# Book Reviews

## The Sense of Well-Being: Developing Measures

**The Quality of American Life**. Perceptions, Evaluations, and Satisfactions. ANGUS CAMPBELL, PHILIP E. CONVERSE, and WILLARD L. RODGERS. Russell Sage Foundation, New York, 1976 (distributor, Basic Books, New York). xiv, 584 pp., illus. $15.

The idea of expanding the nation's data collection machinery to include a wider range of social information is in vogue in the social sciences and has, as well, a modicum of governmental, including congressional, support. The idea is not new, and earlier calls for more effective monitoring of the nation's economic and social well-being have not gone unheeded entirely. Over the years there has been substantial growth in what the nation has sought to learn about itself.

The current "social indicators" movement, as it has come to be called, is distinguished from its predecessors especially by its advocacy of adding a wide range of "subjective" information to the largely "objective" data that the Bureau of the Census, the Bureau of Labor Statistics, the National Health Survey, and other agencies now collect. Information is being called for that would allow fuller assessment of the changing character of American life than can be provided by objective data alone—information, for example, about changes in the things Americans value, in the beliefs they hold, in the satisfaction they derive from their lives, in the commitments they are willing to make.

Over the roughly ten years of its history, the social indicators movement has not achieved notable success in informing the nation's data collection machinery. This is a result partly of the movement's not having generated the political power to move full steam ahead. More fundamentally, however, the movement has not, as yet, come up with a plan for putting its ideas into practice that has gained widespread support. The continuing hope has been that out of the considerable developmental work being done there might emerge one or several models for new social indicators around which the movement might coalesce.

Among the developmental efforts whose results have been awaited most eagerly is one with the broad and ambitious goal of fashioning a means to measure the quality of American life over time. This effort, undertaken at the Institute for Social Research of the University of Michigan, has now reached fruition with the publication of the book that is the subject of this review.

The means advocated for assessing the quality of American life is the sample survey. The authors—though they do not suggest how often surveys should be taken or indicate what they think the sample size ought to be—plan repeated measurement of the quality of life through periodic surveys of samples of the nation's adult population, with successive samples being drawn equivalently so as to allow meaningful discernment of change.

The authors have sought to design and test a set of questions that might be asked in such surveys to afford reliable, valid, and meaningful measures of how Americans assess the quality of their lives. The task of measurement is approached at three levels: at a global level, where the end in view is to produce a single indicator of "general sense of well-being"; at an intermediate level, where measurement is directed to assessing the degree of satisfaction with particular "domains" of life experience, for example, work, housing, and family life; and at a more specific level oriented to discovering the determinants of satisfaction within particular domains. The book is devoted largely to describing the measures developed at these different levels, to assessing their adequacy as social indicators, and to elaborating and testing a model of their determinants. These tasks are pursued through a survey of the adult population of the United States (sample size 2160) carried out in the summer of 1971 and through repeated interviews with a subsample (285 respondents) conducted in the spring of 1972.

Several alternative possibilities are entertained in the search for a global measure. The measure decided on is one having two components, the first of which is produced from responses to a question asking respondents to rate their general satisfaction with life these days on a seven-point scale ranging from complete satisfaction to complete dissatisfaction. The second component is an "index of general affect" produced from the responses to a battery of questions asking respondents to rate their lives, again using a seven-point scale, on the basis of ten pairs of "polar" adjectives, for example, boring–interesting, empty–full, disappointing–rewarding. This index and the general satisfaction ratings are then given roughly equal weight to form a composite "index of well-being."

The assessment of satisfaction with particular domains is pursued by the use of a single question for each domain, respondents being asked to rate their satisfaction on the same seven-point scale as was employed in the question on general satisfaction. In total, 18 such questions are proposed, chosen to "throw as broad a net as possible over the lives of [the] respondents." The domains are marriage, family life, health, neighborhood, friendships, housework, job, life in the United States, city or country, nonworking activities, housing, usefulness of education, standard of living, amount of education, savings, religion, the national government, and organizations belonged to.

A series of more specific questions are proposed to assess satisfaction with particular features of each domain and to gather information about the domain's attributes. In the domain of housing, for example, they include questions asking for evaluations of the respondent's dwelling unit as a place to live and of the adequacy of room size, structure, and heating. Attribute questions include whether the dwelling unit is rented or owned and at what cost.

The book gives considerably more attention and space to the measures of domain satisfaction than it does to the "index of well-being," its components, or other possible summary measures. The authors conclude that the overall measure is less stable and probably less reliable than the domain measures and should not be used alone, though they argue for the retention of such a measure in any more extended inquiry for reasons of economy and efficiency.

It is not possible in short compass to summarize adequately the wide range of tests and analyses to which the domain measures are subjected. The validity, reliability, and stability of the measures are all examined carefully. The potential for bias in measurement is explored extensively, in particular the possibility of a

"positive aura" of responses. Among the other topics examined analytically are the organization of domain satisfactions, the association between domain scores and scores on the global index, the interplay between the importance assigned to different domains and levels of domain satisfaction, the influence of education and age on domain scores, and the relation between respondents' reports about their present levels of satisfaction within domains and the aspirations and expectations they harbor about future levels of satisfaction.

The results of this prodigious effort are inconclusive on a number of issues. Although it is established that the domain measures are more reliable and stable than the general measures, their reliability is not pinned down precisely. It is also not established firmly to what extent, if at all, the relatively high levels of satisfaction reported reflect a tendency on the part of respondents to report greater degrees of satisfaction than they actually feel. Moreover, there remain unanswered analytic questions, such as how to account for the unexpected finding that those with more education tend to report lower levels of satisfaction than those with less.

Ambiguity about some of the unresolved issues, the authors indicate, is inherent in social science measurement in its present state of development. Other issues are resolvable but require more adequate repeated measurement than was possible in the developmental work reported on here. The authors are sanguine about resolving the crucial remaining problems of measurement and conclude that the domain measures afford a key tool for monitoring changes in satisfaction with the quality of life.

The domain submeasures are the subjects of a series of chapters which deal successively with the domains relevant to the residential environment, to the United States as a cultural and political unit, to the world of work, and to marriage and the family. The purpose of these chapters is to explore the authors' conceptual model of the determinants of satisfaction.

The model regards general satisfaction with a domain as being dependent on assessments of its subfeatures which, in turn, are dependent on how these subfeatures are perceived by the individual and on the standards by which he makes the assessment—his aspirations, expectations, conception of equity, reference group, and personal needs and values. General satisfaction with a neighborhood, for example, will depend on whether such subfeatures as convenience, condition of housing, and neighbors are assessed positively or negatively. These assessments are dependent on how each of these attributes is perceived—for example, whether neighbors are seen as all white, mostly white, half and half, mostly black, or all black—and on what expectations and aspirations are harbored about what a neighborhood should be like—for example, what racial mix in a neighborhood is expected and preferred. The model takes into account the possibility of discrepancy between how the subfeatures of a domain are perceived and what they are objectively and also recognizes that objective conditions, such as race, educational attainment, and job characteristics, can exert an influence on the workings of the model. Examination of the data confirms that domain scores are strongly influenced by assessment of domain subfeatures, with objective conditions playing variously important intervening roles. The net effect of these chapters is to support the authors' more general claims for the domain measures.

Appropriately, the book is devoted largely to the measurement and analytic problems judged to be central to developing a continuing research program. Substantive issues are not entirely neglected, however, and in the penultimate two chapters reports are provided on how quality of life is assessed by men, by women, and by blacks. Men and women as groups are found to differ very little from each other in expression of general well-being and of satisfaction with specific domains. However, when comparisons are made among more homogeneous subgroups, for example, employed men and employed women, differences do emerge, although they are not consistently in the same direction. As might be expected, whites report greater satisfaction than blacks. There is considerable variation in satisfaction among black subgroups; women, for example, respond more negatively than men and younger persons more negatively than older ones. These results, based as they are on a single cross-sectional survey, cannot adequately demonstrate the substantive knowledge to be gained from repeated measurements. The authors intend them, however, to afford insight into the potential.

Among other matters addressed that warrant mention are the relative advantages and disadvantages of objective and subjective measures of quality of life, the relative desirability of single- and multiple-item measures to assess change, and the possibilities for, as well as the limitations and dangers of, utilizing subjective measures of quality of life to help guide public policy.

The authors, in concluding, judge their report to be premature because the repeated measurements necessary to resolve outstanding methodological questions and to demonstrate the substantive power of their conceptualization have not been made. They express confidence, however, that what they have done affords ample evidence of the viability of their approach and warrants its being extended to additional points of measurement.

Whether or not Campbell, Converse, Rodgers, and their associates have produced a viable and useful blueprint for advancing the cause of social indicators cannot be fully decided until they are given the chance to undertake the more extended developmental work they aspire to do. This interim report nevertheless affords a needed framework for discussion of the directions that future work on social indicators might take most profitably.

Speaking in favor of the approach advocated is its likely political acceptability. Some, to be sure, will see any attempt to measure subjective feelings about the quality of life as politically dangerous. Asking people how satisfied they are with particular aspects of their lives and with life in general seems the least politically controversial approach that might be imagined.

The proposed forms of measurement also have the advantage that they appear not to be time-bound. By and large, the domains covered are fundamental to life, and though it is possible that events will modify their relative importance they are likely to remain central elements of experience. Consequently, evidence of change in satisfaction produced by repeated measurement following the authors' prescriptions can reasonably be interpreted as just that rather than as an artifact of something else.

The major questions that are likely to be raised about the book have to do with its conceptualization of quality of life. It especially might be objected that the conceptualization neither is grounded in a theory of social change nor has a solid empirical base. The authors, early on, suggest that America may be in the midst of revolutionary changes with respect to the standards against which the good life is judged. They speak of the "revolution of rising expectations" as reflecting not simply a desire for more material goods but a growing need for satisfaction of things of the "spirit." The nature, direction, and causes of this revolution are never expounded, however, and the task

of conceptualization is pursued independently of a theory of change. Such a static model as the authors use seems no substitute for more macroscopic theory about broader changes in American life that might affect perceptions, evaluations, and, in the final analysis, behavior on matters pertaining to the quality of life. From a social indicator point of view, the issue boils down to whether or not a conceptualization of quality of life relatively uninformed by a theory of change provides a basis for monitoring change effectively, much less for accounting for it.

An alternative to grounding conceptualization in theory is to derive it empirically, in the present instance through learning how Americans conceptualize quality of life for themselves. Inquiry toward this end, through, for example, the use of nondirective depth interviews, would have helped to establish the degree of correspondence between the frames of reference adopted by the investigators and those held by their respondents. The investigators' conceptualization has some empirical base, clearly, in their long experience in conducting surveys of the American public, but the case for their measures would be stronger if the empirical base were stronger.

For those who find the mode of conceptualization congenial, *The Quality of American Life* is likely to be judged the seminal work on social indicators it aspires to be. For those who remain unsatisfied that the authors have come up with a conceptualization that adequately comprehends quality of life, there will be respect for the very high level of craftsmanship exhibited and gratitude for a work that is likely to prove an effective stimulus to get the social indicators movement off dead center.

CHARLES Y. GLOCK
*Department of Sociology, University of California, Berkeley*

## Visual Behavior

**Gaze and Mutual Gaze.** MICHAEL ARGYLE and MARK COOK. Cambridge University Press, New York, 1976. xii, 210 pp., illus. $18.50.

Psychological and sociological views of social interaction have accorded little formal place to eye contact and gaze in the regulation of human interaction. Many experimental studies in social psychology, for example, have taken an exchange of verbal messages as constituting the totality of interaction. Likewise, sociological theories of interaction, such as symbolic interactionism, have dealt in general terms with the nature of human communication but have seldom specified, except in an incidental and somewhat anecdotal way, the nonverbal variables that govern the flow of such interaction. Occasional insightful observers, such as Simmel, have noted the social use of the eyes, but its importance has seldom been fully appreciated.

In recent years, however, an interest in nonverbal communication has arisen out of ethology and out of the recognition on the part of a few innovative social psychologists of the importance of such factors as facial expression, gaze, and gesture in everyday discourse. Among the most productive of the pioneers has been Michael Argyle, who directs an extensive program of research on nonverbal communication at Oxford. Argyle has authored several previous books in the area, including a recent general review entitled *Bodily Communication*.

Now Argyle has written, with Mark Cook, the first book-length exposition of the role of gaze patterns in human interaction. In the book Argyle and Cook systematically present the results of their own work on the subject and that of other investigators (such as Ralph Exline) around the world.

The authors begin by assessing the role of gaze in the animal kingdom, giving the biological perspective that has been traditional since Darwin's *The Expression of the Emotions in Man and Animals* appeared in 1872. The predominant use of gaze in animals appears to be as a threat signal, with gaze cut-off commonly taken as indicating appeasement. (These two uses of gaze are retained in human interactions as well.) Affiliative functions also appear to be served, especially in the higher primates, but nowhere is this more clear-cut than in the case of man, where eye contact between mother and infant appears to be instrumental to the growth of attachment.

Overlying the complex functioning of gaze as aggressive or affiliative signal are cultural norms specifying the proper use or avoidance of mutual gaze. Arab cultures, for example, seem to expect more gaze, as well as other forms of contact, between conversationalists than do northern European ones, a difference that sometimes leads to misunderstandings when members of the two cultures meet.

Most of the remainder of the book is given over to a discussion of the findings of experimental and observational studies of gaze behavior. Argyle and Cook precede their presentation by a full consideration of the formidable technical problems involved in the measurement of gaze patterns. Some experimentalists have taken the rather artificial tack of using confederates who look fixedly at the subject for 100 percent or 50 percent of the time and then recording the subject's reactions. Others have used observers behind one-way mirrors who record the amount of gaze, mutual gaze, timing of glances, pupil dilation, and eye opening. Such records are then correlated to the flow and outcome of the interaction, as indicated by pen-and-paper measures of liking and other affects as well as by the more naturalistic verbal and nonverbal transcript of the entire encounter. The latter approach permits the more complex social functioning of the eyes to emerge but presents considerable difficulties in conventional data handling, which is premised on the more usual experimental model. Most gaze research, including Argyle's own, has been a compromise between the two approaches, both utilizing experimental control and permitting interactional freedom.

Argyle and Cook go on to report on the perception and interpretation of gaze, its role in the sequence of interaction, and personality differences in the use of gaze. They report that "the most basic meaning of gaze is that another is attending, that his visual channel is open." Such attention produces arousal and, depending on the context of the gaze, can evoke positive, approach responses or negative, aggressive behavior or flight. Gaze can be evaluated only in the context of total social performance, including, of course, verbal input and situational factors. Global impressions of personality are often affected by gaze patterns, with persons who look more at others in conversation being evaluated more positively, at least in American and English cultures. Staring in public places often acts as a hostile signal and evokes flight reactions, however. Argyle and Dean have developed an intimacy equilibrium model which posits that eye contact elicits both approach and avoidance tendencies and that within any given situation participants attempt to maintain an optimum desired level of intimacy, established by gaze and other means such as facial expression and physical proximity. If deviation occurs in any of these the participants will attempt to restore equilibrium by adjusting others.