proactive coping strategies for positive affect and well-being in a sample of undergraduates.

Although these important results, very little research has examined the role of proactive personality as stable inner disposition in life domains such as the quality of the relationships between individual and social context, his/her community, civic and political participation and engagement.

As stated by Bateman & Crant (1993), the proactive personality, through its ability to identify resources and identify precocious signs that can lead to favorable or unfavorable outcomes, can also modify actively the environment. Therefore it can be motivated to realizing itself by way of innovative, original and creative contributions in favor to society. The relationships between individual and social contexts could lead to a positive and enriching reciprocity when individuals are motivated and perceive themselves as agentic force of constructive change of the society, a hallmark of proactive personality.

For this reason, we could hypothesize that proactive individuals can be more involved in civic activities, or possess more favorable attitudes toward society as a whole or toward the surrounding social context where they live. A high level of proactivity disposition may be indeed relevant for the perception of a high self-efficacy (Bandura, 1997), that is a fundamental prerequisite for taking action in order to change those social situations that are evaluated as unsatisfactory or unjust. An active involvement in civic behaviors (such as volunteering participation) or the belief to give a valued contribution to the growth of the society may be facilitated through the possession of a stable disposition toward active and agentic interventions on the society itself, especially in time of rapid social change, when groups, institutions and referring norms and values became uncertain. At the same time, perceiving themselves as constructive, powerful force of change could lead to a better Social well-being, since it comprises components that request to take active actions, such as Social contribution and Social integration.

RESEARCH OBJECTIVES

The research had four fundamental aims:
– To evaluate the level of Social well-being, civic participation and proactive personality among the emerging adults;
– To evaluate the differences for gender and Degree Course on Social well-being, civic participation and proactive personality. Based on previous research (e.g. Albanesi, Zani & Cicognani, 2012) we could hypothesize that females are less involved in political-protest civic engagement and that females possess a higher level of Social well-being than males (e.g. Zambianchi & Ricci Bitti, 2013);
– To examine the correlations among Social well-being, civic engagement and proactive personality. It was hypothesized that proactive personality is positively correlated with Social well-being and civic participation in its two components;
– To evaluate the predictive power of proactive personality on Social well-being and civic participation, after controlling for age, gender and Degree Course. It was hypothesized that proactive personality gives a substantial contribution to them.

METHOD

Participants and procedures

The study was realized at University Campus of Rimini. A sample of 388 University undergraduates (mean age = 20.08; SD = 1.72, 19% males and 81% females) were recruited from four Degree Courses: Psychology (73 students, 19%), Economic Sciences (119 students, 31%), Pharmacy (67 students, 17%), Fashion (129 students, 33%). They were informed briefly of the objective of the study and its anonymity. Then, after their consent, they filled in the following self-report measures:
– Questionnaire on Social Well-being (SWB, Keyes, 1998; Cicognani et al., 2001). This questionnaire contains 33 items sand is composed of five dimensions: Social Integration

(the evaluation of the quality of one's relations with society and community, e.g. of item "My community is a source of comfort", Cronbach Alpha = .80); Social acceptance (the belief that others can be industrious, trust, and capable of kindness, e.g. of item "I think that people care about others' people problems", Cronbach Alpha = .83); Social contribution (the belief to be a vital member of society, with something of value to give to the world, e.g. of item: "I have something valuable to give to the world", Cronbach Alpha = .61); Social actualization (the evaluation of the potential and the trajectories of society, e.g. of item "I think that our society is a productive place for people to live in", Cronbach Alpha = .68); Social coherence (a concern for knowing about the world, e.g. of item "The world is too complex for me", with reverse code, Cronbach Alpha = .50). The Alpha value for overall SWB is .72.

– Questionnaire on Civic Engagement (Albanesi et al., 2007). This questionnaire is composed of 10 item and evaluated the level of engagement in activities in the previous year, such as political manifestations, protest parades, charity purchase, cultural events, local folk festival, strikes. The scale was a four-point Likert (1 = never; 4 = often). An exploratory factor analysis (EFA) was conducted on the scale, that evidenced a two factor solution: the first factor, that gathered items related to political-protest actions, was labeled "political-protest participation"; the second factor, that gathered items related to cultural activities, charity purchase and donations behaviors, was labeled "prosocial volunteering participation". The psychometric properties of the two dimensions was good: the first factor (political-protest participation) has Cronbach Alpha = .83, the second factor "prosocial volunteering participation" has Cronbach Alpha = .71.

– Questionnaire on Proactive Personality (short form) (Bateman & Crant, 1993, Trifletti et al., 2009). The questionnaire is composed of 10 items that evaluate how much individual considers him/herself as a powerful force for constructive change, is able to find a good opportunity long before others, and found exciting to see his/her ideas turn into reality. On the scale was conducted an exploratory factor analysis (EFA), that evidenced a two factor solution, contrary to the results obtained by Trifletti et al. (2009). The first factor gathered 7 items that are referred at the persistence and perseverance for realizing projects and ideas, and at the efforts to realize ideas and projects also when they encounter the opposition of the others. For this reason it was labeled "proactive persistence in front of obstacles" (with Cronbach Alpha = .81); the second factor, that gathered 3 items, was related to the ability of identifying opportunities before others and to the self-perception of being a powerful force of constructive change. For this reason it was labeled "proactive constructive environmental agency" (with Cronbach Alpha = .70).

Statistical plan

Analyses were calculated in four steps. In the first step, they were calculated means, standard deviations skewness and kurtosis of all the variables. In the second step, a correlation matrix (Spearmann R, due to the not Gaussian shape of the variable political participation) was calculated. In the third step, Manova models were run for the evaluation of group differences on Social well-being, civic and political participation and proactive personality. Subsequent Univariate Anova highlighted the specific difference in value. In the fourth step, hierarchical regression models were run in order to evaluate the predictive power of proactive personality on social well-being and its sub-components, political-protest and prosocial- civic participation, after controlling for age, gender and Degree course. Age was inserted as a continuous variable. All statistical analyses were performed with STATISTICA 7.0 (Statsoft. Inc). For hierarchical Regression models, four of them are shown fully with all steps and change in F and R^2 values. Four of them (those who present the lowest level of explained variance) are instead summarized with final Multiple R and F value.

RESULTS

Descriptive of the study variables

Table 1 shows that Social coherence and Social contribution possess the highest scores for Social well-being, while Social acceptance has the lowest one. Overall Social well-being shows medium-high score. Political participation has a very low score, while it is higher for prosocial volunteering participation. For proactive personality, the dimension of proactive persistence in front of obstacles shows the highest score, and proactive environmental agency the lowest.

Table 1 – Descriptive statistic among study variables

Variables	M	SD	Skewness	Kurtosis
Political participation	.50	.30	1.25	2.78
Civic participation	2.22	.70	.37	−.42
Social integration	4.26	.94	−.04	.14
Social contribution	4.46	.77	.06	−.001
Social acceptance	3.43	1.00	.08	.05
Social actualization	3.86	.91	−.08	.12
Social coherence	4.65	.70	.31	1.49
SWB global score	4.13	.59	.09	.65
Proactive persistence	3.83	.59	−.25	−.14
Proactive constructive environ. agency	3.11	.74	.15	−.36

Correlations among study variables

The Spearmann bivariate correlations show that proactive persistence in front of obstacles is positively correlated with civic and volunteering participation, Social integration, Social contribution, Social coherence and with overall SWB. Proactive environmental agency is positively correlated with political participation, civic and volunteering participation, Social integration, Social contribution and overall SWB. (see Table 2)

Differences for gender and Degree course for Social well-being, civic participation, proactive personality

The Manova showed significant differences for Degree Course on the two components of proactive personality (Wilk's Lambda = .94; F (6,752) = 3.62; $p<.001$. Proactive persistence in front of obstacles: F = 6.94, $p<.001$; proactive environmental agency: F = 3.39; $p<.01$). Psychology Degree course shows the lowest scores on both components; Fashion the highest. (see Figure 1 and Figure 2).

The Manova model showed that there are significant gender differences on the level of involvement in political-protest participation; males have higher scores than females (Wilk's lambda = .96; F (2,396) = 6.82; $p<.001$; Males: M = .59 (SD = .37) Females: M = .47 (SD =.27).

No significant values for gender and Degree Course were found for SWB ($p<.58$; $p<.24$). Neither for proactive personality gender was significant ($p<.07$). Degree Course resulted not significant also for civic participation (both components), $p<.83$.

The predictors of Social well-being, political and civic participation

The Hierarchical regression model that established overall SWB as dependent variable showed that, in the first step, any structural variable contributed significantly to the explained variance. When the two components of proactive personality were added to the equation, the Degree Course acquired significance for Beta value; proactive dimensions resulted both positive predictors of overall SWB, improving the fit of indexes R^2 and F value. (see Table 3)

For Social contribution in the first step age, gender and degree course entered into the model. Age and degree course resulted significant predictors, but contributing modestly

Table 2 – Bivariate Spearmann correlations between proactive personality, civic participation and social well-being

	Political part.	Pros. civic part.	Social integr.	Social contrib.	Social accep.	Social actualiz.	Social coher.	Overall SWB
Proactive persistence in front obstacles	.06	.14**	.21**	.35***	−.06	.07	.22**	.23**
Proactive constructive env. agency	.14**	.15**	.27**	.34***	−.01	.07	.12	.21**

**p<.01; ***p<.001.

Note. Political part. = Political participation; Prosc. civic part. = Prosc. civic participation; Social contrib. = Social contribution; Social accep. = Social acceptance; Social actualiz. = Social actualization; Social coher. = Social coherenc.

to the explained variance. When proactive personality was added to the equation, an important improvement of F value and R^2 was highlighted. Age and degree course maintained their significance (with a substantial improvement of Beta value for degree course), but the highest Beta values were offered by the two components of proactive personality, that resulted the most important positive predictors of this component of Social well-being. (see Table 4)

For Social integration, no structural variable resulted as significant predictor at the first step, result confirmed also by the not significant p value. After entering into the model the proactive personality dimensions, the overall goodness of indexes improved substantially. Degree course acquired a significant Beta value, while the proactive environmental agency resulted positively associated to Social integration, giving the most important contribution to the explained variance of the model. (see Table 5)

For Social coherence, age was the only structural variable turned out to be a significant predictor when inserted in the first block. After adding the proactive personality, age remained significant (improving its Beta value) and degree course acquired statistical significance. The personality dimension "proactive persistence in front of obstacles" resulted in a positive association to it, possessing the strongest Beta value and contributing substantially to the improvement of the explained variance. (see Table 6)

For Social acceptance, neither structural variables, nor proactive personality gave a significant contribution to the explained variance (Multiple R = .11, R^2 = .01; adj. R^2 = −.001; p = .49)

For Social actualization neither structural variables, nor proactive personality gave a significant contribution to

the explained variance (Multiple R = .12, R^2 = .01; adj. R^2 = .002; p = .33)

Political-protest participation highlighted, at the first step, gender as significant structural predictor. When proactive personality dimensions were added, gender remained substantially invariant, while proactive environmental agency was the other significant positive predictor of the model, contributing to the final explained variance (Multiple R = .21; R^2 = .04; adj. R^2 = .03; F (5,382) = 3.48; p<.01).

Civic and volunteering participation highlighted only a significant positive predictor, proactive environmental agency, while structural variables were not significant at the first and the second time of insertion. (Multiple R = .19; R^2 = .03; adj. R^2 = .02; F (5,382) = 2.54; p<.05)

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS

The study has evaluated the role of proactive personality on two facets of positive functioning in emerging adult, the perceived Social well-being and the civic participation.

Results confirm the main hypotheses that were posed: those emerging adults who possess a proactive personality tend to be more involved in civic engagement, both political-protest engagement and prosocial engagement and to perceive a higher level of overall Social well-being. These two components of positive functioning are positively correlated, as previously evidenced in the study of Zani et al., (2007).

Our study, as other previous studies, confirmed the crisis of civic engagement among the youngest generations in western society (Flanagan, 2004), especially for the political-protest actions (Albanesi et al., 2007; Crocetti et al., 2014; Jahromi,

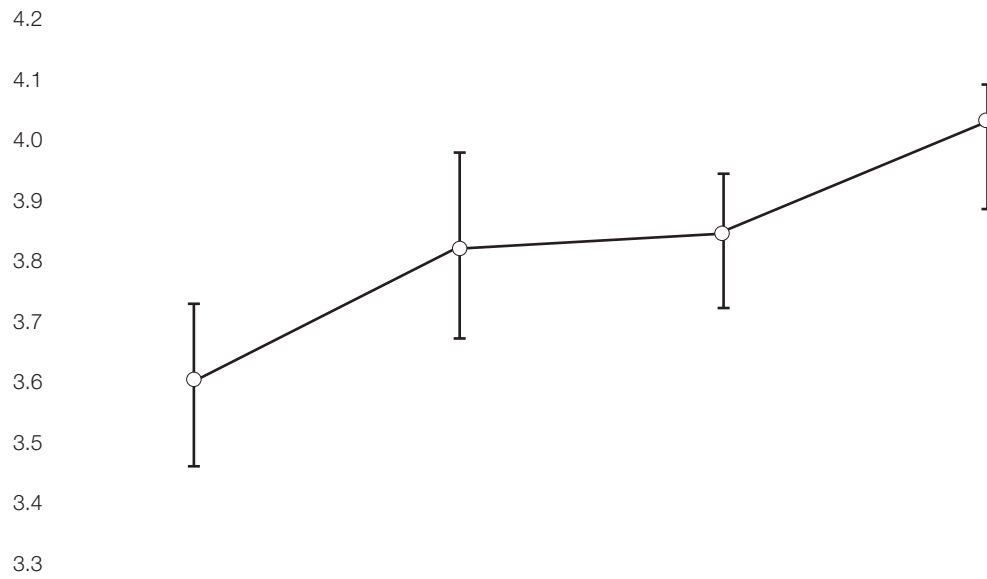**Figure 1** – Proactive persistance in front of obstacles

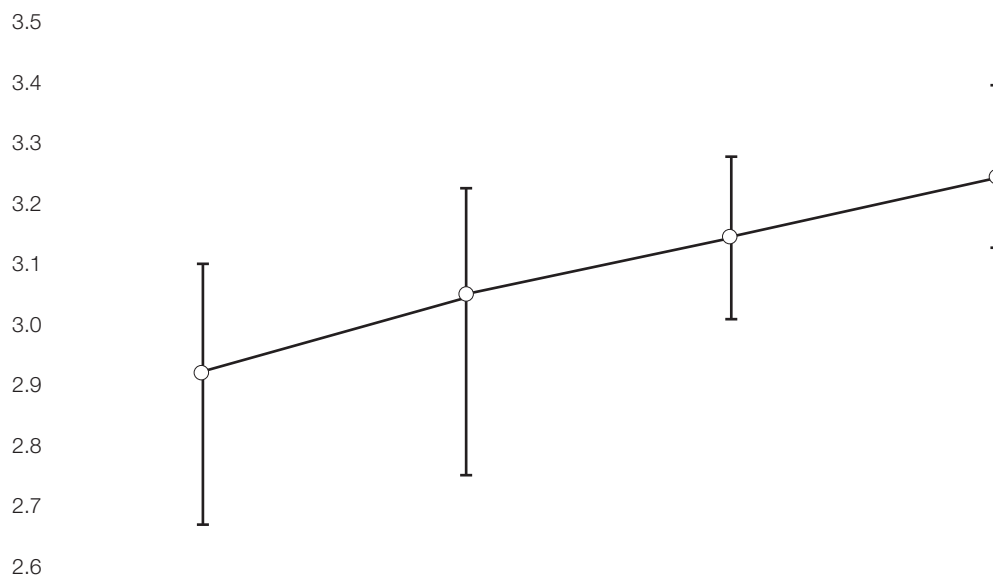**Figure 2** – Proactive constructive environmental agency and Degree course

Table 3 – Overall SWB as dependent variable

	Beta	B	R2 and F change
Step 1			
Age	.07	.02	
Gender	.06	.10	
Degree course	−.06	−.03	$R^2 = .01$; adj. $R^2 = .01$ $F (3,384) = 2.33$; $p<.07$
Step 2			
Age	.08	.02	
Gender	.06	.09	
Degree course	−.125**	−.06	
Proactive persistence in front of obstacles	.175***	.16	
Proactive environmental agency	.148**	.11	$R^2 = .09$; adj. $R^2 = .08$ $F (5,382) = 8.23$; $p<.0001$

**p<.01; ***p<.001.

Table 4 – Social contribution as dependent variable

	Beta	B	R^2 and F change
Step 1			
Age	.111*	.04	
Gender	.06	.12	
Degree course	−.102*	−.07	$R^2 = .03$; adj. $R^2 = .02$ $F (3,384) = 4.48$; $p<.01$
Step 2			
Age	.134*	.05	
Gender	.05	.10	
Degree course	−.194***	−.13	
Proactive persistence in front of obstacles	.279***	.36	
Proactive environmental agency	.225***	.23	$R^2 = .22$; adj. $R^2 = .21$ $F (5,382) = 22.47$; $p<.000001$

*p<.05; ***p<.001.

Table 5 – Social integration as dependent variable

	Beta	**B**	**R2 and F change**
Step 1			
Age	.003	.002	
Gender	.09	.21	
Degree course	−.04	−.03	$R^2 = .01$; adj. $R^2 = .003$ $F = (3,384) = 1.39$; $p<.24$
Step 2			
Age	.0003	.02	
Gender	.07	.09	
Degree course	−.105*	−.06	
Proactive persistence in front of obstacles	.07	.16	
Proactive environmental agency	.260***	.11	$R^2 = .10$; adj. $R^2 = .09$ $F = (5,382) = 8.91$; $p<.0001$

*p<.05; ***p<.001*

Table 6 – Social coherence as dependent variable

	Beta	**B**	**R2 and F change**
Step 1			
Age	.105*	.04	
Gender	.04	.08	
Degree course	−.05	−.03	$R^2 = .02$; adj. $R^2 = .01$ $F = (3,384) = 2.63$; $p<.05$
Step 2			
Age	.134**	.05	
Gender	.05	.09	
Degree course	−.116*	−.07	
Proactive persistence in front of obstacles	.313***	.36	
Proactive environmental agency	−.01	.06	$R^2 = .10$; adj. $R^2 = .09$ $F = (5,382) = 8.91$; $p<.0001$

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

Crocetti & Buchanan, 2012; EACEA, 2013). While indeed the level of civic engagement defined as volunteerism, donation, signing petitions is not particularly high but still indicating some active involvement, the level of political involvement is dramatically low. As stated by Flanagan (2007), the contemporary youngest cohorts are reluctant to be engaged in civic activities, and in particularly in political actions. This relevant question should be brought to attention, being this kind of involvement crucial for future citizenship and civic responsibility. The political protest engagement requests the mobilization of considerable resources (e.g. planning for the future, create a cohesive consensus) that are facilitated by the presence of an agentic disposition toward environmental change. At the same time, results suggest that lacking of self-efficacy and agency makes more difficult in young age to believe to give an original, creative and valued contribution to the contemporary society, characterized by increasing opacity of the future, crisis of traditional institutions, roles and certainty of life course biography (Leccardi, 2009). The results of the study confirm also the more engagement of males confronted with females in the specific area of political investment, as previous studies highlighted (e.g. Albanesi et al., 2012).

Emerging adults possess a medium level of overall Social well-being, similar to those reported in previous studies (Cicognani et al., 2008; Zambianchi & Ricci Bitti, 2013), while the highest scores about its specific components are found on Social coherence and Social contribution. Overall Social well-being is positively correlated with the two components of proactive personality, while only three its sub-components are correlated to them, namely Social integration, Social contribution and Social coherence. Proactive constructive environmental agency shows positive correlations with both forms of civic engagement, highlighting the relevance of the perception to be a powerful force of positive change for this kind of participation to the growth of the society.

In multiple regression models, three components of Social well-being, namely Social contribution, Social integration and Social coherence highlight the significant contribution given by the two components of proactive personality, the persistence in front of obstacles and the proactive constructive environmental agency. They give indeed the most relevant contribution to these dimensions of Social well-being, that request an agentic intervention of individuals. Being a powerful force of constructive change,

having the ability to envision a better opportunity before others may favor a positive integration to community, or may improve the actions and plans for realizing himself/herself in the society and for the growth of the society itself. Being persistent in dealing with obstacles and in sustaining own ideas also if they are in opposition to others, may improve the desire for knowing the society, learning for a better comprehension of culture diversity and transforming the problematic situations. The participants of the study are all University undergraduates, and the persistence in front of obstacles, the ability to perceive the challenges as opportunities rather than threatscan help them to persevere in the studies and can augment the desire of knowledge about the society.

An intriguing result concerns the significant differences for degree course on proactive personality. Moving from the interactionist perspective (Magnusson & Endler, 1977) it could be hypothesized that young people chose the University course (and perhaps others path to development) on the basis not only of potential labor market, or preference for specific cultural area, but also for the degree of perceived freedom of personal intervention and contribution that the specific Degree open to them. Future research, with broader samples, could disentangle this question.

Our results raise a matter. Being proactive personality a stable, inner disposition, how is it possible to intervene in order to improve civic participation of those young people that are low on this personality dimension?

As highlighted by several studies (Fishman, 2004; Cicognani et al., 2008; Albanesi et al., 2012), the role exerted by family education is crucial for civic participation: increasing the awareness of its influence on this relevant positive outcome may lead to improving the participation of the youngest generations, together with the reduction of gender inequalities for political participation. At the same time schools could contribute at improving the perceived self-efficacy of young people, through initiatives promoted during adolescence, a stage of life where individuals firstly explore with growing autonomy the social environment. These interventions could lead to increased level of personal empowerment (Zimmermann, 2000; Zani, 2012). This construct comprises three fundamental dimensions: control (the capacity to influence decisions), critical awareness (the comprehension of the way how operate the powered institutions and structures); participation (the tendency to be active in order to making things happen and for

social changing). This latter component is closely related to the construct of proactivity, but, at the same time, is more changeable through interventions, on the contrary of proactive personality, that is a stable inner disposition.

The study has several limits, that have to be taken into account. The first limit refers to the low reliability of the Social coherence dimension, that suggests caution to the conclusions that are drawn from results. The second limit concerns the unbalanced sample for gender; for this reason, studies with more balanced undergraduates groups will be necessary in order to draw more stringent conclusions about gender differences for Social well-being, civic participation and proactive personality. The third limit is its cross-sectional nature, that do not allows to drawn inferences about the causal direction of the connections between proactive personality, civic engagement and Social well-being. Only longitudinal future research could disentangle this question. Furthermore, the cross-sectional nature of this study and its variable-centered approach do not permit to identify specific patterns of functioning among the emerging adults. A person-centered approach (Magnusson & Endler, 1977) could better clarify which are the best configurations of psychosocial functioning for Social well-being and civic engagement in relation with the dimensions of proactive personality in this stage of life.

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