

A Quarterly Review of Social Reports and Research on Social Indicators, Social Trends, and the Quality-of-Life.  
News Included of Working Group 6 on Social Indicators and Social Reporting of the International Sociological Association.

## WOLFGANG GLATZER ON COMPARING THE QUALITY OF LIFE IN THE EUROPEAN UNION AND THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

In this paper, Wolfgang Glatzer boldly takes on the task of systematically comparing various composite/summary indices of the quality of life in Europe and the USA. He begins by noting that both Europe and the USA belong among the most wealthy regions in the contemporary world. Furthermore, both Europe and North America constitute post-industrialized knowledge societies with the USA as a consolidated state and Europe as an ensemble of around 30 national states engaged in state-building activities that will lead to a new type of union in the future. Both unions are big "societies" of some hundred million inhabitants, 300 Million in the US and 450 Million in the enlarged EU. But, Glatzer states, it is of general interest to have a comprehensive comparison of quality of life in the European Union and the United States.

Glatzer, Wolfgang, 2006, "Quality of Life in the European Union and the United States of America: Evidence from Comprehensive Indices." Paper presented at the 7<sup>th</sup> Conference of the International Society for Quality-of-Life Studies, Rhodes University, Grahamstown, South Africa, July 17-20, 2006. Email: [glatzer@soz.uni-frankfurt.de](mailto:glatzer@soz.uni-frankfurt.de)

After noting that the concept of quality of life has received attention in both regions as a societal goal

beginning in the sixties, Glatzer states that Europe has come to emphasize objective measures of the quality of life, whereas subjective measures are stressed in the United States. To accommodate both approaches to measurement, Glatzer uses the conceptual framework shown in Overview 1 (on pg 2).

### Comparisons Using Objective Indices

For comparisons of the EU nations and the USA based on objective measures, Glatzer uses three comprehensive, composite indices, namely, the Human Well-Being Index (HWI) developed by the United Nations Development Programme in Geneva, Switzerland (*Human Development Report 2005*), the Human Development Index (HDI) developed by Robert Prescott-Allen (2001), and the Weighted Index for Social Progress (WISP) developed by Richard Estes (1984, 1988). Many readers of *SINET* will be reasonably familiar with each of these composite indices.

As Glatzer notes, the HDI is a barebones composite index that focuses on three "key capabilities for human development" that are related to the quality of life. The goals related to these are:

- To lead a long and healthy life,
- To acquire knowledge,
- To have access to resources needed for a decent standard of living.

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**Editor' Note:** The 7th Conference of the International Society for Quality-of-Life Studies (ISQOLS) was held July 17-20, 2006 at Rhodes University, Grahamstown, South Africa with the theme 'Prospects for Quality of Life in the New Millennium'. See the webpage: [www.ru.ac.za/isqols2006](http://www.ru.ac.za/isqols2006). Working Group 06 of the International Sociological Association also held its sessions at the XVI International Sociological Association World Congress of Sociology in Durban, South Africa, July 23-29, 2006. Papers presented in the WG06 sessions are available as pdf files on the SINET webpage: <http://www.soc.duke.edu/resources/sinet/index.html>. As of the date of assembly of this issue of SINET, the Editor had not yet received reports from the secretariats of the ISQOLS conference. Thus, this issue contains only a report on the WG06 ISA Sessions in Durban. Reports from the ISQOLS Conference will appear in the November 2006 issue.

The main contents of this issue are three extended summaries/review essays of two papers presented at the ISQOLS Conference and one paper presented at the ISA World Congress. These papers should be of interest to many.

# SINET

Social Indicators Network News

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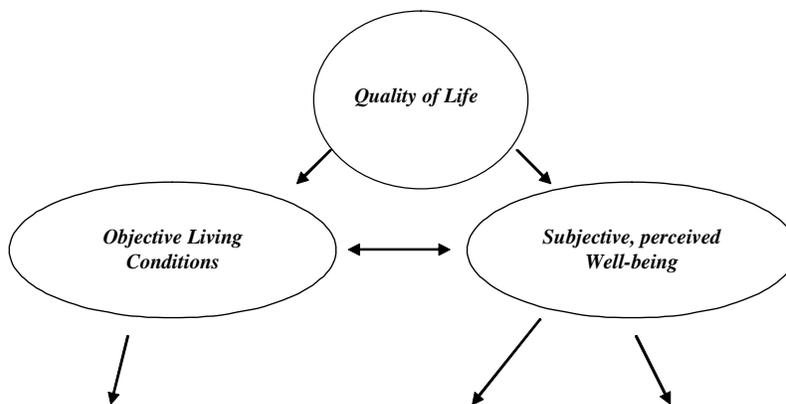
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**Overview 1: Quality of Life and Its Components**



<p><u>Domains:</u></p> <p>Personal conditions Family and household Neighbourhood Community Nation Supranational Unions Environmental conditions</p> <p><u>Social Problems:</u></p> <p>Poverty Social Exclusion</p>	<p><b>Positive Well-being</b></p> <p>↓ ↓</p> <p>Life satisfaction, Happiness</p>	<p><b>Negative Well-being</b></p> <p>↓ ↓</p> <p>Worries, Anxieties</p>
	<p><u>Satisfaction with life domains</u></p> <p>(marriage, family, work, leisure, income, security, environment, religion)</p>	
	<p><b>Future Expectations</b></p> <p>↓ ↓</p> <p>Optimism, Pessimism</p>	

Accordingly, the HDI is a summary measure of the average achievement in a country in three basic dimensions of human development that are operationalized as follows:

- A long and healthy life as measured by health expectancy at birth.
- Knowledge as measured by the adult literacy rate (with a two-thirds weight) and the combined primary, secondary and tertiary gross enrolment ratio (with a one-third weight).
- A decent standard of living as measured by GDP per capita.

To calculate the HDI, an index is developed for each dimension, which ranges from 0 (minimum value) to 100 (maximum value). The HDI then is computed as the simple average of the three index-values.

HDI-values are available for most of the European countries and the US. In his Overview 2, Glatzer reports the following results for the two areas:

**Overview 2: Human Development Index (HDI) for Europe and the United States 2003**

Higher or equal to the HDI-score for the US (= 0.944) are the following European countries

Norway (0.963)	Iceland (0.956)	Sweden (0.949)	Luxembourg (0.949)
Switzerland (0.947)	Ireland (0.946)	Belgium (0.945)	

Lower to the HDI-score for the US (= 0.944) are the following European countries

Netherlands (0.943)	Denmark (0.941)	Finland (0.941)	Un.Kingdom (0.939)
France (0.938)	Austria (0.936)	Italy (0.934)	Germany (0.930)
Spain (0.928)	Greece (0.912)	Portugal (0.904)	Slovenia (0.904)
Cyprus (0.891)	Czech Rep. (0.874)	Malta (0.867)	Hungary (0.862)
Poland (0.858)	Estonia (0.853)	Lithuania (0.852)	Slovakia (0.849)
Croatia (0.841)	Latvia (0.836)		

Source: Human Development Report 2005

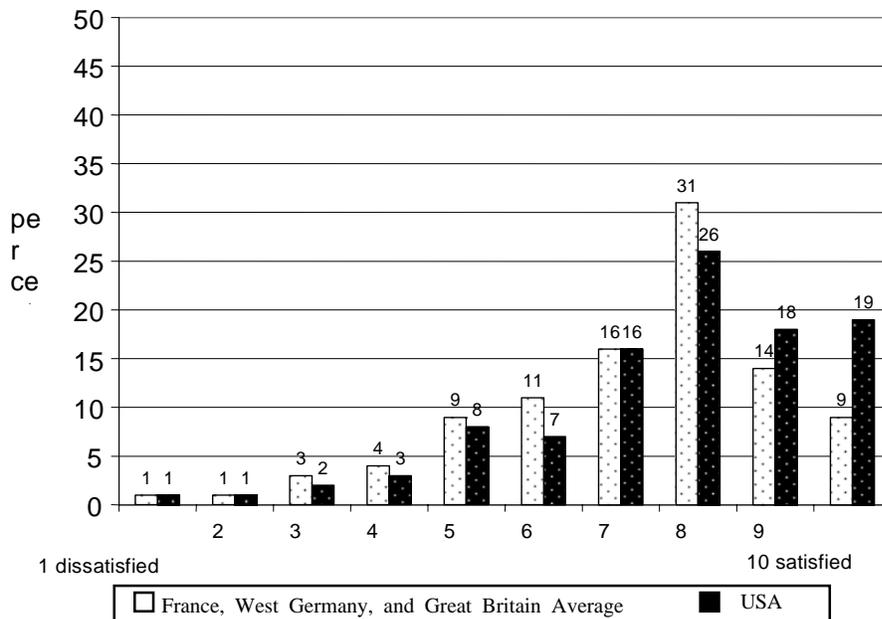
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In brief, using the HDI as a yardstick for comparisons, seven European countries rank higher than the USA, while 22 countries, including the larger nations of the United Kingdom, France, and Germany, rank lower. Using the HDI series back to 1975, however, Glatzer notes that only one European country, namely Denmark, ranked above the USA in 1975, whereas seven attain that position in 2003. In addition, he observes that there is no country in Europe which gives a share of its income to the poor (poorest 10%) as small as the US, and there is no country in Europe which allocates a higher income share to the top 10 % of the income distribution than the USA (it is 30 % of total income). But, he observes, some European countries are not very far from the USA on this measure. The USA also tends to have a lower unemployment rate than the larger European countries, a higher HIV/AIDS infection rate than all European countries, and a crime victimization that is middling in comparison to the European countries. In sum, Glatzer concludes that “[a]ltogether the United States and the European Union constitute large state unions with a higher HDI for the US. If a more comprehensive mixture of social traits and social characteristics is regarded some EU-countries lay in advance of the US.”

This conclusion is buttressed by Glatzer’s comparisons using the other two more comprehensive composite indices, the HWI and the WISP. Without reviewing these in as great detail, suffice it to say that comparisons using the HWI (year 2000) show some 16 European nations (all of the Northern and Central European nations plus the United Kingdom and Ireland) as ranking above the USA and 20 nations in Southern and Eastern Europe ranking lower. In addition, the WISP shows the USA in the year 2000 as ranking below averages for the North- and West-European nations but above nations in the South- and East-European areas. Averaging across all 36 European nations yields a WISP higher than that of the USA for 1970, 1980, and 2000, but tied at the same value in 1990.

**Overview 9: Overall Life Satisfaction (OLS) in France, Germany (West), Great Britain and US 1999/2000**



**Comparisons Using Subjective Indices**

Glatzer next turns to comparisons based on subjective indices of the quality of life – based on responses to questions about overall satisfaction with life and happiness in sample surveys. These data about life satisfaction allow international comparisons for the US and Europe based on the same scales for different points of time.

Overall, Glatzer finds that the US has a relatively high level of overall satisfaction with life, with only some of the smaller European countries having higher levels than the US: “From Malta to Belgium through Austria and the Netherlands, the satisfaction level is astonishingly high. All the bigger countries of Europe have a lower satisfaction level than the US: Germany, Great Britain, France, Italy, Spain, Slovenia, Czech Republic and Portugal have joined this club. And below this satisfaction level are the populations Eastern Europe from Poland though Hungary to Lithuania. Europe as whole has a lower satisfaction than the US.” And he finds evidence that these rankings are consistent for the past 50 years.

As one illustration of many comparisons in the paper, Glatzer’s Overview 9, based on data from the 1999/2000 World Values Survey is reproduced nearby. This chart shows responses to the overall life satisfaction

question on a 10-point scale – with the comparison based on an average of responses from France, West Germany, and Great Britain as compared to the US. Glatzer notes that this chart shows that the satisfaction with life advantage of the US responses is due to the higher density on the high end of the scale (values 9 and 10) and correspondingly somewhat lower densities in the mid-range. But, at the low end of the scale, the densities are approximately equal. Glatzer suggests that this “satisfaction gap” between the US and Europe may be accounted for by a relatively larger upper middle and upper class in the US as compared to European countries.

The paper also reviews other approaches to the measurement of subjective well-being, such as the Personal Well-Being Index developed by Bob Cummins and associates and the Affect Balance Scale of Norman Bradburn.

**Conclusions**

Glatzer concludes that:

- his findings about the quality of life in the EU and the US are multifaceted but not contradictory;
- both objective and subjective measures show no fundamental differences between the two state unions and thus both are part of one modernized world;
- based on objective indicators, the

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US leads in economic and technological terms and Europe is more ahead on societal terms; if the comparison is broadened from economic concerns to societal concerns, then the evaluation of Europe improves;

➤ based on subjective indicators, there is systematically a higher satisfaction level of the population in the US than in Europe; this is due to a higher percentage of Americans at the highest points on the satisfaction scale; on lower levels of the satisfaction scale, there is nearly no difference between the frequency distributions of American and European populations; and

➤ on composite objective indices, some European countries consistently are better off than the United States; they tend to be located in Northern and Central Europe.

### Comment

Wolfgang Glatzer's project on comparisons of the quality of life in the US and the EU is a useful contribution to the social indicators/quality-of-life research community. He clearly shows that some, usually smaller, relatively racially and ethnically homogeneous European countries have higher measures of both objective and subjective quality of life than the US.

But the US spans a continent and constitutes some 300 million residents who are very diverse racially, ethnically, and length of time in the US. Moreover, the 50 US states have large differences in social and economic development and, correspondingly, in levels of the quality of life. Glatzer notes in the paper that the differences among the European Union member states with respect to the quality of life are larger than the overall differences between the US and EU averages. Given the large differences among the 50 US states, this surely is true for the US as well. Unfortunately, most social indicators are not systematically available at the level of the states in the US. An exception to this might be that sufficient data on life expectancy, literacy and school enrolments, and GDP per capita for the estimation of the HDI for each of the 50 US states for decennial census years. But, to my knowledge, no researcher actually has undertaken the computation, estimation, and publication of the HDI at the level of the US states for decennial census years. This surely is a project that merits research attention. The point is that, for example, Denmark might be more properly compared with the US state of Minnesota, and Albania with Mississippi. Glatzer's paper is a step in the right

direction in setting up this research question.

Glatzer's paper also succeeds in identifying what he terms a "satisfaction gap" between the US and the larger European states, and he puts forth a hypothesis about how differential sizes of the upper and upper-middle classes might account for the gap. This hypothesis merits additional attention as well. Additional research also should be given to the question of why it evidently is difficult for larger states, such as France, Germany, and Great Britain and the US as a whole, to have average levels of overall life satisfaction and happiness as high as those of smaller states such as Denmark and The Netherlands. Is it a matter of economic development and equality? Or does the greater population diversity of the larger states have an influence as well?

~ Kenneth C. Land

### **Carnegie Mellon, University of Pittsburgh Receive \$15 Million From National Science Foundation to Establish Center Focused on Improving Americans' Quality of Life**

The NSF has issued a five-year, \$15 million grant to Carnegie Mellon University and the University of Pittsburgh to create an engineering research center that will focus on technologies to enable the elderly and disabled to live more independent and productive lives. Scientists at the Quality of Life Technology Engineering Research Center (QoLT ERC) will establish a base of knowledge that will support the creation of intelligent systems, such as a device a person could wear, a mobile system that can be ridden, or an environment furnished with devices to keep track of the health and activity levels of people living alone. The center will also try to improve current assistive technologies, such as wheelchairs, and could develop systems to prolong the age at which the elderly can safely drive. The activities of the center will expand

on recent research in the fields of robotics, machine perception, learning, and communication. The center will seek to develop the technologies to address the challenges of a population swelling with the ranks of the elderly and disabled. "The purpose of our new center is to foster independence and self-determination among older adults and people with disabilities," said Takeo Kanade, Carnegie Mellon professor of computer science and robotics and co-chair of the center. "If the technology we develop at the QoLT ERC can delay the need to send people from their homes to assisted-living or nursing facilities by even one month, we can save our nation \$1.2 billion annually. We need to apply the same ingenuity that we've used for military, space, and manufacturing applications to improve the human condition." The center will also be mindful of accessibility and user-acceptance issues, says Rory Cooper, professor of rehabilitation science and technology at the University of Pittsburgh and the center's other co-chair.

Lauren Hatcher demonstrates the GameCycle Exercise System, a modified, hand-pedaled ergometer that allows exercisers to play racing-style videogames during their workouts. The technology is one of many that Carnegie Mellon and Pitt hope to commercialize through the QoLT ERC.

# NEW ESTIMATES OF ECONOMIC WELL-BEING FOR SELECTED OECD COUNTRIES BY THE

## CENTER FOR THE STUDY OF LIVING STANDARDS

In the late- 1990s, Andrew Sharpe and his colleagues at The Center for the Study of Living Standards in Ottawa, Canada developed a new composite measure of well-being called the Index of Economic Well-being (IEWB). A key feature of this index was that it organized the economic well-being domain into four dimensions: consumption flows, stocks of wealth, equality, and economic security. This paper notes that this research program has greatly advanced, both conceptually and empirically, in the intervening years. This paper presents this new research on, and estimates of, the revised Index of Economic Well-being.

Osberg, Lars, Andrew Sharpe and Daniel Ershov, 2006, "New Estimates of the Index of Economic Well-Being for Selected OECD Countries." Paper presented at the 7th Conference of the International Society for Quality-of-Life Studies, Rhodes University, Grahamstown, South Africa, July 17-20, 2006. Email: csls@csls.ca

The paper has four main parts. The first part provides a discussion of the motivation for the development of the Index of Economic Well-being (IEWB) and the potential contributions of the Index to debates on the measurement of economic well-being. It also outlines the basic framework of the measures. The second part of the paper discusses major methodological changes incorporated into the revised index, namely the switch to a scaling methodology, and the move to equal weighting for the four domains. Part three, by far the longest, provides a detailed discussion of trends in the Index of Economic Well-being, and in the four domains and sub-components of the domains, for selected Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) countries over the last quarter century. The fourth part discusses briefly lessons learned from the authors' experience in the construction of the IEWB.

### Motivation and Framework

The Index of Economic Well-being

attempts to address the long-standing concern in the "social indicators" literature that there is more to "well-being" than economics. The authors are motivated by the idea that a better measure of "access to resources needed for a decent standard of living" is needed if both economic and "social" trends are to be combined into an index with larger ambitions. But they also argue that "society's well-being" is not a single, objective number (like the average altitude of a country). The authors' hypothesis is that indices of social well-being can best help individuals to come to reasonable answers about social choices if information is presented in a way that highlights the objective trends in major dimensions of well-being and thereby helps individuals to come to summative judgments – but also respects differences in values.

The logic of the author's identification of four components of well-being is that it recognizes both trends in average outcomes and in the diversity of outcomes, now and in the future, as Exhibit 1 reproduced nearby illustrates. In brief, this two-by-two table recognizes both the "typical" person as well as heterogeneity among individuals in the rows and recognizes both present and future states in the columns. The cells then identify the four components of the IEWB.

Each of the four dimensions of economic well-being comprises two to four specific indicators for a total of 14 indicators in the IEWB. These are shown in Exhibit 2 reproduced nearby.

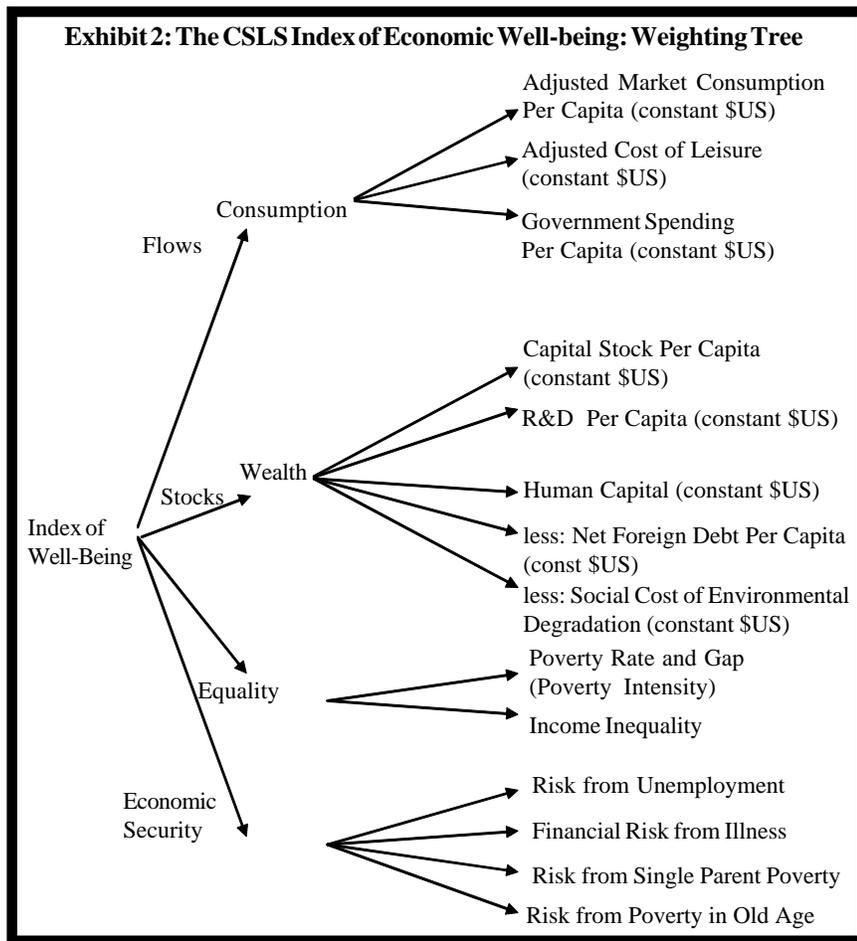
### Methodological Changes

The authors notes that an essential question that underlies discussions of index methodology is whether a single variable should be scaled, and if so, what is the meaning or interpretation of a scaled variable. It may be necessary to scale variables in a composite index, because raw data have significantly different ranges. In such cases, without scaling, composite indices will be biased towards variables with high ranges and small, but meaningful changes in a value may insignificantly affect the composite index. An unscaled aggregation of sub-indexes also has an implicit weighting scheme. When the variables are aggregated without scaling, higher implicit weights are given the variables that have a large range as their percentage increases are larger.

For this reason, in revising the IEWB, the authors employed the Linear Scaling Technique (LST). Readers of SINET may be familiar with the LST, as it is the method used by the United Nations Human Development Programme to construct the Human Development Index, and the HDI is well-known among social indicators/quality-of-life researchers. The key feature of the LST is that it standardizes the ranges of component indicators of a composite index. To do so, an estimate is made for the high and low values which represent the possible range of a variable for all time periods and for all countries, and denoted Min and Max, respectively. The actual range of values may also be used. The data are then scaled according to these values. For

**Exhibit 1 - Dimensions of Economic Well-Being or Command over Resources**

Concept	Present	Future
"Typical Citizen" or "Representative Agent"	Average Flow of Current Income	Aggregate Accumulation of Productive Stocks
Heterogeneity of Experiences of all Citizens	Distribution of Potential Consumption – Income Inequality and Poverty	Insecurity of Future Incomes



paper reports many comparisons and charts. Only a few highlights will be given here. Perhaps the most general of these is Chart 1, which gives the IEWB values for the year 2004. This chart shows that the country with the highest level of the IEWB in 2004 was Norway followed by Denmark. The United Kingdom was ranked the lowest with Australia, Spain, and the United States having Index values in the same range.

How do these selected OECD countries compare with respect to changes in the IEWB over the 25 years, 1980-2004? The answer is given in Chart 2 reproduced nearby. This chart shows that the IEWB grew for all countries during this period. Denmark experienced the most significant growth of 0.2105 percentage points, or 45.0 per cent. Several other countries show growth in the Index of 0.10 percentage points or more. The exceptions are Australia, the United Kingdom, Sweden, and The Netherlands. In the case of Sweden and The Netherlands, the Index already was at high levels in 1980, and these countries may have something of a “ceiling effect.”

Breaking the time period into decades, the authors note that, from 1980 to 1990, all countries but the UK experienced progress in their well-being. Particularly notable were Canada, Norway and Spain, which grew by over 20 per cent during the period. The index level of the United Kingdom, on the other hand, dropped by 8.2 per cent, or 0.0323 percentage points.

During the following period of 1990-2000, the authors indicate that several countries experienced impressive acceleration in the growth of their index levels. Specifically, the US moved from growth of 4.5 per cent over the 1980s, to growth of 25.8 per cent over the 1990s. As well, the UK moved from a declining level of well-being, to a significant increase of 19.6 per cent. Finland and Spain, however, moved the other way and experienced declines in their levels of well-being. From 2000 to 2004, all countries experienced positive growth in their levels of well-being. They were led by Finland, where the overall index grew by 20.1 per cent, 0.1055 percentage points.

The paper next explores variations among the countries in 2004 on the four major components of the IEWB. These comparisons show:

- the US has the highest total consumptions flows per capita with Finland having the least;
  - Germany and Denmark have the high-
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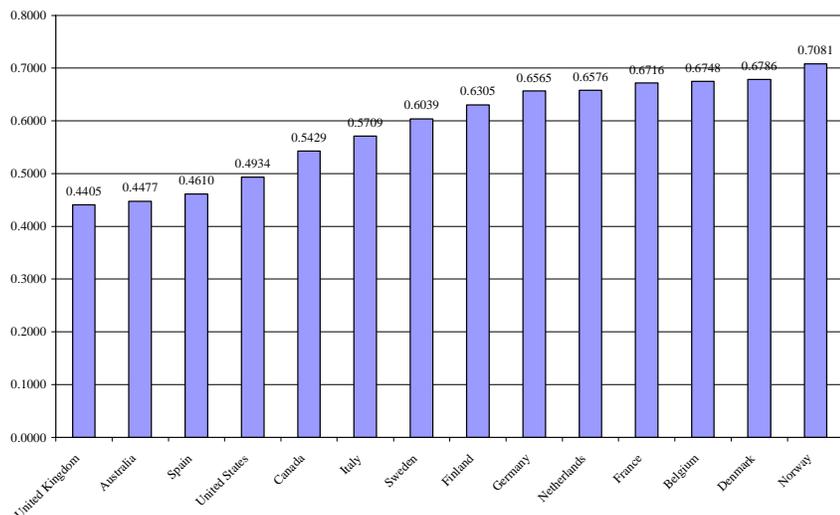
example, if a variable increase corresponds to an increase in overall welfare, the variable, VALUE, is scaled according to the formula:  $Value - \text{MinMax} - \text{Min}$ . But LST is not without its problems as well, and the paper contains a nice discussion of pros and cons of use of this technique.

The authors note that the initial version of the IEWB assigned unequal weights to the four major components of the Index, a decision that was criticized for having a bias against sustainability because of the low weight for the stocks of wealth. Accordingly, the second major change in methodology for the revised IEWB is that it employs equal weights for its four dimensions.

**Trends in the IEWB**

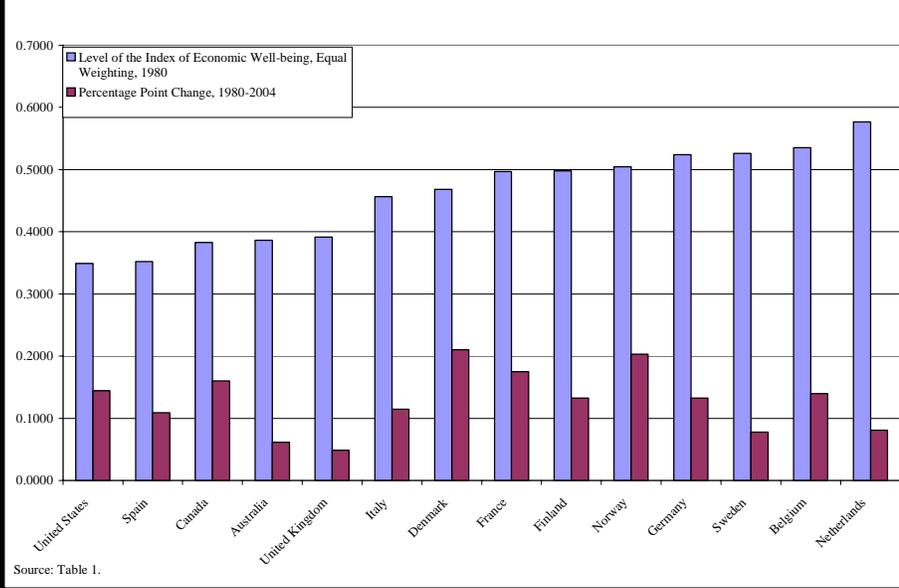
So what does the revised IEWB tell us about trends in economic well-being among the selected OECD countries compared for the years 1980-2004. The

Chart 1: Index of Economic Well-being, Equal Weighting, OECD, 2004



Source: Table 1

Chart 2: Growth in the Index of Economic Well-being, OECD, 1980-2004 (percentage points)



est per wealth with Spain and Australia the least;

➤ Finland has the highest Index of Equality and the US the lowest followed by two other English-speaking countries, Australia and the UK; and

➤ Denmark has the highest Index of Economic Security, the US the lowest followed by the UK and Australia.

The paper next describes and compares each of the 14 component indicators (see Exhibit 2) of each of these dimensions. These will not be described here.

### Lessons Learned

Clearly, the authors of the IEWB have undertaken an ambitious exercise in international comparisons. They indicate that three lessons have been learned from the work:

1) Composite indicators are useful heuristic devices that focus debate. They are

useful in focusing the attention of both research and policy communities, as well as the media and the general public, on a particular trend or variable that is driving the composite index. This attention can lead to actions, such as research aimed at understanding the trend identified, policy changes to rectify an unacceptable situation, or the allocation of resources to fill data gaps identified by the composite indicator.

2) Composite indicators may be sensitive to methodological choices. Since originators of indices can, in principle, choose the methodology that gives them the results they seek, a high degree of transparency in index con-

struction is required (straightforward methodologies are preferable a priori to complicated methodologies, everything else being equal). In addition, it is very important that composite index developers provide clear rationales for their choice of one methodology over competing methodologies.

3) Weighting schemes for composite indexes are very controversial. In the absence of a high level of consensus on a weighting scheme, the authors indicate that their experience suggests that the most effective and realistic manner to deal with this issue is to give equal weight to the main components of the composite index and to then to undertake sensitivity analysis to ascertain how sensitive the overall trends of the index are to a range of weights (for a systematic methodological analysis of weighting schemes for composite indices, see Hagerty and Land 2006). In some cases, the path of a composite index is robust to any set of weights, while in others the path varies significantly with the set of weights chosen.

### Comment

Andrew Sharpe and colleagues have done an excellent job in laying the groundwork for international comparisons of composite indices of economic well-being that are more comprehensive than the Gross Domestic Product. Can more be done? It seems to me that there are two possible ways in which this work could be further extended, which appear to work against each other.

One is that critics could find fault

with the use of the specific 14 component indicators and/or the four dimensions of economic well-being and seek to extend the Index to include other component indicators or dimensions. This, of course, requires the identification of additional components for which statistical data series are available for comparisons. What additional indicators and/or dimensions might be identified? This question is beyond the scope of this review. But it is possible that there are additional key aspects of economic well-being that should be added to the conceptual schemes of the CSLS group as laid out in Exhibits 1 and 2. Examples are access to capital (e.g., for purchases of housing) and the level of “trust,” “honesty,” and “fairness” of typical economic transactions in a society. Perhaps it would be good to hold focus group discussions in various countries in order to identify the key dimensions, and components thereof, of economic well-being from the point of view of the “typical citizen.” Then the CSLS analysts could determine the extent to which these are similar or different across national contexts.

A second way in which this work could be extended is to look beyond the 14 selected OECD countries towards a wider inclusion of countries. This, of course, could go well beyond the OECD to other nations such as recent additions to the European Union, Russia, China, India, and so forth. Again, however, the impulse to expand the set of nations compared quickly will run into data series limitations that likely would require a reduction in the 14 component indicators of the IEWB. Thus, one might anticipate the development of three versions of the IEWB – the “basic” Index as now constructed but extended to as many nations as possible, given the data requirements, an “expanded” version of the Index that includes possible additional indicators beyond the set of 14, and an “extended” version of the Index that slims down the set of 14 indicators (if necessary) in order to extend the list of countries compared.

~ Kenneth C. Land

### References

Hagerty, Michael R. and Kenneth C. Land, “Constructing Summary Indices of Quality of Life: A Model for the Effect of Heterogeneous Importance Weights,” *Sociological Methods and Research*, 36, forthcoming.

## “Gross National Happiness” Proposed As Substi- tute for GNP

The former Prime Minister and Foreign Minister of Bhutan, Lympo Jigmi Yoser Tinley, proposed “Gross National Happiness” as the measure of the country’s prosperity. He spoke in January, 2006, at the East-West Center, Honolulu, Hawaii, saying:

“GNH is a balanced and holistic approach to development. While conventional development models stress economic growth as the ultimate objective, the concept of GNH is...that true development of human society takes place when material and spiritual development occur side by side to complement and reinforce each other.”

According to Buddhist teaching, the ultimate purpose of life is inner happiness. This philosophy has been adopted by the Bhutan Parliament and, some 30 years ago the King of Bhutan declared the concept of GNH to be more important than the GNP.

To pursue the goal of happiness, public policies are being crafted following four “pillars” of GNH. These are:

- Sustainable and suitable socio-economic development.
- Conservation of environment.
- Preservation and promotion of culture.
- Promotion of good governance.

Measures should include social and economic contributions of households and families, free time and leisure. Indicators must not be biased toward consumption. Indicators should include conservation of social, environmental, and human factors.

~ Abbott L. Ferriss

## 2006 GENERAL SOCIAL SURVEY DATA AVAILABLE

The 2006 General Social Survey for the United States conducted by the National Opinion Research Center has been completed and will be archived in the Fall.

The topical modules are on

- 1) the quality of working life, replicating a module in 2002,
- 2) attitudes towards firearms,
- 3) shared capitalism, expanding on a module in 2002,
- 4) level of disability,
- 5) use of foreign languages,
- 6) mental health attitudes and experiences drawing on modules in the 1996-2000,
- 7) number of people known,
- 8) participation in congregations,
- 9) knowledge about and attitudes towards science,
- 10) religious trends, repeating a number of items from earlier GSSs, and
- 11) sexual behavior (continuing the series started in 1988).

The International Social Survey Program modules are on the role of government and work orientation. The role of government module builds on the ISSP studies on the same topic in 1985, 1990, and 1996 and it is the first ISSP topic to be fielded four times. As is usual, about two-thirds of the items are replications and one-third new content. Topics include social-welfare and

economic regulation, civil liberties, spending priorities, and political efficacy. The work

orientation module is the second replication with earlier rounds in 1989 and 1997. Besides the questions asked of all respondents there are special sections for the employed asking about their specific job and workplace and for the unemployed. In addition, there is another cross-national collaboration on the 2006 GSS. The International Mental Health Stigma Study will be conducted in the US and 15 other countries.

In addition to the continued support of the National Science Foundation (NSF) the 2004

GSS received funds from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, the National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health, the University of Maryland, the Templeton Foundation, the National Bureau for Economic Research, Rutgers University, the University of Iowa, and the National Institutes of Health.

The 1972-2006 GSS data be will available from 1) the Roper Center, Box 440, University of Connecticut, Storrs, CT, 06268. Phone (860) 486-4882 Fax: (860) 486-4882, EMAIL: [lois@ropercenter.uconn.edu](mailto:lois@ropercenter.uconn.edu) and 2) the Interuniversity Consortium for Political and Social Research (ICPSR), Box 1248, University of Michigan, Ann Arbor, MI, 48106. Phone (313) 763-5010. EMAIL: [netmail@icpsr.umich.edu](mailto:netmail@icpsr.umich.edu).

For other information contact Tom W. Smith, NORC, 1155 East 60th Street, Chicago, IL, 60637. EMAIL: [smitht@norc.uchicago.edu](mailto:smitht@norc.uchicago.edu).

## The 1<sup>st</sup> International Society for Child Indicators Conference

### *Child Indicators: Diverse Approaches to a Shared Goal*

June 26-28, 2007  
Chicago, Illinois

Organized by International Society for Child Indicators and hosted by the Chapin Hall Center for Children at the University of Chicago

#### **About ISCI**

The ultimate purpose of the International Society for Child Indicators (ISCI) is to contribute to improving the well-being of the world's children. A specific goal of ISCI is, first, to develop a network dedicated to improving measures and data resources, rigorous analysis of the data, exploration of theoretical issues, presentation of information, and the dissemination of information about the status of children. A second goal is to enhance the capacity of the field, especially for countries that are in the initial stages of producing child well-being indicators. Third, we seek to identify and develop ways to facilitate the dissemination and application of indicators to policy and practice. For a full description, information and for joining ISCI please see

[www.childindicators.org](http://www.childindicators.org)

#### **Theme of the Conference**

The conference theme seeks to explore how child indicators can be used to improve the development and well-being of the world's children. The goal of the conference is to provide an opportunity for all participants to discuss relevant issues, make networks, share resources and collaborate in an effort to promote the well-being of all children using child indicators.

The conference is focused on the following sub-themes:

- Theory and conceptual frameworks of child indicators
- Measurement, data, and methods issues
- Child indicators as measures of present or future child well-being
- Dissemination of child indicators
- Advocacy using child indicators
- Policy development using child indicators
- Children's participation in the development and implementation of indicators
- Child indicators with cultural variations
- Child indicators across borders
- Information technology and child indicators

Focusing on the above mentioned sub-themes, the conference also seeks to highlight domains of child well-being, including the following:

- Economic well-being
- Education
- Psychological well-being
- Social behavior
- Physical health
- Safety
- Child welfare
- Civic life skills
- Time use and activities
- Vulnerable children

## Call For Papers Applied Research in Quality of Life The Official Journal of the International Society for Quality-of-Life Studies

The aim of this journal is to publish conceptual, methodological and empirical papers dealing with quality-of-life studies in the applied areas of the natural and social sciences. As the official journal of ISQOLS, it is designed to attract papers that have some direct implications for or impact on practical applications of research on the quality-of-life. We welcome papers crafted from inter-disciplinary, inter-professional and international perspectives. This research should guide decision making in a variety of professions, industries, nonprofit, and government sectors such as healthcare, travel and tourism, marketing, corporate management, community planning, social work, public administration, human resource management, among others. The goal is to help decision makers apply performance measures and outcome assessment techniques based on concepts such as well-being, human satisfaction, human development, happiness, wellness and quality of life. The Editorial Review Board is divided into specific sections indicating the broad scope of practice covered by the journal, and the section editors are distinguished scholars from many countries across the globe.

Authors interested in submitting manuscripts for publication should consult the website <http://ariq.edmgr.com>. Manuscripts should be directed to the relevant Section Editor of the Editorial Review Board. If an appropriate Section Editor can not be identified, direct the manuscript to the current Editor in Chief, Michalos.

## RUUT VEENHOVEN ON WHY SOCIOLOGISTS FAIL TO ACKNOWLEDGE HAPPINESS

Ruut Veenhoven is one of the world's leading authorities on studies of happiness. For years, he has studied this subject, and he founded and fosters the growth of the World Database of Happiness at Erasmus University in Rotterdam, The Netherlands: <http://worlddatabaseofhappiness.eur.nl>. In this paper, Veenhoven brings his expertise and knowledge of this subject to bear on the question of why sociologists cannot acknowledge several "remarkable findings" on happiness.

Veenhoven, Ruut, 2006, "UNSEEN HAPPINESS: Why sociologists fail to acknowledge findings on this matter." Paper presented at the 16th World Congress of Sociology Working Group 06 Social Indicators, Durban, South Africa, 23-29 July 2006. Email: [veenhoven@fsw.eur.nl](mailto:veenhoven@fsw.eur.nl)

### Remarkable Findings on Happiness

What are these remarkable findings? Several of them are familiar to members of ISQOLS and WG06 of the ISA. But they merit emphasis. The first is that *most people are happy in modern nations*. In the World Values Survey of 2000, the following question appeared:

All things considered, how satisfied are you with your life as-a-whole these days?

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10  
Dissatisfied Satisfied

Veenhoven finds that the average of this 10-point scale is above neutral in most present day nations. He notes that, of the 90 nations surveyed, only 18 have average scores of 5 or lower, while the average is 7 or higher in 26 nations.

Veenhoven's second finding is that *average happiness is rising over time*. Survey data since the 1970s in a number of nations show a slight upward trends in most cases. This finding holds true for both Western and non-Western nations. Moreover, since life expectancy has increased in many nations, recent generations have experienced an unprecedented rise in "happy life years."

Third, the rise in happiness has been accompanied by *a decline in inequality of happiness in populations of societies*, as measured by measures of dispersion of responses to survey questions on happiness; see Veenhoven's Figure 4 repro-

duced nearby. In part, this is due to the rising average happiness that concentrates responses at the upper end of the scale, and, in part, it is due to a reduction of unhappy responses.

Fourth, Veenhoven illustrates in his Figure 5 reproduced nearby that the average happiness level of nations is higher in nations that combine a good material standard of living with good governance, freedom, and a climate of tolerance. On the other hand, he cites prior studies that have found societal characteristics – income inequality and state welfare effort – that are unrelated to average happiness.

Fifth, at the level of individuals in modern affluent nations, Veenhoven notes that happiness depends far more on embedding in intimate networks and psychological/ personality characteristics than on income position.

### The Response in Sociology

What has been the reception of these findings in sociology? According to Veenhoven, there are good reasons to expect that these findings attract much attention in sociology:

➤ The subject was on the agenda of the 19th century founding fathers of sociology such as Auguste Comte and Herbert Spencer.

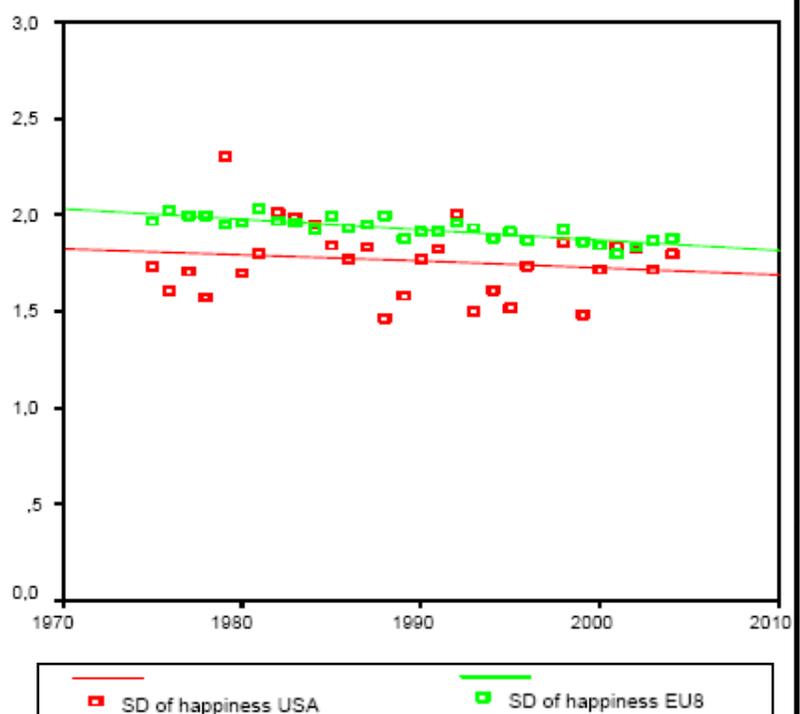
➤ These findings involve answers to long-standing questions in sociology. For example, the finding that most people are happy is indicative for the question of how livable modern society is, the finding that happiness is rising embodies an answer to the question of progress and the finding that happiness differs so much across kinds of societies is highly relevant in the debate of what a good society is like.

➤ And some of the findings are in flat contradiction with common beliefs. The finding that inequality of happiness has diminished during the last decades contradicts the common notion of 'new inequality' rising in modern societies. Likewise the finding that income inequality in nations is

(Continued on next page.)

Figure 4

Trend inequality of happiness in 8 EU nations and the USA, 1973-2003



(Continued from previous page.)

unrelated to average happiness contradicts the commonly held belief that socio-economic disparities hurt very much. The same is hold for the finding that income position within nations hardly affects happiness.

But the reality is quite different. Veenhoven documents that:

- The subject of happiness is typically absent in sociological textbooks.

- The subject of happiness is only rarely addressed in sociological journals.

- The subject of happiness is also marginal in sociological organizations such as the International Sociological Association.

- Still, the term 'quality-of-life' is not unknown in sociology. There are symposia under that name and research institutes. Yet subjective enjoyment of life is typically not at stake in these contexts, quality-of-life being typically conceived as the degree to which life meet a-priory standards of wellbeing.

- Sociology has a preoccupation with misery and inequality. Veenhoven cites an analysis of the sociological abstracts that finds an increasing use of negative words such as 'fear' and 'crime'.

### Why the Neglect?

Veenhoven cites three kinds of reasons for the neglect: pragmatic, ideological and theoretical:

- He enumerates several pragmatic reasons. First, sociologists are more interested in what people do than in how they feel. Their main objective is to explain social behavior and subjective wellbeing is at best a variable in that context. A related point is that sociology is about collectivities, while subjective wellbeing is an individual level concept. A further pragmatic reason is that sociologists earn their living dealing with social problems. So, if they look at subjective well being at all, they focus on ill being in the first place.

- As concerns ideological rea-

sons, many sociologists are committed to notions of objective wellbeing, such as social equality and social cohesion. They are therefore not eager to investigate how people actually feel in such conditions, and when they do they often ignore contradictory results. When people appear to feel subjectively good in conditions deemed to be objectively bad, this is easily disposed of as 'desirability bias' or 'false consciousness'.

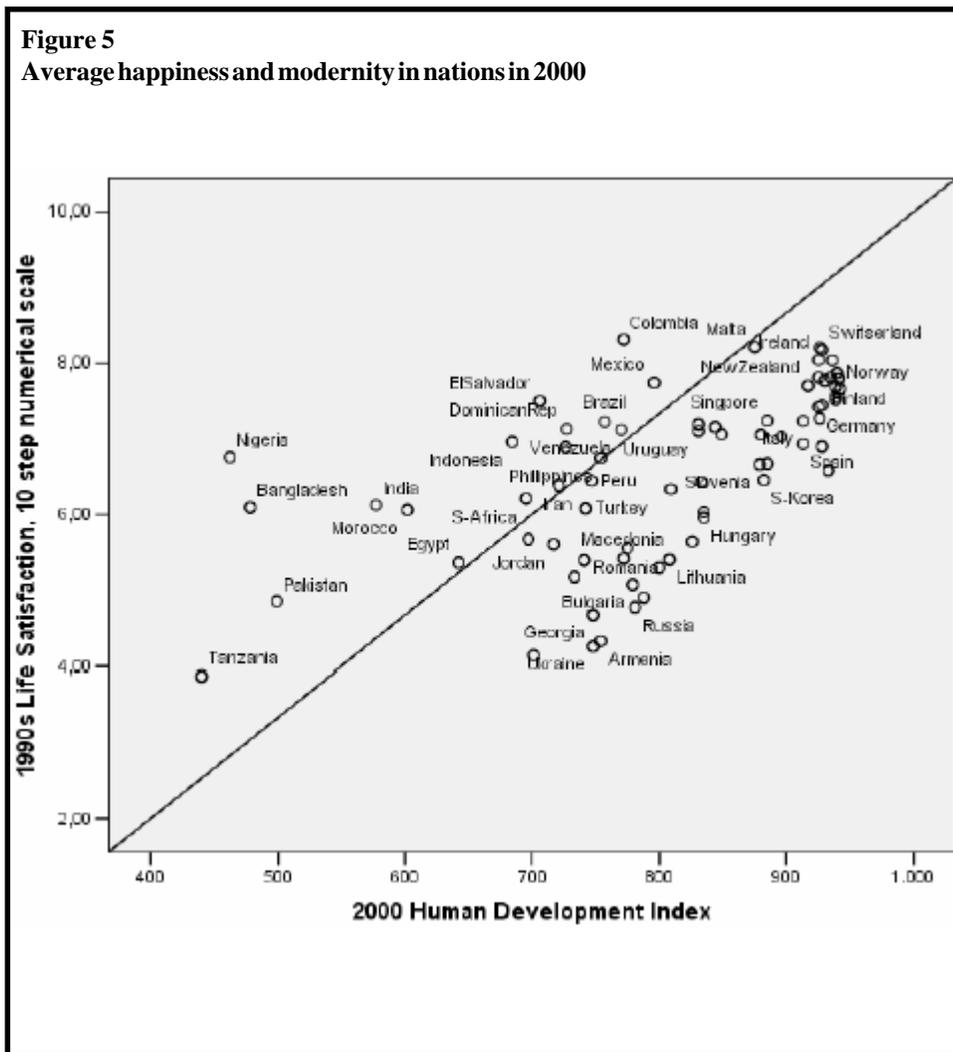
- The last group is theoretical reasons. Sociologists tend to think of subjective wellbeing as a mere idea that depends on social comparison with variable standards and that is therefore a whimsical state of mind, not worth pursuing and hence not worth studying.

Much of the remainder of the paper is a more extensive and detailed discussion of these theoretical reasons for the neglect of happiness in sociology. Veenhoven concludes that the main reason for neglect is sociological theories that block a proper view of the research on happiness.

### Comment

This is an important paper. It merits publication in a journal likely to be accessed by sociologists. Since that may not happen for the reasons of theoretical disposition towards neglect of happiness in sociology, I would recommend, in fact, that Veenhoven publish several versions of this paper in various journals, so as to improve the chances that a number of sociologists might give it some attention. I further recommend that Veenhoven team up with a sociological theorist of some repute to jointly write a revisionist paper on sociological theory. For, if one grants the case that he makes in this paper, the major task at hand is a substantial reorientation and revision of sociological theory to accommodate the empirical findings on happiness that Veenhoven and others have documented in various studies over the past three or four decades.

~ Kenneth C. Land



## NEWS FROM DURBAN

### SOCIAL INDICATORS RESEARCH AT WORLD CONGRESS OF SOCIOLOGY

The World Congress of Sociology took place in July in Durban South Africa. Social Indicators Research was well represented with five sessions, organized by Valerie Moller and Dennis Hushka for Working Group 06– Social Indicators – of the International Sociological Association. Sessions were well attended and the quality of the contributions was good.

#### Presentations

- o Michelson, William, University of Toronto, Canada  
*What makes an indicator social?*
- o Mangahas, Mahar & Guerrero, Linda Luz. Social Weather Stations, Philippines,  
*Twenty years of Social Weather reporting in the Philippines.*
- o Mazumdar, Krishna. Indian Statistical Institute, India,  
*World inequality in social development indicators.*
- o Tsai, Ming-Chang National Taipei University, Taiwan  
*Does globalization affect human well-being?*
- o O'Connor, Julia S. University of Ulster, Northern Ireland  
*Social Indicators and the measurement of progress in European Union welfare states.*
- o Baksh, Faiza Shaheen, University of Manchester, United Kingdom  
*Poverty's consequence: Using young people to highlight areas in growing distress.*
- o Crothers, Charles, Auckland University of Technology, New Zealand  
*The development of indicators in New Zealand.*
- o Taylor-Cole, Wilfred, Saint Mary's College and Mount Royal College, Canada  
*Social reporting and public participation in the formation of social policy: The Alberta Model*
- o Mathew, Elizabeth, Loyola College of Social Sciences, Trivandrum, Kerala State, India  
*Monitoring quality of life of rural poor women in Kerala State, India.*
- o Hovland, Jon, Norwegian University of Technology and Science NTNU Trondheim, Norway  
*Rasputin's black box: How statistics are used in Norwegian municipality monitoring and administration.*
- o Richards, Robin & Mutsonziwa, Kingstone, Community Agency for Social Enquiry, South Africa  
*A pilot study of quality of life in the City of Johannesburg.*
- o Pereira, Elvira, ISCSP, Technical University of Lisbon, Portugal  
*Perceptions of well-being and objective life conditions: A participatory approach to well-being assessment in a mountain rural community in Portugal.*

- o Bonini, Astra, Johns Hopkins University, USA  
*Cross-national variation in subjective well-being.*
- o Spellerberg, Annette; Huschka, Denis & Habich, Roland, Universität Kaiserslautern, Deutsches Institut für Wirtschaftsforschung Berlin/SOEP, and Wissenschaftszentrum Berlin für Sozialforschung (WZB), Germany,  
*Convergence and polarisation: German quality of life trends in regional and international comparison.*
- o Møller, Valerie, Rhodes University, South Africa  
*What makes for satisfied and dissatisfied South Africans? Results from the General Household Survey in international comparison.*
- o Veenhoven, Ruut, Erasmus University Rotterdam, Netherlands  
*Why sociologists fail to see that life is getting better.*
- o Rojas, Mariano, Universidad de las Américas, Puebla, México,  
*On the impact of different response scales, different happiness questions, and different time applications on subjective well-being research.*
- o De Matteis, Pietro, European College Parma, Italy  
*The economics of happiness.*
- o Suter, Christian, University of Neuchâtel, Switzerland  
*Dimensions of subjective well-being.*
- o Bulz, Nicolae & Stoica, Marcel, Ecological University Bucharest & Academy of Economic Studies, Romania,  
*Interpretation on Mircea Malitza's construct "Geomodernity" – as a "Quality of Life" new approach; complementary approaches.*
- o Antonius, Rachad, Université du Québec à Montréal, Canada  
*Measuring racial/ethnic discrimination : Conceptual and methodological issues.*
- o Schyns, Peggy, Leiden University, The Netherlands  
*Cynical and unhappy? The relationship between (political) cynicism and subjective well-being.*
- o Laczko, Leslie, University of Ottawa, Canada  
*Quantitative indicators of ethnolinguistic diversity: A comparison of simple and composite indices.*
- o Land, Kenneth C., Lamb, Vicki L., Meadows, Sarah O., and Taylor, Ashley Duke University, U.S.A.  
*Measuring trends in child well-being: An evidence-based approach.*
- o Michalos, Alex C.; Zumbo, Bruno; Hatch, P. Maurine & Lavalley, Loraine, University of Northern British Columbia & University of British Columbia, Canada  
*A longitudinal study of the relative explanatory power of multiple discrepancies, income and age.*
- o Oesterdiekhoff, Georg W., RWTH Aachen, Germany  
*Youth, leisure time, clubs and organisations in Germany.*

- o Singh, J., University of the South Pacific, Fiji,  
*Quality of life in Fiji.*
- o Satyanarayana, Gattu, Osmania University, Hyderabad, India  
*Continuity and change and quality of life trends: a study of Telangana village in Andhra Pradesh, South India*
- o Scott, Jacqueline & Nolan, Jane, University of Cambridge, United Kingdom  
*Perceptions of quality of life: Generations and gender differences.*
- o Eckermann, Elizabeth Jane, Deakin University, Australia  
*Using the Personal Wellbeing Index in Lao PDR: issues of equivalence.*
- o Michalos, Alex C.; Hemingway, Dawn; Lavalley, Loraine; Hatch, P. Maurine, Hogan, Anne & Christensen, Bev. University of Northern British Columbia, Canada  
*Health and quality of life of older people: A replication after six years.*
- o Suter, Christian & Budowski, Monica, University of Neuchâtel and University of Fribourg, Switzerland  
*Health and subjective well-being: the Swiss experience.*
- o Unterhalter, Elaine, University of London, United Kingdom  
*Global inequalities in girls' and women's education: How can we measure progress?*
- o Casares, José Ángel Martínez & Guijarro, Ester Massó, PEPSA & University of Granada, Spain  
*Legal controlled heroine, public health and social welfare: a case study in a Spanish region.*
- o Yusupov, Musa, Chechen State University, Chechnya, Russia,  
*Social risk factors in health: the case of Chechnya.*
- o Moum, Torbjørn, University of Oslo, Norway  
*Social inequality in psychological distress and major depression among Norwegian adults: Results from a large panel study.*
- o Arion, Ali, Universidad Francisco de Miranda, Falcon, Venezuela  
*Experiencias de pasantías rurales de estudiantes de medicina de la Universidad Francisco de Miranda: Caso paraguana, Coro - Falcon – Venezuela, año 2005.*
- o Chuan, Kun-Yang, Taipei Medical University, University  
*The health profile of disabled persons in Taiwan.*

#Presentations marked with # are available for download from the SINET website

#### Application for status of a Research Committee

Since 1978 Social Indicators Research is organized in a so-called 'Working Group' in the International Sociological association (ISA). Working Group status is intended for emerging specializations, established fields are organized in 'Research Committees'. The field of Social Indicator Research and Quality of Life is now sufficiently matured to

(Continued on next page.)

(Continued from previous page.)

upgrade the working group to a research committee. Earlier attempts to make that happen foundered on the ISA bureaucracy. This year another attempt was made, which also run into bureaucratic delay. Meanwhile all administrative requirements have been and it is expected that RC status will be obtained at the next meeting of the ISA Research Council in the Spring 2007.

### Board 2005-2009

At the business meeting in Durban, the following members were elected in the board of Working Group 05 'Social Indicators':

■	Past president:	Ken Land	USA
■	President:	Heinz-Herbert Noll	Germany
■	President elect:	Ruut Veenhoven	Netherlands
■	Secretary	Liz Eckerman	Australia
·	Members:	Mahar Mangahas	Philippines
		Anna Lau	China
		Valerie Moller	South Africa
		Joachim Vogel	Sweden

The business meeting also decided on statues for the Research Committee. According to these rules, the next elections will be held using e-mail.

### Membership

According to the ISA office 196 members have expressed their interest in the working Group 'Social Indicators'. Since no fee was required until this year, expression of interest on the membership application form is the only way of registration. This list is incomplete, many seasoned members missing. On the other hand, the list may involve names of ISA members who just ticked the box of a group for free. Meanwhile ISA requires that all groups charge a fee of at least US \$ 10 for 4 years. The number of paying members will be counted and funds will be allotted in proportion to the number of paying members.

A call for payment will be made and that will determine how many we are.

### Next conferences

The following World Conference of Sociology will be in Gothenborg, Sweden in 2009. There will of course be sessions on Social Indicators Research on that conference and joint sessions with other Research Committees are planned. In the years 2007 and 2008 the group intends to participate in one or more intermediate conferences. Several suggestions have been raised, more are welcomed.

~Ruut Veenhoven. Veenhoven@fsw.eur.nl

## THE INTERNATIONAL SOCIETY FOR QUAL- ITY-OF-LIFE STUDIES: HEADQUARTERS AND WWW HOMEPAGE

The International Society for Quality-of-Life Studies (ISQOLS) was formed in the mid-1990s. The objectives of ISQOLS are: 1) to stimulate interdisciplinary research in quality-of-life (QOL) studies within the managerial (policy), behavioral, social, medical, and environmental sciences; 2) to provide an organization which all academic, business, nonprofit, and government researchers who are interested in QOL studies can coordinate their efforts to advance the knowledge base and to create positive social change; and 3) to encourage closer cooperation among scholars engaged in QOL research to develop better theory, methods, measures, and intervention programs.

The year 2006 membership fees are US\$75 for regular members and \$50 for students or retired persons. Prof. M. JOSEPH SIRGY (Virginia Tech and State University) is Executive Director of ISQOLS. Anyone interested in knowing more about ISQOLS should contact Prof. Sirgy at the central office.

The ISQOLS central office recently moved to new physical and virtual locations. Please note the new addresses:

International Society for Quality-of-Life Studies (ISQOLS)  
1800 Kraft Drive, Suite 111  
Blacksburg, Virginia 24060-6370,  
USA

Office tel: (540) 231-5110; fax: (540) 961-4162

E-mail: [isqols@vt.edu](mailto:isqols@vt.edu)  
Website: [www.isqols.org](http://www.isqols.org)

## **SINET WORLD WIDE WEB HOMEPAGE**

*SINET* has a homepage entry on the World Wide Web. It is located on the homepage of the Department of Sociology at Duke University and thus can be accessed by clicking on Department Publications on the address of that page, namely, <http://www.soc.duke.edu> or by typing in the full address <http://www.soc.duke.edu/resources/sinet>. The homepage for *SINET* contains a description of the Contents of the Current Issue as well as of Previous Issues. In addition, it has Subscription Information, Editorial Information, Issue-Related Links, and a link to the homepage of ISQOLS, the International Society for Quality-of-Life Studies. The Issue-Related Links button has links to World Wide Web locations of data for the construction, study, and analysis of social and quality-of-life indicators that have been identified in previous issues of *SINET*. When you are surfing the Web, surf on in to our homepage.

# **SINET**

## **Social Indicators Network News**

### **Subscription Information**

As a service to the world-wide social indicators community, *SINET* is issued quarterly (February, May, August, November). Subscribers and network participants are invited to report news of their social indicator activity, research, policy development, etc., to the Editor for publication. Deadlines are the 20th of the month prior to each issue.

**Address:**

*SINET*, Kenneth C. Land, Editor,  
Department of Sociology, Box 90088,  
Duke University, Durham, NC 27708-0088, USA  
E-mail: [kland@soc.duke.edu](mailto:kland@soc.duke.edu)  
Telephone: 919-660-5615  
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# **SINET**

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Kenneth C. Land, Editor  
Department of Sociology  
Box 90088, Duke University  
Durham, NC 27708-0088 USA  
151-1057-6936-22940