

**Statistics Users Council:
Quality of Life Indicators Conference 1987**

Contribution from floor by John F Hall
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I'd like to take the opportunity to point out that a great deal of subjective indicator work in the quality of life area was actually developed, if not initiated, in Britain. Mark Abrams referred to some of it earlier and it has in fact been published. It has even been published in Social Trends (Abrams 1973; Hall 1976) and there is a display outside of British SSRC Quality of Life Survey work and a leaflet listing known publications deriving from them. This was important work and although it stopped in 1976 when SSRC closed its Survey Unit it has informed and shaped a lot of work that has followed since.

The question about what is "Quality of Life" has in fact been asked in Britain. It formed the basis of a major series of questionnaire surveys conducted by Mark Abrams and myself between 1971 and 1975 at the Social Science Research Council Survey Unit. These surveys were part of a cross-national research programme in subjective social indicators and were carried out in close collaboration with research institutes in the USA and Canada (notably Angus Campbell, Philip Converse and Frank Andrews at the Institute for Social Research at the University of Michigan, Ann Arbor, Norman Bradburn of the National Opinion Research Centre, University of Chicago and Bernard Blishen and Tom Atkinson at the Institute for Social and Behavioural Research at York University, Ontario) Questions were replicated across countries. Experience in this area informed the direction and content of later work both in the UK and elsewhere.

The British work I refer to consisted of two pilot surveys conducted in 1971, one national and two local (Stoke-on-Trent and Sunderland) urban surveys in 1973 and a further national survey (in the same wards, but different polling districts) in 1975. This last survey included a question asking respondents what they thought the phrase "Quality of Life" actually meant. The verbatim replies were on questionnaires stored at SSRC in Temple Avenue and I suspect that they have long since gone, but the coded replies are reported in an article commissioned for Social Trends (Hall, 1976) Respondents' unprompted definitions of "Quality of Life" include many of the topics covered this afternoon - things like family and home life, general contentment, money and prices, living standards, social values and standards and so on right down to very low proportions mentioning altruistic things and getting into areas like equality and justice. Eric Thompson mentioned civil liberties earlier today: people do mention them, but not in very high proportions. The 1976 Social Trends article reports many other findings from the 1973 and 1975 surveys including an early attempt to link survey data with small area statistical data from the Census and other sources.

After 1976, British quality of life research continued in various guises and locales: some of this work is referred to in papers this afternoon, but quite a lot of it is not. I notice that

there's someone here from Cleveland County Council today. I know for a fact that Cleveland were actually running quality of life type surveys replicating SSRC questions and using them as direct monitoring of social policy and informing social policy planning. Strathclyde Council used instruments developed by SSRC in surveys by Jack Brand's unit at Strathclyde University. That's really a way of saying that we haven't really heard today from the local authorities or about the small area statistics applications of social indicators which I suspect are probably more useful for policy making than material collected in national surveys. Other work has spun off into the quality of life of the elderly in residential care and into community groups.

Peter Warr at the MRC/ESRC Social and Applied Psychology Unit, Sheffield University has been running a research programme on the quality of life in (and out of) work. There are two research initiatives on values in Europe and, indeed the world, which include quality of life indicators. Elizabeth Noelle-Neumann has been working with one of the groups the European Values Systems Study Group which has now conducted questionnaire surveys in more than twenty countries. Mark Abrams is a member of this group and is joint editor of the report (Abrams, Gerard and Timms 1985) on the British survey. Staff in my unit supplied chapters for this and have also written a book (Harding and Phillips 1986) reporting on the findings in Europe as a whole. Fieldwork for these surveys was conducted by Gallup who some years ago also conducted a "World Quality of Life Survey" heavily derived from British SSRC and Michigan ISR work.

The other group is the Working Group on Values and Social Problem Indicators in Contemporary Europe chaired by Prof Walter Ruegg of Bern University which has been doing a lot of work utilising multi-dimensional scaling and mapping sentences. My unit represents Britain on the group and has conducted a pilot survey (Phillips 1981) and was commissioned to design the core questionnaire used in several European countries and Israel. The core questionnaire contains replicated quality of life questions. Ironically, owing to lack of funding, it was never used in the UK!

Indirectly there's quality of life thinking implicit in, for example, the National Crime Survey, the General Household Survey and, to some extent, in the SCPR British Social Attitudes series; Roger Jowell is here and can speak to that, but although it includes questions on satisfaction with selected services, it hasn't really covered quality of life, psychological well-being, happiness and those kinds of indicators and it's a pity because for ten years there hasn't really been any systematic national collection of data. The OECD has worked on quality of life indicators and the annual Eurobarometre survey contains much relevant material, again deriving from early SSRC work.

Finally I'd just like to give a plug for the ESRC Data Archive which has all our data, together with comprehensive user-documentation for secondary analysis, (eg Hall 1982) in SPSS system files for those who know what they are plus a lot of national survey data and census data and other kinds of economic statistics. Eric Tanenbaum and Marcia Taylor are here today, but I think the ESRC Data Archive is under-exploited as a resource for monitoring social trends and even for going back and doing

secondary analysis on quite old data. I'll stop there and hand over to Roger Jowell

Post-script:

The selective display of British and other quality of life work seemed to be of great interest to conference delegates. I therefore append a short reading list of material published up to 1982 reproduced from my 1982 user-manual. A great deal of material has been published since and readers are advised to look at the specialist journal, Social Indicators Research edited by Alex Michalos at the University of Guelph and published by Reidel (Netherlands). Publications referred to in my text are:

- Abrams M "Subjective Social Indicators"
 Social Trends No 4 HMSO 1973
- Abrams M, Gerard D "Values and Social Change in Britain"
and Timms N (Eds) Macmillan 1985
- Hall J F "Subjective Measures of Quality of Life in
 Britain 1971-1975: some developments and
 trends"
 Social Trends No 7 HMSO 1976
- Hall J F "The Quality of Life in Urban Britain 1975:
 Users' Manual" Polytechnic of North London
 1982
- Harding S and "Contrasting Values on Western Europe:
Phillips D with Unity, Diversity and Change" Macmillan 1986
Fogarty M
- Other work of interest includes:
- Andrews F and "Social Indicators of Well-Being"
Withey S Plenum Press 1976
- Bradburn N "The Structure of Psychological Well-Being"
 Aldine Press 1969
- Campbell A and "The Human Meaning of Social Change"
Converse P (Eds) Russell Sage 1972
- Campbell A "The Quality of American Life"
Converse P and Russell Sage 1976
Rodgers W
- Strumpel B "Subjective Elements of Well-Being" OECD 1974
- Szalai A and "The Quality of Life: Comparative Studies"
Andrews F (Eds) Sage 1983

Authors to look for include:

Allardt E (Scandinavia) Andorka R and Hankiss E (Hungary)
Ingelhart R and Zapf W (W Germany) Atkinson T (Canada) Heady B
(Australia) Davies E and Davies P (Ireland) Veenhoven R
(Netherlands)

Data from the British and American Quality of Life and from the
SCPR British Social Attitude surveys are available at the
Polytechnic of North London for secondary analysis and for
teaching.