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# SOCIAL INDICATORS NETWORK NEWS

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.  
Newsletter of the International Society for Quality-of-Life Studies

*Editor's Note: Due to the press of administrative and editorial responsibilities, it was not possible to meet the deadline for publishing the February 2000 issue of SINET. Therefore, I decided to combine the February 2000 (Number 61) and May 2000 (Number 62) issues of SINET together.*

## A SYSTEMS APPROACH TO SOCIAL INDICATORS: THE CALVERT-HENDERSON QUALITY OF LIFE INDICATORS

In a note introducing this volume, Barbara Krumsiek, President and Chief Executive Officer of the Calvert Group, remarks that citizens throughout the United States are demonstrating a desire to engage in serious discussions about how to measure the quality of life and livable communities. The present volume is the initial publication from a five-year effort to prepare for this debate supported by the Calvert Group, a leading asset management firm specializing in the field of socially responsible and tax free investing. Calvert's socially responsible investment approach combines traditional investment strategies with a vision of a healthy, equitable, and sustainable society. Krumsiek states that the hope is that the messages and lessons from this volume and the broader project "will empower people from all walks of life who are equally concerned about our future together on this planet" (p. 1).

This project is sufficiently ambitious and interesting to be brought to the attention of social indicators/quality-of-life researchers. I first will characterize the contents of the volume and then I will comment thereupon.

Chapter 1 is a foreword by Hazel Henderson, one of the co-editors of the volume and a well-known independent author and futurist (whose most recent book is *Beyond Globalization: Shaping a Sustainable Global Economy*). Henderson commences with the observation that the twin forces of globalizing technology and markets are accelerating changes and restructuring in our society and economy and the very fabric of our daily lives. She then notes some voices that see this as ushering in a "New Economy," while others are more cautious. To provide readers with information to enter this debate about factors affecting the overall quality of life and our children's future is the objective of this volume. Henderson states that the 12 Calvert-Henderson Quality of Life Indicators presented in the volume range far beyond the Gross Domestic Product and other standard money-denominated indexes of inflation, incomes, interest rates, and so forth. The ap-

proach in the volume is "to paint a broader picture of quality of life to complement current statistics and identify statistical "blindspots" where new data collection is needed" (p.4). In

*(Continued on next page.)*

### In this Issue...

#### SOCIAL INDICATORS:

A Systems Approach to Social Indicators: The Calvert-Henderson Quality of Life Indicators .....	1-5
Child Trends' Criteria for a Better System of Child and Family Indicators .....	6-7
A Brief History of Social Indicators Developments .....	8-9, 14-15
A New Federal Chartbook on Health and a Report on Juvenile Offending in the United States .....	10-12, 15

#### SOCIAL REPORTS AND TRENDS:

Crime and Incarceration in the United States at the End of the Millennium: An Article by Jan Chaiken, Director, U.S. Bureau of Justice Statistics .....	10-13
---	-------

#### ANNOUNCEMENTS:

ISQOLS Conference 2000, Call for Papers .....	14
Index-Construction Session, Call for Papers .....	7
The International Society for Quality-of-Life Studies .....	16
SINET World Wide Web Homepage .....	7

**SINET News is successor to:**  
Social Indicators Newsletter (Social Science Research Council), Social Indicators (American Institute for Research)

**Hazel Henderson, Jon Lickerman, and Patrice Flynn, Editors, 2000, *Calvert-Henderson Quality of Life Indicators*. Bethesda, MD: Calvert Group, Ltd. Paperback. Price: \$19.95. To obtain copies, contact the Calvert Group, Ltd., 4550 Montgomery Avenue, Bethesda, MD 20814, ph: 800-368-2748. Webpage: [www.calvertgroup.com](http://www.calvertgroup.com)**

# SINET

Social Indicators Network News

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Duke University, Durham, NC

## MANAGING EDITOR:

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brief, the main objective of the present volume is to contribute to the “enlightenment” function of social indicators for the general American public as well as key officials and administrators, a long-standing objective of the social indicators research community described in previous issues of *SINET* (see also Land, 2000).

## A Systems Approach

Chapter 2 presents an introduction to the volume by Jon Lickerman and Patrice Flynn who coordinated the team of scholars that produced the indicators and wrote the chapter for the volume. This and the subsequent Chapter 3 on research methodology by Flynn describe the setting of the Calvert-Henderson effort and its unique approach. The unifying theme of the volume and the indicators it presents is that it represents “the first national, comprehensive effort to redefine overall quality of life using a systems approach” (p. 15). It claims uniqueness in four ways (p. 19):

- the Calvert-Henderson approach involved a multi-disciplinary group of some 15 authors with considerable expertise in creating and using indicators in their respective fields of study;
- the indicators unbundle central social, economic, and environmental issues into 12 distinctive domains of quality of life;
- the indicators reveal the underlying trends and deeper processes that accompany daily reported news events; and
- all of the indicators identify interfaces with other domains.

It is the last point that comprises the main unique product of the “systems approach” taken in the volume. Lickerman and Flynn claim that this “allows a systemic overview of our society often concealed by aggregation of traditional indices” (p. 20). This systems approach is contrasted to two “standard approaches to measuring well-being employed by social scientists today” (p. 27): index numbers (such as the Gross Domestic Product Index) and attempts at the neighborhood, community, or city levels to redefine well-being in ways that expand the traditional parameters of the National Income and Product Accounts.

## The Indicators

After Chapter 4, which gives biographical sketches of chapter authors, the volume is divided into chapters describing the specific Calvert-Henderson Quality of Life Indicators in 12 domains of social life. Each author of these chapters “was presented with the challenge of: (a) identifying and rectifying apparent clashes in our public discussions about the respective domain; (b) educating the readers about the state of the field; and (c) taking us to the cutting-edge of thinking about the topic as it fits into the whole” (p. 25). The contents of the chapters can be briefly described as follows (adapted from pp. 21-22 of the volume):

- **Education Indicator** (Chapter 5 by Jill Dianne Swenson), which summarizes the quantity, quality and distribution of education in the U.S. defined as life-long learning. This indicator contributes to the broader dialogue on who learns what, where, and how throughout the life cycle.

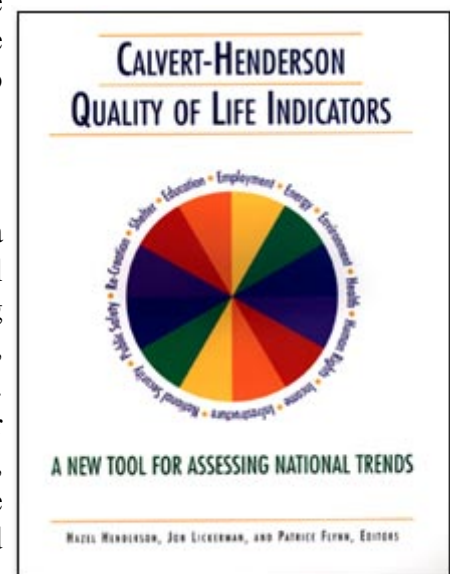
(Continued on next page.)

- **Employment Indicator** (Chapter 6 by Patrice Flynn), which describes the structure of employment in the U.S. as developed by the government and amended by private research efforts and helps clarify basic questions as to what constitutes employment and unemployment and what it means when figures fluctuate over time.
- **Energy Indicator** (Chapter 7 by John A. “Skip” Laitner), which describes how much and how efficiently energy is consumed in the U.S. and provides feedback to the public on what can be done to reduce the environmental impact of energy consumption.
- **Environmental Indicator** (Chapter 8 by Kenneth P. Scott), which presents detailed information on the health of our environment with a special emphasis on the production-consumption process. A research focus on water and air quality offers data of primary interest to the general public.
- **Health Indicator** (Chapter 9 by Constance Battle and Mary Jenifer), which initiates a discussion on what constitutes health and examines the overall state of health of the people in America by age, race and gender.
- **Human Rights Indicator** (Chapter 10 by Alya Kayal), which examines the degree to which the Bill of Rights (in the U.S. Constitution) is protecting citizens and the level of citizen participation in the electoral process.
- **Income Indicator** (Chapter 11 by Lawrence Mishel), which focuses on changes in the standard of living as reflected in monetary measures of family income. The indicator examines and explains trends in the level and distribution of family income and wealth along with stagnant and unequal wage growth over the past 25 years.
- **Infrastructure Indicator** (Chapter 12 by William J. Mallett), which explains the importance of the physical infrastructure to our economy and provides an example of how to supplement our national accounts with an improved asset account to monitor our physical stock.
- **National Security Indicator** (Chapter 13 by Colonel Daniel M. Smith, Ret.), which explains the process our nation takes to achieve a state of national security beginning with the President’s National Security Strategy through the Congressional Budget Process. This includes a diplomatic strategy and a military strategy, all of which are affected by public opinion and the perceived threat to security.
- **Public Safety Indicator** (Chapter 14 by Trudy Karlson), which examines how effectively our society promotes private and public safety when faced with complex interrelationships between personal decisions, public actions, risks, and hazards in the environment that result in deaths from injuries.
- **Re-creation Indicator** (Chapter 15 by Richard A. Peterson and Carrie Y. Lee), which provides a novel approach to identifying the myriad ways that Americans chose to re-create the self, to be revitalized in body and mind, and to re-establish social contacts through leisure and/or recreational activities.
- **Shelter Indicator** (Chapter 16 by Patrick A. Simmons), which explores the type of housing Americans have access to, the level of affordability of that housing, and how housing in turn affects broader social outcomes.

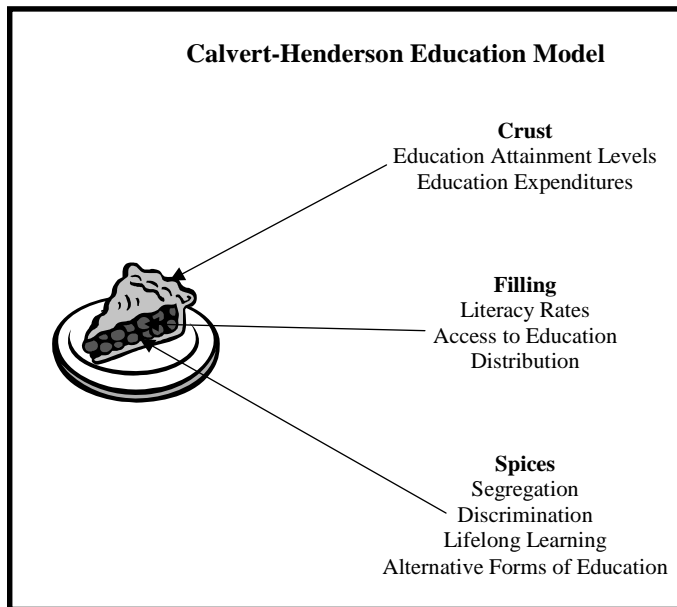
Lickerman and Flynn state that each quality of life indicator chapter develops a conceptual model, presents national statistical trends, and includes analysis to inform the reader about the subject. They indicate that “further research will explore the relationships across domains and build on the foundation we have laid to define what constitutes quality of life for the core indicators and provide reliable, consistent, and verifiable statistics from which the reader can come to their own conclusions about quality of life” (p.22).

### Examples

The authors of the individual chapters in this volume come from a diverse array of academic, scholarly, research, foundation, and professional backgrounds. It is not surprising then that, even with a uniform set of guiding principles established by the organizers of the Calvert-Henderson project, there is considerable diversity in the organization and content of the chapters. It also should be noted that the data bases are much more fully developed for some of the quality-of-life domains covered in the volume than for others. Also, with the goal of general public enlightenment of the volume as noted above, one would not anticipate that the chapters would describe highly sophisticated and complex quantitative systems models in each substantive domain. This, indeed,



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is the case.

An example of one of the more informal and heuristic models in the volume is the “Calvert-Henderson Education Model” reproduced in the above graph. This “metaphorical pie recipe” education model provides a means for chapter author Jill Swenson to organize her thoughts about the “Education Indicator.” In her words, the “Education Indicator deploys the metaphor of a pie to present three sets of summary statistics on the status of American education. First, the model examines the piecrust of American education in terms of educational attainment levels and educational expenditures. Second, the pie filling looks at literacy rates, access, and distribution of educational resources in America. Finally, key factors that add seasoning by stirring in policy issues are examined” (p. 46). Three tables of data (two with time series) addressed to these three components of the slice of pie are contained in the Appendix to the chapter. The text of the chapter discusses these and other related empirical facts pertaining to indicators of the dimensions of the education indicator just described.

Some of the chapters address domains of social life for which there are numerous data series. The chapter on the “Public Safety Indicator” is a good example. The conceptual model described in this chapter takes the form of a flow chart going from safety determinants in the “private sphere” (such as risk-taking behaviors, alcohol use, protective equipment, and training) and in the “public sphere” (such as laws, product design, design of public places, financial incentives, and such environmental factors as natural phenomena and cultural values) to outcomes. The latter category includes “externally caused deaths” or injuries and “deaths or illnesses due to dis-

eases.” As an example of the data series contained in this chapter, see Appendix 5 reproduced on the opposite page. This chart contains graphs of time trends in death rates from injury by year and various causes. The general impression that one obtains from the time series plotted in this figure is that the general trend in the overall death rate from injuries over the last few decades is down. Here is an instance in which some work towards the construction of a general summary index to document and quantify this overall trend would be useful (more about this below). But no such summary indices are developed in this or other chapters of the volume.

### Comment

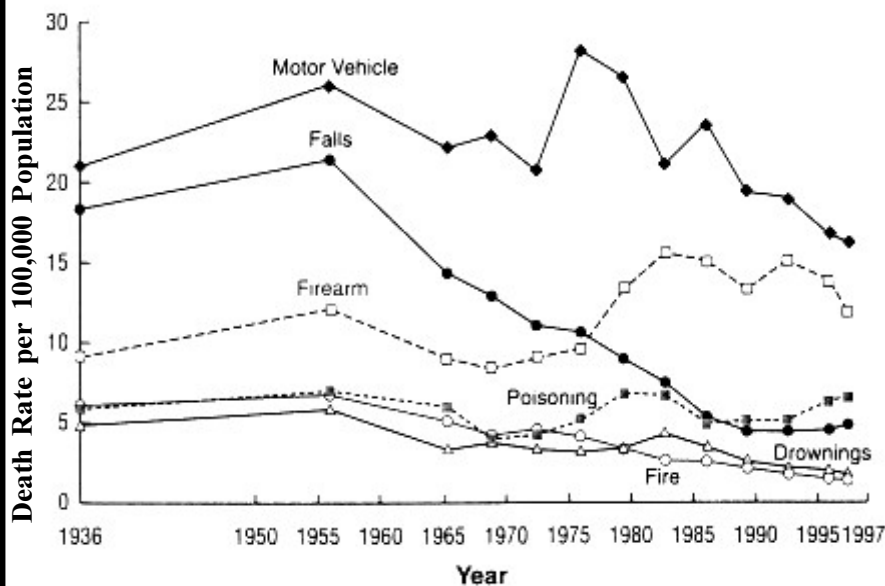
The editors, contributors, and sponsors of this volume should be thanked for the efforts that went into the project that produced this volume. It is a welcome contribution to the literature on social indicators and quality-of-life measurement in the United States. It is particularly gratifying to see sponsorship of this volume and the project that produced it by a private organization during a period in which the federal government has abandoned the production of a comprehensive periodic report on national trends in the quality of life. The volume should be informative to the general public. It is built around a set of unifying themes. Yet, there are a number of comments that I can make that may be of use to the editors and contributors in their future work on this project.

First, the editors and leaders of the Calvert-Henderson project need to devote more attention to a basic conceptual/theorizing articulation of the quality-of-life construct that they seek to measure. The quality-of-life construct is the basic, but undefined, notion that unifies and guides the volume and the project on which it is based. But it is just that—undefined. This is a key deficiency in the current volume.

Most articulations of the quality-of-life construct begin with focus group and/or sample survey data on what it is in social life that makes people happy or contributes to their overall satisfaction with life. This then guides the definition of a set of domains of social life for which a set of objective and/or subjective social indicators can be developed. The focus also typically is on indicators of “end-product” or “final consumption” items of social life that clearly can be tagged to measurable variables and assessed for whether and/or to what degree they contribute to individuals’ assessments of their satisfaction with life. This volume identifies and includes several of

*(Continued on next page.)*

### Death Rates From Injury by Year and Cause, 1936-1997



Source: National Center for Injury Prevention and Control and Historical Vita Statistics.

the domains of social life that previous studies of the quality-of-life construct have identified (such as education, employment, health, income, housing, public safety, and leisure). But there are other domains of social life identified in previous studies that are not included in the Calvert-Henderson list, and the Calvert-Henderson list includes some areas that have not typically been part of previous studies. The key point, however, is that there is no definition of the quality-of-life construct in the present volume that justifies the list of indicators included and the exclusion of others.

Second, while each chapter is labeled as a “domain indicator,” there is not, in fact, a single indicator summarizing trends in the domain in any one of the chapters. Rather, most chapters contain several indicators for their domain areas. In part, this is due to the “unbundling” methodology that guides the volume—the use of multiple indicators for each substantive domain. The editors also make clear at several points that they eschew the use of “index numbers” to summarize the trends in the substantive domains or to provide an overall

quality-of-life index. As Flynn states, “... the reader will not find a single index or simple answer to the question: How well are we doing in a given domain? Rather, the approach unpacks the existing warehouse of information about a given dimension and presents the information or data in an organized fashion” (p. 28).

This certainly is an acceptable approach to the construction of indicators in various domains of social life that has a long-standing tradition in social indicators research (see, e.g., the classic volume edited by Sheldon and Moore, 1968). However, there has been a revival of interest over the past few years in the formation of index numbers to summarize the overall trends in various domains of social life (Land, 2000). And the simple fact is that the multiple time series of indicators cited in various chapters of this volume cry out for some efforts to summarize the overall domain trends in meaningful ways. Not that there is any single index number that can do all of the work. In fact, there may be several creative ways of summarizing the trends in a given domain, each of which provides

meaningful information and insights. In my opinion, this should be a major focus of future work on the Calvert-Henderson project.

Third, the “systems approach” construct that is introduced as a unifying theme for the Calvert-Henderson project is, in practice, basically a heuristic device for thinking about what subjects to include in each domain area, how to arrange them, and how to define or identify appropriate indicators thereof. The volume does not contain a clearly articulated systems model with quantitative indicators and statistically estimated linkages in any of the domain-specific areas. Nor is there much articulation (and no statistical or quantitative estimation) of linkages among the domains covered in the various chapters. At most, some of the chapters mention some of the ways in which the chapter’s domain is dependent upon or link to the domain-subjects of some of the other chapters. But that is about it. Of course, it must be emphasized that this volume is intended for broad public appeal (and therefore has little technical content) and is the first effort of a larger project. Presumably, additional attention will be given to the systems model within, and among, domain-subject areas in subsequent work.

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2000 “Social Indicators.”  
In Edgar F. Borgatta and Rhonda V. Montgomery (eds.), *Encyclopedia of Sociology*. New York: Macmillan (forthcoming).
- Sheldon, Eleanor Bernert and Wilbert E. Moore  
1968 *Indicators of Social Change: Concepts and Measurements*. New York: Russell Sage Foundation.

## CHILD TRENDS' CRITERIA FOR A BETTER SYSTEM OF CHILD AND FAMILY INDICATORS

The past few years have seen a number of incidents of school violence in the United States that have raised numerous questions about the well-being of children and youths. But this should be placed in this historical context in which every generation laments the condition of its times. From the Great Depression to the turbulent 1960s to the new millennium, Americans have fretted over the health and safety of the nation's children, their educational progress, and their moral development. Are their fears warranted? How do we know whether circumstances for children are bad and getting worse, or good and improving? On what bases do the public and its leaders form opinions and draw conclusions? Child Trends, a nonpartisan, non-profit research center (4301 Connecticut Avenue, NW, Suite 100, Washington, DC 20008; ph: 202-362-5580; fax: 202-362-5533; webpage: [www.childtrends.org](http://www.childtrends.org)) that has been active in the child and youth indicators field for 20 years, recently published a four-page *Research Brief* on the topic of "Building a Better System of Child and Family Indicators" that addresses these and related questions. The research brief was adapted from "Indicators of Child and Family Well-Being: The Good, the Bad, and the Ugly," an invited address to the National Institutes of Health, Office of Behavioral and Social Sciences, 1999 Seminar Series, by Kristin Anderson Moore, Ph.D. The research brief contains two neat

summary tables that should be of interest to social indicators and quality-of-life researchers. Table 1 reproduced here summarizes five purposes for which indicators used. These include providing descriptive information about society, monitoring social conditions, setting societal and community goals, assessing outcomes, and evaluating programs.

The second table (see Table 2 reproduced on right) describes some 13 criteria for indicators of child

(Continued on next page.)

**Table 1: Five Purposes for Which Indicators are Used**

**Description:** Indicators provide knowledge about society. Numerous reports provide descriptive information about the circumstances of America's children and families, for example, the proportion who complete high school.

**Monitoring:** Indicators are used to track outcomes, which can help with planning and suggest policy approaches. Usually monitoring occurs over time, as trends are tracked to see whether outcomes are improving, deteriorating, or holding steady. For example, the proportion of youth who complete high school is tracked over time; also, comparisons are made over time across social and demographic groups in the proportion of youth who complete high school.

**Setting Goals:** Indicators are used to help coordinate and focus activities across agencies, across levels of government, and across public and private groups. Healthy People 2000 and Education Goals 2000 are two examples of long-term goal-setting projects that have provided targets and specified associated strategies designed to help reach those targets.

**Outcomes-Based Accountability:** Indicators are used to hold agencies, governments, communities or managers responsible for improving outcomes. Measuring outcomes rather than inputs represents an important new direction in program implementation.

**Evaluation:** Indicators are sometimes relied on to determine whether or not programs are effective and, where possible, the reasons for success or failure. For example, if a teen pregnancy program is introduced in school, an evaluation may track the teen pregnancy rate over time.

(Source: Brown, B.V. and Corbett, T. 1998. "Social Indicators and Public Policy in the Age of Devolution." IRP Special Report Series. Madison, WI: Institute for Research on Poverty.)

**Table 2: Criteria for Indicators of Child Well-Being**

1. **Comprehensive coverage.** Indicators should assess well-being across a broad array of outcomes, behavior, and processes.
2. **Children of all ages.** Age-appropriate indicators are needed at every age from birth through adolescence and covering the transition into adulthood.
3. **Clear and comprehensible.** Indicators should be easily and readily understood by the public.
4. **Positive outcomes.** Indicators should assess positive as well as negative aspects of well-being.
5. **Depth, breadth, and duration.** Indicators are needed to assess dispersion across given measures of child well-being, children's duration in a status, and cumulative risk factors experienced by children.
6. **Common interpretation.** Indicators should have the same meaning in varied population subgroups.
7. **Consistency over time.** Indicators should have the same meaning across time.
8. **Forward-looking.** Indicators should be collected now that anticipate the future and provide baseline data for subsequent trends.
9. **Rigorous methods.** Coverage of the population or event being monitored should be complete or very high, and data collection procedures should be rigorous and consistent over time.
10. **Geographically detailed.** Indicators should be developed not only at the national level, but also at the state and local level.
11. **Cost-efficient.** Although investments in data about U.S. children have been insufficient, strategies to expand and improve the data system need to be thoughtful, well planned, and economically efficient.
12. **Reflective social goals.** Some indicators should allow us to track progress in meeting national, state, and local goals for child well-being.
13. **Adjusted for demographic trends.** Finally, to aid interpretation, indicators, or a subset of indicators, should be developed that adjust for changes in the composition of the population over time that confound our ability to track well-being. Alternatively, indicators should be available for population subgroups that are sufficiently narrow to permit conclusions within that subgroup.

(Source: Moore, Kristin A. 1997. "Criteria for Indicators of Child Well-Being." Indicators of Child Well-Being edited by Robert M. Hauser, Brett V. Brown and William Prosser. New York: Russell Sage Foundation.)

(Continued from previous page.)

well-being. The research brief notes, in particular, that it is ironic that most current child "well-being" indicators measure just the opposite—assessing the incidence or prevalence of problems like infant mortality, substance, abuse, violence, teen pregnancy, family poverty, and crime. The research brief poses the development of indicators of positive youth development as the next frontier in the study of child and family well-being. This next generation of work includes conceptualizing positive development, developing sound measures, testing them in longitudinal studies, and then making them available for use as indicators. This necessitates qualitative work, such as focus groups, to identify the characteristics desired by parents, policy makers, citizens, and children themselves. It will include psychometric work to develop items and scales that overcome problems of social desirability and that can be administered in large-scale studies. It also will require longitudinal data collection and careful analyses of these data to assess whether a given construct and a given measure predict positive outcomes in adulthood.

The research brief concludes that a system of indicators that meets these fairly demanding criteria is slowly becoming a reality, but that much remains to be done. A set of indicators that reach across levels of governance from the national to the state to the community level still is lacking. Cross-national comparisons still are difficult in most respects. The seamless measurement of concepts across the years of childhood is a challenge. And again, most importantly, the identification of valid and reliable ways to measure child well-being positively as well as negatively requires much attention.

~Kenneth C. Land

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## INDEX- CONSTRUCTION SESSION: METHODS OF AGGREGATING INDICATORS OF SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC WELL- BEING

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In recent years the interest in constructing composite indexes of Social and Economic Well-Being has grown considerably. In social indicators research and beyond a variety of approaches of how to synthesize information and how to combine several indicators into an aggregate index have been developed. A prominent example is the Human Development Index, which has been published by the United Nations Human Development Report Office each year since 1990 and which has triggered off an ongoing debate on methodological issues in this field. Although there are plenty of research activities in different parts of the world few methodological standards have been agreed upon so far. Crucial problems - as for example the weighting problem - are far from being solved. A session at a meeting in Germany later this year has been organized to provide an opportunity to present different proposals of index construction, to discuss these approaches in methodological terms but also in their substantial implications as measures of social development and progress.

This Session will be held as part of the "Fifth International Conference on Social Science Methodology," Cologne, Germany, October 3 - 6, 2000

organized by the Research Committee on Logic and Methodology (RC33) of the International Sociological Association (ISA), in Cooperation with the German Social Science Infrastructure Service (GESIS) and the Zentralarchiv für Empirische Sozialforschung (ZA). For more information on this conference please visit the following website: <http://www.za.uni-koeln.de/rc33/> Individuals interested in participating in this session also may contact the organizer: Dr. Heinz-Herbert Noll, ZUMA, P.O. Box 122155, D-68072 Mannheim, Germany, Fax: +49-621-1246-182/100, e-mail: [noll@zuma-mannheim.de](mailto:noll@zuma-mannheim.de)

### **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/dept/sinet/index.html>. 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.

## A BRIEF HISTORY OF SOCIAL INDICATORS DEVELOPMENTS

*Editor's Note: As part of his work on a collaborative ISQOLS project on assessing some 20 indices of the quality of life, Abbott Ferriss drafted the following brief history of social indicators development. Few social scientists have been working in the field of social indicators and quality-of-life measurement as long as Ferriss, and, in part due to his experience as Editor of SINET for 11 years, few have the overall perspective on the field that he has. We thus are pleased to print this preliminary version of his brief history here.*

With *Recent Social Trends in the United States* (Ogburn, 1933) and *Southern Regions of the United States* (Odum, 1936) as its conceptual precursors, the social indicators "movement" gained momentum with the NASA-sponsored volume, *Social Indicators* (1966). The combined effort of academics and Federal Government social scientists resulted in *Toward a Social Report* (1969), a volume that attempted to give social meaning to trends in social indicators. Hopeful of improving public policymaking, a social indicator, it said, was "a direct measure of welfare and is subject to the interpretation that if it changes in the 'right' direction, while other things remain equal, things have gotten better, or people are 'better off'." (p. 97)

Broader significance was given to the "movement" by Wilbert Moore and Eleanor Sheldon (1965, 1968) who called for contributions to understanding "large-scale structural change in American society" and the collection and analysis of new and better data so as to monitor indicators of "structural alterations" and to use "such information for entry into the system, to alter the magnitudes, speed, and even direction of change in terms of explicit,

normative criteria. . ." (p.144). Thus, teleology to improve well-being through statistical measurement, intervention and monitoring was the motivating force of the "movement."

### The United States Federal Government

The United States Federal Government responded with a series of three chartbooks, bringing together topical time series with graphic illustrations, but scant interpretation and little policy implication (U. S. Office of Management and Budget, 1974 and 1977, and U. S. Bureau of the Census, 1981). Compensation for their lack of interpretation in these Federal documents was made through essays in issues of *The Annals* (Gross, 1967, 1970, 1973, and Taeuber, 1978)).

Interest in this pathway abated and Federal agencies began to publish indicator reports by sector, frequently with interpretation and discussion of program implications. In annual or biennial series, these appeared: *Science Indicators* (National Science Board), *Health USA* (U.S. Department of Health and Human Services), *Educational Indicators*, *Youth Indicators* and *the Condition of Education* (U. S. Department of Education), *Aging America* (U. S. Department of Health and Human Services), *The Sourcebook of Criminal Justice Statistics* and *Criminal Victimization in the United States* (U. S. Department of Justice), *Indicators of Housing and Neighborhood Quality* (U.S. Bureau of the Census), *Humanities Deskbook* (Office of Planning and Budget, National Endowment for the Humanities), and others. Simultaneously the U. S. Bureau of the Census continued and expanded its series of *Current Population Reports* detailing trends in household and family, income, occupation, blacks, Hispanics, children

and youth, educational enrollment, and attainment, the elderly, fertility, voting, unemployment and many others (Ferriss, 1979 and 1989).

Attention turned, through a committee of the Social Science Research Council and other groups, to improving the data base. The Victimization Survey and the General Social Survey (NORC) in the U. S. are two outstanding examples of these efforts. (Rockwell and others, 1983). Europeans saw the initiation of "the Level of Living Surveys in Sweden, the SPES Social Indicators System in West Germany, the Eurobarometer surveys of the European Economic Community countries, the Victoria in Australia," and others (Andrews, 1989, p. 403).

### The Movement Declared "Dead"

To recapitulate, the 1960s saw the beginnings and vigorous promise and ideas for the use of social indicators. In the 1970s research and publications flourished, stimulated by Federal funds, through the National Science Foundation and others. In the 1980s a more conservative Federal administration was less interested in the promise of social indicators, NSF funding was curtailed, the Center for the Coordination of Research on Social Indicators was discontinued. Pessimistic social scientists groused that the social indicators "movement" was dead. (Andrews, 1989).

But the journal *Social Indicators Research* continued to publish social indicator (SI) and quality-of-life (QOL) research. *SINET – The Social Indicators Network News* gathered together the subscription lists from the Center for Coordination of Research on Social Indicators and the newsletter of the American Institute for Research, and began distributing news of SI research in 1985.

(Continued on next page.)



Under Heinz-Herbert Noll's editorship, *ISI: Informationsdienst Soziale Indikatoren* began publishing articles and news in German. A new newsletter also, now, addresses *Urban Quality Indicators*. There now is the prospect of a new journal that will publish happiness studies, under the general editorship of Ruut Veenhoven.

### **The Social Report**

Meanwhile, in Europe and the rest of the world, stimulated by OECD, the Statistical Commission of the U. N., and UNESCO, nations were challenged to assemble data from their statistical systems so as to assess the status of conditions of education, income, employment, crime, housing, health, transportation, and other categories of indicators. This gave rise to a multitude of social reports many continuing periodic publication today. Some of these are: *Social Report on Hungary, 1992*, *Donnees Sociales 1987* (France), *Datenreport 1992* (Germany), *Inequality in Sweden: Trends and Current Situation*, *Women in Figures 1992* (Spain), and reports on Italy, Philippines, and many other countries. The use of the social survey as a means of collecting social indicators increased. Interest in interpretation and use of indicators for assessment of well-being has aroused a considerable following. The inadequacies of statistical systems of developing countries to provide reliable and valid data has become apparent (Westendorff and Ghai, 1993). Efforts to improve national statistical systems through sample surveys, censuses and reported vital and other statistics continues.

### **Subjective Well-Being**

The preceding primarily reflects developments in objective measures.

Subjective indicators have not been neglected. In *The Human Meaning of Social Change* and, later, *The Quality of American Life: Perceptions, Evaluations and Satisfaction*, Angus Campbell and associates (1972 and 1976) made the case for subjective evaluations of life quality. Andrews and Whithy (1976) followed with a volume of studies based upon national surveys and focus groups, demonstrating the utility of the concept. (Land, 1996)

The quality of life concept caught both intellectual and political interest during the 1990s and bodes well to become a leading concept of social indicator studies. Its progress has been chronicled by Schuster and Fisher (1985) and by Diener (1984, 1994) and colleagues (1997, 1999). Diener has outlined an agenda for psychological research to clarify a number of questions: concern with disposition, adaptation, goals, coping strategies, etc., and to understand situational influences upon life satisfaction. Ruut Veenhoven (1993) has contributed much to the study of the QOL through his compilations of a World Database of Happiness.

Legacies of the social indicators "movement" also include agendas for future developments. These involve improving statistical systems, social reporting and public policies, futures forecasting, and the modeling of social change. These will be briefly mentioned.

### **Improving Statistical Systems**

The annual publication of *World Development Report* and *Indicators* has brought into stark relief the inadequacies of many national statistical systems, especially in the developing nations (World Bank, 1999). Only through improved censuses, population surveys, the reporting of vital statistics and other data collection

efforts, will reliable and valid data emerge upon which social indicator and quality of life studies may be based.

Social reports of trends in a variety of public "concerns" have demonstrated the importance of periodic reviews and assessments. An informed public is vital to democratic institutions. National social reports provide the vehicle for considering policy options that lead the way to legislation and program development. In the past most of these have merely reported trends in categories of statistics without fathoming the underlying social processes. Studies of trends in West Germany, France, Italy, Quebec and the United States by an International Research Group on the Comparative Charting of Social Change have shown the vitality of one such approach (Langlois, 1994). Constructed with attention to both manifest and latent consequences of change, national social reports can contribute vitally to public policy development.

Economic projections employ macro dynamic structural equations to forecast the immediate future. Land has demonstrated the benefits of this approach in crime, education and other phenomena. He and Schneider (1987) have "explored on an interdisciplinary basis" the prospects for applying projection methods in order to envision the future. Such methods engage time series of social indicators and extend them into the future. Such exercises make it possible to assess the effects of a proposed intervention *a priori* (Land, 1996).

### **Models of Social Processes**

Models of social processes are required to order and analyze social indicators. Some models require more detailed data than most modern statistical systems provide. Richard

(Continued on page 14.)

## CRIME AND INCARCERATION IN THE UNITED STATES AT THE END OF THE MILLENNIUM:

An Article by Jan Chaiken, Director, U.S. Bureau of Justice Statistics

The January 2000 issue of the *National Institute of Justice Journal* recently published an article based on a presentation by Jan M. Chaiken, Ph.D., on July 20, 1999 at the Office of Justice Programs' Annual Conference on Criminal Justice Research and Evaluation in Washington, D.C. Dr. Chaiken is Director of the Bureau of Justice Statistics (BJS), a component of the Office of Justice Programs, U.S. Department of Justice. The BJS is the primary source for criminal justice statistics in the United States. The article reviews trends in crime and imprisonment in the U.S. over the past two decades or so and makes some interesting international comparisons. Because crime or freedom from high levels of crime and fear of crime are key components in any general measure of the quality of life, this article and its contents merit a review for *SINET* readers. I first will summarize the main text and reproduce some of the figures (which are highly informative) from the Chaiken article. Then I will comment thereupon.

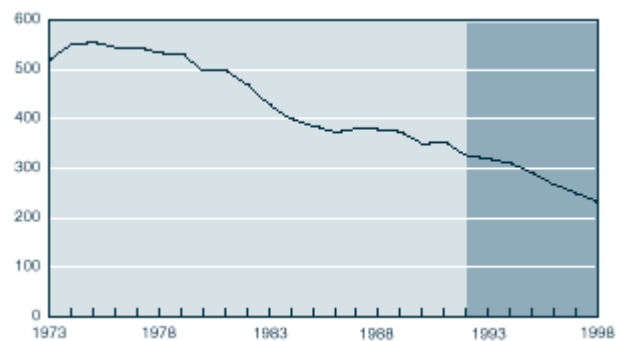
### Property Crime: Declining in the U.S. and Increasing Elsewhere?

Chaiken begins by reporting the good news on the crime front in the United States. That is, as measured by the BJS National Crime Victimization Survey (NCVS), property crime has been declining in the U.S. for at least 25 years (see figure 1 reproduced from the article). This type of crime, which includes larceny, burglary, theft in general, and motor vehicle theft, has fallen 58 percent since 1975. Burglary rates closely resemble property crime rates overall in their steep decline. But, Chaiken comments, this pattern has *not* been duplicated in other countries. In Canada, for example, although property crime has declined steadily since 1992, the decline is not nearly as steep as in the United States, and the longer term pattern in Canada is essentially flat—or has not changed.

Chaiken then observes that England and Wales use a victimization survey quite similar to the NCVS, which facilitates comparison of crime data with the United States. Not only has property crime been increasing in England and Wales, but the rates—once much lower than in the United States—now exceed ours. For most of the period

**Figure 1: Property Crime Rate, United States, 1973-98**

Adjusted victimization rate per 1,000 households\*

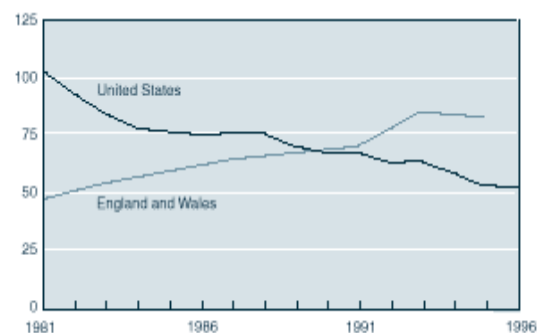


Source: Bureau of Justice Statistics, National Crime Victimization Survey  
Note: The property crimes included are burglary, theft, and motor vehicle theft collected since the redesign.

\* The National Crime Victimization Survey redesign was implemented in 1993: the area with the lighter shading is before the redesign and the darker area after the redesign. The data before 1993 are adjusted to make them comparable with the data

**Figure 3: Property Crime Rate, United States, 1973-98 and England/Wales, 1981-96**

Victimization rate per 1,000 population

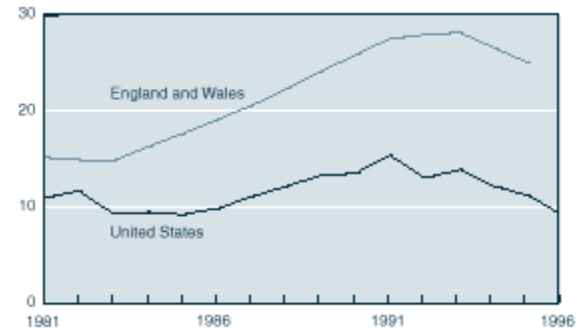


Source: Langan, Patrick A. and David P. Farrington, *Crime and Justice in the United States and in England and Wales, 1981-96*, Washington, DC: US Department of Justice, Bureau of Justice Statistics, October 1998 (NCJ 169284).

Note: U.S. surveys interview people age 12 or older; English surveys, age 16 or older. The U.S. surveys have been conducted annually since 1973. English surveys were conducted in 1981, 1983, 1987, 1991, 1993, and 1995. Burglary was defined in both countries' surveys as residential burglary.

**Figure 4: Motor Vehicle Theft Rates, United States and England/Wales, 1981-96**

Adjusted victimization rate per 1,000 households



Source: Langan, Patrick A. and David P. Farrington, *Crime and Justice in the United States and in England and Wales, 1981-96*, Washington, DC: US Department of Justice, Bureau of Justice Statistics, October 1998 (NCJ 169284).

Note: U.S. surveys interview people age 12 or older; English surveys, age 16 or older. The U.S. surveys have been conducted annually since 1973. English surveys were conducted in 1981, 1983, 1987, 1991, 1993, and 1995.

since 1981, burglary in England and Wales has been increasing, not declining, with a turnaround starting in 1992 or 1993 (see figure 3 reproduced from the article), a situation approximately the same as in Canada. By comparison, the time trends in patterns of rates of motor vehicle theft in the United States much more closely resemble those of England and Wales (see figure 4 reproduced from the article). But, even for motor vehicle theft, the rates in England and Wales recently have been more than twice as high as the U.S. rates. This contradicts the traditional image of a crime-ridden U.S. as compared to a presumably low-theft England and Wales.

What is going on here? Chaiken comments that it first is important to note that national trends are an aggregate of State and local trends, which may be moving in entirely different directions in some parts of the country than the overall numbers. So it is possible that in a particular State or community the trends are quite a bit different from the national trend. But on a nationwide basis, the differences among these two countries are consistent with recent public attention. In London, for example, burglaries in recent years have become a high-priority focus of the police and are frequent topics of newspaper articles and even announcements on public transit.

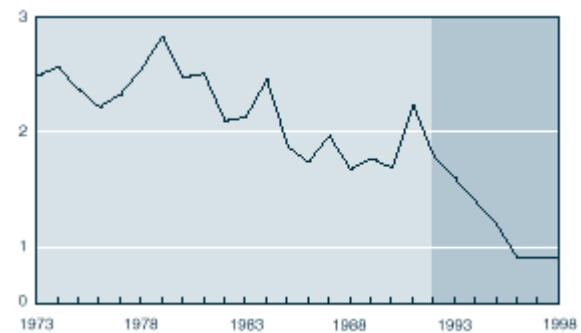
What comes to mind as possible explanations of the U.S. property crime trends? Chaiken notes that, on the side of potential victims, there are more window and door alarms and more secure windows and doors, better illumination in yards and driveways and inside homes when no one is present, more private security and gated communities, and less cash being carried because of greater use of credit cards and ATM cards for financial transactions. On the side of potential perpetrators, there are more drug dealers in prison as well as more criminals turning to robbery and lucrative Internet crime instead of burglary. And, as might be expected from the Director of the BJS, Chaiken puts forward better criminological research and evaluation as a factor contributing to the downtrends in the U.S. He also notes that when the *U.S. News and World Report* examined these time trends, it favored a crime opportunity/routine activities explanation for the drop in crime: People are more likely now than in the past to be home watching cable TV and videotapes, rather than being out on the town, so the nighttime burglar has fewer opportunities.

### Is Rape Really Declining?

Chaiken next comments that people generally have two different reactions when they see the data on rape trends. Some say, when they see the decline reported by the

**Figure 5: Rape Rates, United States, 1973–98**

Adjusted victimization rate per 1,000 people age 12 and older\*



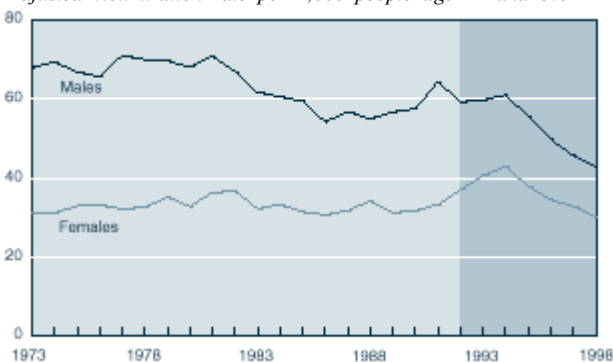
Source: Bureau of Justice Statistics, National Crime Victimization Survey  
Note: Includes both attempted and completed rape.

\* The National Crime Victimization Survey redesign was implemented in 1993; the area with the lighter shading is before the redesign and the darker area after the redesign. The data before 1993 are adjusted to make them comparable with data collected since the redesign.

NCVS (see figure 5 reproduced from the article), obviously criminal justice system policies concerning violence against women are working—women are learning how to handle threatening situations or are aware of the alternatives for avoiding them. Others disagree, believing that the downward trend is illusory, that it means only that women are becoming less willing to report rape and even more reluctant to mention it to the NCVS interviewers. The NCVS data are based on interviews, not police reports, and the respondents also are asked if they reported the crime to the police. Chaiken comments that we know from research on the NCVS that rape continues to be the crime reported least often, especially among women in their teens and early twenties, as well as college students. BJS, the National Institute of Justice, and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) sponsor research to examine whether other methods of inquiring about

**Figure 6: Violent Crime Rates, by Gender of Victim, United States, 1973–98**

Adjusted victimization rate per 1,000 people age 12 and over\*



Sources: Bureau of Justice Statistics, National Crime Victimization Survey, and FBI Uniform Crime Reports

Note: The violent crimes included are rape, robbery, aggravated and simple assault, and homicide.

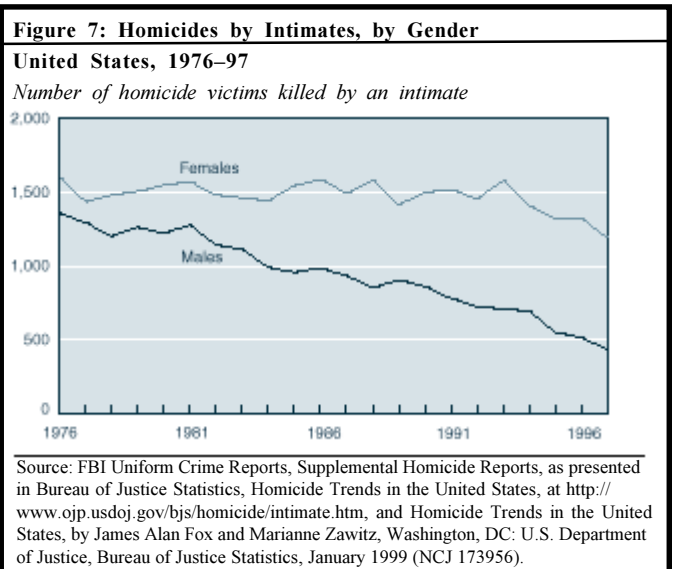
\* The National Crime Victimization Survey redesign was implemented in 1993; the area with the lighter shading is before the redesign and the darker area after the redesign. The data before 1993 are adjusted to make them comparable with data collected since the redesign.

sexual assault and rape yield better estimates of the true extent of victimization. Whenever BJS compares the results of its NCVS surveys with those of the more explicit and reassuring methods used in surveys conducted by NIJ, CDC, and in other BJS research, it becomes clear that many of these crimes remain uncounted by the NCVS. Chaiken states that this is particularly true of rape by intimates, which women may mention to an interviewer in the context of fights with their partners or spouses but are less likely to mention in the NCVS context of crime. That may be either because they may not think it is a crime or because they may not want to contemplate the implications of their partner's behavior amounting to a violent crime. He observes that the BJS is working closely with NIJ, CDC, and the National Center for Health Statistics to better understand the incidence of domestic violence, including sexual assault, and to develop better ways to measure the extent of violence against women. Particularly because sexual assault, unlike property crime, may not actually be dwindling, it requires continued research and intervention—and improved measurement systems.

### The Gender Gap in Declining Violence Among Intimates

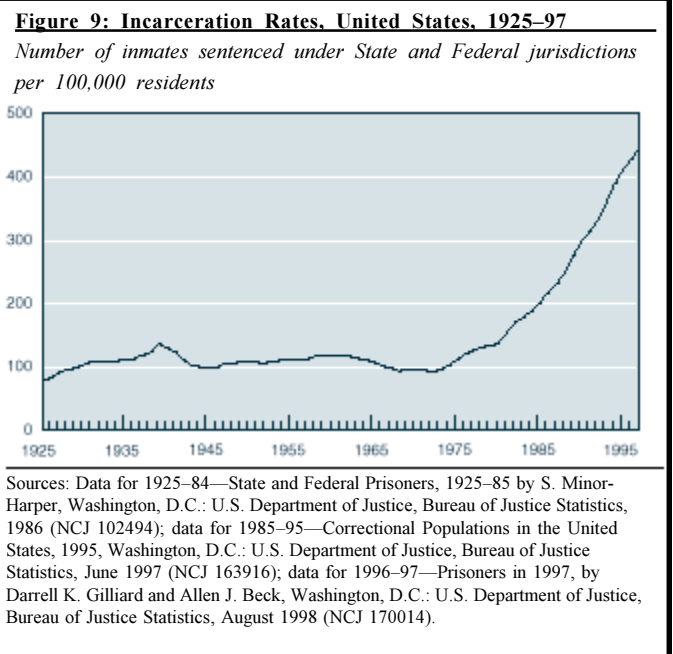
Chaiken next remarks that the story of trends in violence among intimates is a remarkable one. The past decade has seen a real change in perceptions of the seriousness of violence against women, especially by a husband or partner. Legislation has been enacted at the State and Federal levels, the Violence Against Women Office was established in the U.S. Department of Justice, and funding has flowed to all the States for programs intended to reduce the occurrence of violence against women and assist victims. Chaiken argues that although we are beginning to see numerous indications of the effectiveness of these programs in a broad sense, the trends in serious violence are not at all what might be expected given the recent strong emphasis on violence against women. The overall decrease in serious, violent crime (down by about 31 percent since 1994) has benefited men much more than women (see figure 6 reproduced from the article). For women, the victimization rate declined less than 15 percent in this period and overall is still slightly above the levels of the 1970's.

Chaiken states that when particular population subgroups are examined, it is found that some categories of women are more likely than men to be victims of crime. Women college students, for example, are at greater risk of victimization than women of the same age who are not in college. On the whole, the victimization of college women



by crimes other than sexual assault is approximately the same as that for men, but women are in addition the primary victims of sexual assault. Chaiken notes that this is a form of gender equity that no one was hoping for.

When homicide committed by intimates is examined, the possibility that a downward trend for women victims began around 1994 is detected. However, the long-term downward shift in the number of men killed by their intimate partners is much steeper (see figure 7 reproduced from the article). Chaiken suggests that a reasonable interpretation of this disparity is that women who find themselves in situations so devastating that they might consider killing their partners increasingly have options such as shelters, protection orders, and police arrest policies that allow them, at the moment they feel compelled to kill, to resist that compulsion. Men, on the other hand, continue to kill their intimate partners at about the same



rate as a quarter of a century ago. Looking in more detail at the circumstances in which this steep reduction in the number of men killed by intimates has occurred, Chaiken notes that there is a long-term downtrend in the use of guns. In the past few years, the use of other kinds of weapons also has declined (see figure 8 reproduced from the article). It should be noted that not all the men killed by intimates are killed by a woman: The data also include male intimates who kill men.

### **Questions About the High U.S. Incarceration Rate—Problem or Solution?**

Chaiken next comments on the literally incredible increase in incarceration rates in the United States since 1975. Like the decrease in violent crime, this fact is fairly well known, although the details and the implications may not be. Not only has the incarceration rate more than quadrupled—after holding more or less steady for decades—but it has disproportionately affected minority racial and ethnic groups (see figure 9 reproduced from the article). This is so much the case in some communities that incarceration is becoming almost a normative life experience. Chaiken comments that such a high level of incarceration has grave implications for the body politic. For one thing, it fosters disrespect for legitimate authority among people who begin to feel that everyone they know is being put in prison. For another, because felons typically are not eligible to vote, they are likely to have no interest or role in elections and thus may be alienated from the political process.

Chaiken states that the U.S. is disenfranchising a group of people who

currently are minorities, but—if current demographic trends continue—will become a majority of the population. The latest figures, for 1996, show that on any given day, approximately 30 percent of black men ages 20 to 29 were under correctional supervision—either in jail or prison or on probation or parole in the community. Examining the numbers for State and Federal prisoners only (that is, omitting people who are on probation and parole), 8.3 percent of black men ages 25 to 29 were in prison at the end of 1996. This figure is more than three times higher than the 2.6 percent of Hispanic men who are in prison and more than 10 times higher than the rate for white men.

Chaiken notes that BJS has developed a statistical model that predicts the lifetime chances of going to prison if current patterns of imprisonment continue at the same levels. The model indicates that a young black man age 16 in 1996 had a 28.5 percent chance of spending time in prison during his life. This figure does *not* include being arrested and spending a night or so in jail. It reflects actual prison sentences, which ordinarily are for at least a year and follow a conviction for a felony. This does not seem to be the kind of trend that can be sustained very long, both because of its monetary costs and because of its corrosive effects on heavily affected communities. On the other side of the equation, however, there are those (such as deterrence theorists) who believe that the dramatic decrease in violent crime that this country has experienced in the recent past can be attributed to the very fact that large numbers of people are behind bars. They see the investment as paying off in lower crime.

### **Comment**

Chaiken's article presents a nice compilation of data on various aspects of

crime trends in the U.S. and other countries in recent decades. He raises a number of important substantive questions regarding these trends and the more accurate and adequate measurement thereof. Chaiken concludes by stating that this unanticipated period of rapidly declining crime may be unique in the history of the United States. He also suggests that this is an opportune time for researchers to learn as much as they can about the underlying causes of the decline. What social forces as well as criminal justice system policies account for the decline? For the lack of comparable declines in other developed nations? And, in those U.S. communities where the general declines have not been borne out, what accounts for this lack of decline?

Clearly, there is a large agenda here that is of interest not only to criminal justice researchers but also to the social indicators and quality-of-life research community. Declining and/or low-level violent and property crime rates are important factors in determining improving and/or high-level quality-of-life for residents of many communities around the country. Beyond this impact, researchers may also need to pay increasing attention to the burden of high-level incarceration rates and the impacts on the quality-of-life of high levels of former prisoners in the resident populations of many communities, especially minority communities.

~Kenneth C. Land

**ISQOLS CONFERENCE 2000****Third Conference of the International Society for Quality of Life Studies****20-22 July 2000****Centre Cultural de la Merce, Gerona, Spain****CONFERENCE OBJECTIVES:**

The Third Conference of the International Society for Quality of Life Studies will be held at the Centre Cultural de la Merce in the city of Gerona, Spain, July 20-22, 2000. The University of Girona, through its *Institut de Recerca sobre la Qualitat de Vida* (IRQV) (translated as Research Institute on Quality of Life), is co-organizer of this Conference. The location of the Conference is intended to especially encourage participation by European scholars interested in social indicators, social reporting, and quality-of-life studies. Complete information and updates on plans for the Conference can be obtained from the Society's Webpage cited elsewhere in this issue.

The objectives of this international Conference are:

- to provide an international place for researchers and experts in quality-of-life studies to meet and exchange scientific knowledge;
- to promote a dialogue between researchers and other social agents interested in promoting quality of life of specific populations;
- to steer research in quality-of-life studies toward specific problems and challenges of contemporary society;
- to promote European and international networking among all people interested in quality-of-life research and its applications; and
- to facilitate networking among Latin researchers and experts in quality-of-life studies to further develop

research, dialogue, and exchange of ideas and programs.

Generally, the Conference seeks to increase the knowledge base of quality-of-life (QOL) studies. QOL studies are broadly defined to involve issues related to variables and organizations that have an effect on the subjective and/or physical well-being of individuals, groups, communities, and/or society. Organizations can be business organizations, government organizations, educational organizations, community organizations, non-profit organizations, household organizations, among others. This Conference is designed to involve social/behavioral science researchers from a variety of disciplines such as management, psychology, sociology, biology, earth sciences, political science, economics, public administration, marketing, educational administration, family and child development, travel and tourism, leisure and recreation studies, technology management, law, and mass media/journalism.

**INTERNATIONAL ORGANIZATION COMMITTEE:****Co-Presidents:**

- *Josep M. Nadal*, The Rector of the University of Girona in Girona, Spain.

- *Alex Michalos*, The President of ISQOLS, University of Northern British Columbia, Faculty of Management and Administration, 3333 U. Way, Prince George, British Columbia, V2N 4Z9, Canada; tel: 250-960-6697; fax: 250-960-5544; e-mail: [Michalos@unbc.edu](mailto:Michalos@unbc.edu)

Communications and queries concerning the Conference may be addressed to President Michalos or any of the following four Executive Vice-Presidents:

*Ferran Casas*, Universitat de Girona, QOL Research Institute, Pl. S. Domenec, 9, 17071-Girona, Spain; tel: 34-972-41-8980; fax: 34-972-418345; e-mail: [fcasas@aligues.udg.es](mailto:fcasas@aligues.udg.es)

*Don Rahtz*, The College of William and Mary, School of Business Administration, P.O. Box 8795, Williamsburg, Virginia 23187-8795, USA; tel: 757-221-2866; fax: 757-221-

2937; [dxraht@dogwood.tyler.wm.edu](mailto:dxraht@dogwood.tyler.wm.edu)

*M. Joseph Sirgy*, Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University, Pamplin College of Business, Department of Marketing, Blacksburg, Virginia 24061-0236, USA; tel: 540-231-5110; fax: 540-231-3076; e-mail: [sirgy@vt.edu](mailto:sirgy@vt.edu)

*Bruno Zumbo*, University of Northern British Columbia, Depts. of Psychology and Mathematics, 3333 U. Way, Prince George, British Columbia, V2N 4Z9, Canada; tel: 250-960-6504; e-mail: [zumbob@unbc.ca](mailto:zumbob@unbc.ca)

Names and addresses of members of the Scientific Committee of the Conference together with the topics of the sections (tracks) they will organize have been posted on the ISQOLS Webpage.

...Continued from page 9

**"Brief History of Social Indicators..."**

Stone developed such a model for demographic and social statistics (1971). It requires population frequencies at the beginning and end of an observational period and data on the transitions from one state to another within the period (for example, transition from single state to marriage, or from school enrollment to employment). From such tables, trends in rates by age, period and cohort may be derived.

Beyond statistical modeling, however, are models of social change that employ intervention to alter some of life's conditions. Experience in fields of education, health and child well-being have proven the utility of such a model. It involves:—(1) establishing goals in terms of a specific change in the trend of an indicator (such as infant mortality rate); (2) intervening with programs designed to alter the direction or rate of change in the indicator (such as a program of prenatal care, instituted on the local level); (3) monitoring trends in the indicator to assess progress and modifying the intervention if desired results are not being achieved; (4) continuing to monitor progress and to revise goals. This simple paradigm has proven efficient by the KIDS COUNT pro-

(Continued on next page.)

gram to improve the well-being of children (Annie E. Casey Foundation, 1993), the Surgeon General's program of health promotion and disease prevention (U. S. Public Health Service, 1995), and the National Education Goals program (National Education Goals Panel, 1997) for the improvement of U. S. education.

Other recent reviews of the history of the social indicators "movement" include: Land, 1992, and Noll and Zapf, 1994.

~Abbott L. Ferriss

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