



Sociology of Quality of Life

Fall 2010, Das Institut für Soziologie, Universität Bremen

Course Instructors: Ekaterina Uglanova, Hilal Galip and Liuba Borisova

Contact info: Ekaterina Uglanova (euglanov@bigsss-bremen.de), Hilal Galip (hgalip@bigsss-bremen.de), Liuba Borisova (borisova@bigsss-bremen.de)

Course number: 08-29-GS24

Course Description: Quality-of-life research emerged as an outcome of numerous within- and between-disciplinary attempts to measure and engineer social progress (an example of such endeavor would be well-known Human Development Index). The course will start with overview of social indicators (such as GDP or Life expectancy) and constructed indexes (HDI, GDI, GEM, etc) that aimed at measuring social progress. Furthermore, the course will focus on understanding of quality of life on various levels: individual (life satisfaction, happiness); community (neighborhood quality of life); and societal (social welfare). Finally, we will discuss how social policy can profit from quality-of-life research. During the course the students will gain insights how to use and interpret social indicators within the context of macro-, mezzo- and micro-levels of sociological research.

Language of Instruction: English

Course calendar WiSe 2010/2011

Time: Mondays, 10-12 am

Location: UB, GW1 B2070 (S)

Date	Topic	Lecturer	Readings
25/10	History and perspective of quality-of-life research (QOL)	H.Galip, E.Uglanova	None
	<i>Description:</i> Introduction of the instructors, the course and grading. Introduction to QOL. Evolution of the QOL concept. QOL status in Mainstream Sociology		
1/11	What is QOL? QOL and related constructs	H.Galip	Veenhoven R. (2000). The four qualities of life. Ordering concept and measures of the good life. <i>Journal of Happiness Studies</i> , Vol. 1, pp. 1-39.
	<i>Description:</i> QOL in different disciplines. The Veenhoven's four qualities of life.		
8/11	QOL and related constructs. Part 2.	L.Borisova	Concepts of Functioning, Health, Well-Being and Quality of Life. In: Bowling, A. (2004). <i>Measuring health: A review of quality of life measurement scales</i> . Maidenhead: Open University Press. pp.1-9.
	<i>Description:</i> Distinguishing QOL from similar constructs. Going beyond socio-economic constructs.		
15/11	Measurement of QOL. Social Indicators	E.Uglanova	Limitations of economic and social indicators. In: Diener E. et al. (2009). <i>Well-being for Public Policy</i> . Oxford University Press.
	<i>Description:</i> Social indicators: goals and clasifications.		
22/11	Social indicators. Macro-level examples	L.Borisova	Lind, N. (2010). A Calibrated Index of Human Development. <i>Social Indicators Research</i> , 98, 2, pp.301-319.
	<i>Description:</i> Economic, social and political dimensions. Composite measures and sources of data.		

29/11	Social indicators. Mezo-level examples. Part 1	H.Galip	Fadda & Jirón (1999). Quality of life and gender: a methodology for urban research. <i>Environment and Urbanization</i> , 11; 261. <i>Description:</i> Urban and neighbourhood differences in the QOL.
6/12	Social indicators. Mezo-level examples. Part 2.	H.Galip	Hendry, F. & McVittie, C. (2004). Is Quality of Life a Healthy Concept? Measuring and Understanding Life Experiences of Older People. <i>Qualitative Health Research</i> , Vol. 14, 7, pp. 961-975 <i>Description:</i> QOL segregation by groups (elderly, poor, ethnical minorities and migrants)
13/12	Micro-level measurement of QOL: objective indicators and the relationship between the objective and subjective	L.Borisova	Erikson, R. (1993). Descriptions of inequality: The Swedish Approach to Welfare Research. In Nussbaum, M. C. & Sen, A.(Eds.). <i>The Quality of life</i> . Oxford. England: Clarendon Press. pp.67-83. Cummins, R. A. (2000). Objective and Subjective Quality of Life: an Interactive Model. <i>Social Indicators Research</i> , 52, 1, pp.55-72. <i>Description:</i> Measuring QOL at the intra-nation level: objective accounts of people's well-being.
20/12	Subjective indicators – are they of any use?	E.Uglanova	Philips D. (2006): Quality of Life. Concept, Policy and Practice. Routledge, London & New York. Chapter 1 (Quality of life and the individual). <i>Description:</i> The advantages and shortcomings, reliability and validity of subjective indicators.
10/01	Subjective well-being (SWB). Social determinants of SWB	H.Galip	Kahneman D., Diener E., Schwarz, N. (1999): Well-being: the foundation of Hedonic Psychology. Russell Sage Foundation. New York. Chapter Part IV <i>Description:</i> Principal theories of SWB: livability approach, social comparison, aspiration theory
17/01	Principal theories of SWB: set-point theory. Determinants of SWB: society-level factors	E.Uglanova	Lyubomirsky, S., Sheldon, K. M., & Schkade, D. (2005). Pursuing happiness: The architecture of sustainable change. <i>Review of General Psychology</i> , 9, 111-131.
24/01	Determinants of SWB: individual-level factors. Positive psychology	E.Uglanova	Horwitz A. (2007) The loss of sadness: how psychiatry transformed normal sorrow into depressive disorder. Oxford university press. Chapter 1 (The concept of depression). <i>Description:</i> Set-point theory of SWB. Individual and societal factors of SWB. Social comparison, gender and SWB across the lifespan. Strategies of SWB optimization.
30/01	Policy related issues of QOL – inequality, cohesion and public policy	L.Borisova	Dolan, P., & White, M. (2007). How Can Measures of Subjective Well-Being Be Used to Inform Public Policy? <i>Perspectives on Psychological Science</i> , 2, 1, pp.71-85. <i>Description:</i> Poverty, inequality, social exclusion and cohesion – effects on public policy.
7/02	QOL and sustainable development	E.Uglanova	Giddings, B. et al. (2002) Environment, economy and society: fitting them together into sustainable development. <i>Sustainable development</i> , 10, 187-196. <i>Description:</i> Concept and principles of sustainable development. Sustainable consumption and ecological footprint

Supplementary readings

Books:

- Nussbaum, M.C. & Sen, A. (eds.) *The quality of life* Clarendon Press, 1993, Oxford, UK.
 Layard, R. *Happiness. Lessons from a New Science* Penguin, 2005, New York, USA.
 Kahneman, D., Diener, E., Schwarz, N.; (eds.) *Well-Being: The Foundations of Hedonic Psychology* Russell Sage Foundation, 1999, New York, USA.

Journals:

- Social Indicators Research
- International Journal for Quality of Life Measurement
- Journal of Happiness Studies
- Quality of Life Research

History and perspective of quality-of-life (QOL) research.

- Noll, Heinz-Herbert. Social Indicators and Quality of Life Research: Background, Achievements and Current Trends. In: Genov, Nicolai (ed.): *Advances in Sociological Knowledge Over Half a Century*. Wiesbaden: VS Verlag für Sozialwissenschaften 2004, pp. 151-181.
 Sirgy, M. J., Michalos, A. C., Ferriss, A. L., Easterlin, R. A., Pavot, W., & Patrick, D. (May 01, 2006). The Quality-of-Life (QOL) Research Movement: Past, Present, and Future. *Social Indicators Research*, 76, 3, 343-466.

What is QOL? QOL and related constructs.

- A Life of Quality – Just What Does QOL Mean? In: Rapley, M. (2003). *Quality of life research: A critical introduction*. London: SAGE Publications.
 Inkeles, A. (1993). Industrialization, Modernization and the Quality of Life, *International Journal of Comparative Sociology*, Vol. 34, 1-2, pp. 1-23.

Social indicators. Macro-level examples.

- Hagerty, M.R. et al. (2001) Quality of Life Indexes for National Policy: Review and Agenda for Research. *Social Indicators Research*, 55, 1, pp. 1-96.

Subjective indicators – are they of any use?

- Veenhoven, R. (2002). Why social policy needs subjective indicators. *Social Indicators Research*. Vol. 58, pp. 33-45.
 Kahneman, D. & Krueger, A. (2006) Developments in the Measurement of Subjective Well-Being, *Journal of Economic Perspectives*, Vol. 20, 1, pp. 3-24.

Subjective well-being (SWB).

- Veenhoven, R. (2006). *Unseen Happiness: Why sociologists fail to acknowledge findings on this matter*. Presentation at the 16th World Congress of Sociology. Working Group 06 Social Indicators, Durban, South Africa, 23-29 July 2006.
 Easterlin, R. A. (2003). *Building a Better Theory of Well-Being*. Discussion papers, No. 742. Bonn: IZA.
 Easterlin R. (1995) Will raising the incomes of all increase the happiness of all? *Journal of Economic Behavior and Organization*, Vol. 27, pp. 35-47
 Oishi, S., Diener, E. F., Lucas, R. E., & Suh, E. M. (January 01, 1999). Cross-Cultural Variations in Predictors of Life Satisfaction: Perspectives From Needs and Values. *Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin*, 25, 8, 980-990.

Policy related issues of QOL.

- Keck W. & Krause, P. (2007). How Does European Union Enlargement Affect Social Cohesion? In Estes, R. J. (Ed.) *Advancing quality of life in a turbulent world*. Social indicators research series, v. 29. Dordrecht: Springer. pp. 3-24.

Work load

Didactic mode

- Lecture –discussion about key-questions.
- Reading the texts at home.
- Short presentation in class.

3 ECTS: presentation in class (10 min.), which covers a small part of material within the lecture's topic + a short paper (ca. 5 pages) on the same topic. Minimum number of literature sources: 4-5.

Topics for short paper / presentation:

- Gender differences in subjective well-being
- Income inequality and subjective well-being
- Gender inequality and subjective well-being
- Quality of life and disability
- Living standards' inequalities within a society
- The German Socio-Economic Panel (SOEP, *Sozio-oekonomisches Panel*)

6 ECTS: a paper on a research topic (ca. 15 pages) + presentation of the paper in class (15 min.). The paper and the presentation should contain the analysis of survey-data. Minimum number of literature sources: 8-10.

Some possible data sources (the list is not restrictive):

- The World Bank, <http://data.worldbank.org/>
- World Database on Happiness, <http://worlddatabaseofhappiness.eur.nl/>
- World Health Organisation Data <http://www.who.int/research/en/>
- Human Development United Nations Development Programme Data <http://hdr.undp.org/en/statistics/>

Topics for paper / presentation:

- Inequality in subjective well-being: is it a useful indicator?
- Evidence of validity and reliability of subjective indicators
- Indicators of social inclusion
- QOL of children
- Comparing different measures of quality of life
- Advantages and disadvantages of uni-dimensional and multi-dimensional constructs of the QOL
- Quality of life in the old age
- Quality of life in developed and developing world: a comparison

Grading

For both 3ECTS and 6ECTS, grading is based on 65% for the paper and 35% for the presentation.