

FREEDOM AND HAPPINESS

A comparative study in 46 nations in the early 1990's ¹

Ruut Veenhoven

Published in: Diener, E. & Suh, E.M. (eds) 'Culture and subjective wellbeing'

MIT press, Cambridge, MA USA, 2000, ISBN 0 262 04182 0, pp. 257-288

Abstract

Freedom in nations can affect the happiness of citizens both positively and negatively. This study takes stock of the balance of effects. It considers 1) whether there is a positive net-effect at all, 2) which freedom variants contribute most to happiness 3) in what conditions.

Freedom is conceived as chance to choose, requiring 'opportunity' to choose, and 'capability' to choose. Opportunity to choose is measured by absence of restrictions in economic, political and personal life. Capability to choose is measured by information and inclination to go one's own way.

Happiness is conceived as the overall appreciation of ones life as a whole. Average happiness in nations is measured by responses to questions on the matter in representative surveys.

Data on both freedom and happiness is available for 46 nations in the early 1990's. Analysis shows first of all positive correlations between freedom and happiness. Yet closer analysis reveals that freedom and happiness do not always concur.

Freedom is positively related to happiness among rich nations, but not among poor nations. Apparently freedom does not pay in poverty. Further, freedom is related to happiness only when 'opportunity' and 'capability' coincide.

A notable exception is economic freedom. Opportunity for free trade is positively related to happiness in poor nations, but not in rich nations. Similarly, the relation between economic freedom and happiness is strongest in nations where capability to choose is lowest.

The findings show that freedom does not always breed happiness, and suggest that economic freedom deserves priority.

Correspondence to: Prof. Dr. Ruut Veenhoven Erasmus University Rotterdam, Faculty of Social Sciences,
P.O.B. 1738 3000 DR Rotterdam, Netherlands. www2.eur.nl/fsw/research/veenhoven

Printed version on: www.SpringerLink.com

1. INTRODUCTION

'Freedom, equality, and brotherhood' was the credo of the French Revolution. This entreaty was linked to the concept of happiness, which was also under discussion by fashionable authors at the time. It was believed that people could live happier lives if more of society put these principles into practice. This classic view of the Enlightenment is still with us today. But is it realistic? Freedom, equality, and brotherhood are mixed blessings, and their realization is not always compatible.

For a long time, this principle could not be tested empirically. The degree of freedom, equality, and brotherhood in society could barely be measured, and neither could the happiness of citizens. However, during the last decades most of the measurement problems have been solved. Fairly good data are now available on some 50, mainly developed, nations. The first explorations of these data yield intriguing results.

The presumed link between 'equality' and happiness fails to appear, at least where income equality is concerned. Average happiness is as high in countries with great income inequality as in nations where income differences are small (Veenhoven 1997a:49). Happiness is also not higher in egalitarian welfare states (Veenhoven & Ouweneel 1995). 'Brotherhood' appears to be no sure ticket to happiness either, though we cannot be happy without good relations with our neighbors, we can live without relations of the brotherhood type. Average happiness appears to be higher in individualistic societies against that in communitarian settings (Veenhoven 1997b). The next question is whether the 'freedom' factor fulfills the promises of the French Revolution.

The issue

Opinion about the impact of freedom on happiness is mixed. Different philosophies stress different effects and suggest different net outcomes.

Individualistic social philosophy stresses the possible positive effects. It is typically assumed that people themselves know best what will make them happy, and hence that they will enjoy life more if they can follow their own preferences. Conflicts of interest are seen to be solved by the invisible hand of the market, which is believed to yield more optimal solutions than prescription by king or custom. Though this intellectual tradition is not blind to the perils of free choice, it expects that the positive effects prevail.

Conservative thought tends to emphasize the negative consequences of freedom. Conservatives doubt that people really know what is best for them. The wisdom of tradition and the benefits of solidarity are seen to bring a better life than short sighted egoism. Through the ages proponents of this view have complained that individual freedom has gone too far, that it is about to destroy vital institutions. Again, the other side of the coin is also acknowledged but deemed to be less relevant.

Some schools see different effects of different variants of freedom. Currently the New Right is quite positive about economic freedom, but at the same time it is critical about freedom

in the private sphere of life. Free sex and the legalization of soft drugs are seen to lead to unhappiness. Likewise the leading view in South-East Asia is that economic freedom will improve the human lot but not political freedom.

An other theme in the discussion is that freedom will add to happiness only in specific conditions. The most commonly mentioned condition is that people are sufficiently 'mature'. If incapable to choose people will fear freedom and seek refuge under authoritarian leaders and strict rules for life (e.g. Fromm 1941).

Research questions

Three sets of questions are addressed in this chapter: The first is: Are the effects of freedom on happiness positive on balance? If so, how important is freedom relative to other societal predictors of happiness? The second is: What kind of freedom is most conducive to happiness? Do all freedom variants work out equally or are some kinds more essential? One of the issues in this context is whether happiness depends more on freedom in private life than in public life, that is, the economy and politics. The third is: To what extent does the balance of effects depends on circumstances? Does freedom add to happiness only in so-called 'developed' societies?

Answering these questions requires, first of all, that the concepts be defined and measured. To that end we will first consider freedom (§ 2) and then happiness (§ 3). The next requirement is that the interrelationships be explored. Correlational analyses are reported in § 4 and the findings are discussed in § 5.

2 FREEDOM

2.1 Concept of Freedom

Freedom can be defined as the *possibility to choose*. A person can be said to be free if his or her condition allows some choice and if that choice is not inhibited by others. In this sense absolute freedom is not possible. The human condition allows only a limited array of options: We cannot choose to fly or choose not to sleep any more; we cannot even choose to live on our own entirely, so mutual interdependence implies much interference. We deal here with the degree to which choice is limited.

The 'possibility' to choose requires first of all that there be an 'opportunity' to choose. This is an attribute of the environment. In the second place it requires a 'capability' to choose, which is, at last resort, an individual attribute.

Opportunity to choose

This opportunity to choose involves two requirements: first that there be something to choose and second that choice not be blocked by others.

In the first sense, freedom depends on the societal supply of life style alternatives. That

variety in life style options depends primarily of all on the mode of existence. For example, simple hunter gatherer societies provide their members with a more limited assortment than highly differentiated industrial societies. Variety depends also on internal dynamics and on contacts with foreign cultures. In this meaning, the concept of freedom overlaps more or less with notions of material affluence, division of work and cultural variety. This broad meaning will not be considered in this paper. The reason is simply that it is too much to handle.

Provided that there is something to choose, opportunity to choose depends further on absence of restriction by others. Bay (1965) refers to this variant as 'social freedom'. In this sense freedom is freedom from impediments, such as restrictive laws or oppression by the powerful. This is the kind of freedom pursued in the French Revolution. The focus of this study is on that latter freedom concept.

Capability to choose

The possibility to choose requires more than mere 'opportunity'. The opportunity must be seized. This requires an inner 'awareness of alternatives' and the 'courage to choose'.

A primary capability requisite is that the opportunity be acknowledged. The captives who fail to see that the door of their jail is open cannot flee, even though they would if they knew. In this sense freedom is determined by education and information. Bay (1965) calls it 'potential freedom'.

The secondary demand is that recognition of opportunity is acted upon. This depends in the first place on an 'inclination' to choose. The captives who see the open door may let that opportunity pass because they are not too eager to take their fate into their own hands. Inclination may depend on moral conviction and on reality beliefs. Even if one would like to seize the opportunity, there is still the problem that not everybody dares to. Choice involves mostly uncertainty and responsibility. Often people shy away from this. The reader may remember the last scene of 'One flew over the Cuckoos nest'. In this context, Bay (1965) speaks of 'psychological freedom'.

2.2 Measures of Freedom

As yet there is no comprehensive measure of freedom in nations, though there are partial measures. With respect to 'opportunity to choose', there are attempts to measure differences across nations in absence of restrictions in economic life and in political life. A new measure of nonrestraint in private life is proposed in this paper.

Measures of 'capability to choose' in nations are even more scarce. Though there are many good indicators at the individual level, there is little at the national level. New measures for this aspect are also proposed in this paper.

2.2.1 Measures of opportunity to choose

Restrictions to choice can best be measured by considering spheres of life separately. We will

review measures of freedom in economic, political, and private life below. Though these three domains do not constitute the whole of life, they cover at least much of it. The sum of restrictions in these fields is indicative of the room for choice in a society.

Economic freedom In the broad sense, 'economic freedom' means opportunity for exchange of goods and services. That opportunity depends on many things, such as presence of a common language, mutual trust, and established custom. Without an economy there cannot be economic freedom. In the more limited sense used here, economic freedom means absence of restrictions on free trade, such as price control, excessive taxing, or closed-shop practices.

The latter meaning is operationalized in an index devised by the Fraser Institute, reputed to be a think tank of the New Right. This index is based on national ratings for security of money (4 items), free enterprise (6 items), freedom from excessive taxes (3 items), and freedom of money transfer (5 items). The items are presented in [appendix 1](#). This index has been computed for most nations of the world in the early 1990's. Scores on the index have been shown to predict economic growth quite well. Since the 1970's economic growth was higher in the economically most free nations (Gwartney 1996).

Political freedom Likewise political freedom in the broad sense requires that there be a political system. In the more limited sense the concept refers to restrictions on participation in the system.

That latter meaning is operationalized in two indexes kept by Freedom House, which is a liberalist pressure group, comparable to Amnesty International. The Freedom House indexes are a continuation of Gastil's (1987) registration of human rights violation in nations. One concerns civil rights such as free speech (11 items). The other deals with political rights and considers things like free elections (9 items). Scores on this index are available for most nations of the present day world (Karantnycky 1996). This is presented in [appendix 1](#).

Private freedom Restriction in the private sphere of life can be measured in a similar way. One can consider various private domains and estimate the degree to which choice is limited in that domain. As yet no such attempts have been reported. A first shot is presented in this section.

Restriction of choice is most manifest in legal constraints. Legal restraints can be assessed by inspection of legislation and law enforcement. Comparative data on these matters are reported in several sources, for example Humana (1992) and IPPF (1990). Many restrictions in private life are often informal, however, especially restrictions on sexuality. The degree of informal social control in nations can be estimated on the basis of attitudinal data. Most of these data can be found in the World Values Survey, which was conducted in 43 nations in the early 1990's.

On the basis of these sources of information I was able to approximate restrictions in the following fields: restrictions on the practice of one's religion, restrictions on travel in the country and abroad, restrictions on entering into marriage and getting divorced, restrictions on sexuality and reproduction, and finally restrictions on ending one's own life. No comparable data were

found on restrictions on dress, use of drugs, and choice of vocation. The available data are presented in more detail in [appendix 1](#).

2.2.2 *Measures of capability to choose*

Two aspects of capability to choose were mentioned above: 'awareness of alternatives' and 'inclination to choose'. Neither matter has been the subject of earlier comparative research, so this paper also introduces new measures for these freedom variants.

Awareness of alternatives The best way to assess awareness of alternatives is to survey perceived options in the various life domains. Such data are not available. Second best is to use data on education and information, assuming that well educated and informed people tend to see more alternatives. On these matters there are comparable data.

The level of education in nations is estimated on the basis of school enrollment and adult literacy. Data were found in the Human Development Report (UN-DP 1995). The level of information can, in principle, be assessed by estimating media variety, media attendance, and practice of criticism in the media. Unfortunately, data on these matters are not available for a sufficient number of countries.

Inclination to choose As noted above, the chance that people act on the opportunities they see will partly depend on their values and beliefs. Chances will be greater if people respect individual preference and an individualist identity. Currently, the best indicators of adherence to individualist values come from studies in the tradition of Hofstede (1991), which assess adherence to individualist work-attitudes in nations. Some of these studies used nearly identical items. The combination of these studies has yielded 39 cases.

The possibility of choice will also be greater if people believe that they are in control of their fate. People who see themselves as a play thing of fate are less likely to seize the opportunities they see. Perceived fate-control was assessed in the World Values Survey, by single item. This score is available for 42 nations (Inglehart et al 1998). For the purpose of this study, the national scores on work attitudes and perceived fate-control are combined in one index of 'inclination to choose'.

Courage to choose Inclination to choose is often not sufficient, some courage is also needed especially if the choice is contested. The measurement of this attribute requires information about stress tolerance and psychological assertiveness. Unfortunately, comparable data on this matter are not available for a sufficient number of nations.

2.2.3 *Validity of the measures of freedom*

The measures of freedom are summarized in [scheme 4](#), left column. All these measures have

considerable face validity, but do they really measure freedom?

One check is testing congruent validity, that is, assessing the correspondence of scores on these measures. Though the different aspects of freedom are not necessarily related, it is not unlikely that they root in common grounds and that they reinforce each other. So one could still expect sizable correlations. The inter-correlations are indeed sizable. Looking again at [scheme 4](#), note that the bottom row is not corrected for autocorrelation.

Another check is testing for concurrent validity, that is assessing correspondence with related matters. Some data are presented in [scheme 5](#). The freedom measures do indeed appear to be highly correlated with individualism, human rights, and the emancipation of women. There is also a firm correlation with perceived freedom.

2.3 Freedom rank of nations

The three measures of opportunity to choose were combined in an average z-score per nation. The results are listed in [appendix 2](#), and presented graphically on [scheme 1](#). In the bar chart China stands out as the nation that provides the fewest opportunities, closely followed by, Nigeria, Russia, and India. At the middle of the chart we see countries like the Philippines, former Czechoslovakia, and Chile. Opportunity for choice appears greatest in Canada, Switzerland, and the Netherlands. The ranking fits fairly well with what a regular newspaper reader would expect. Only the low score of Israel comes as a surprise.

The measures of capability to choose were combined in the same way. The results are also listed in [appendix 2](#) and presented graphically on [scheme 2](#). At the lowest end we see again Nigeria, India, and China. Yet Russia and Cuba perform better in this regard, mainly because the education in these countries is good. In the middle we see again the Philippines and Chile, while Czechoslovakia scores lower on capability than it did on opportunity. The top scorers are not too different either. Again, we see the US, Switzerland, and Canada. Israel surprises us again, now with an unexpected high capability to choose. Apparently, Israel is a country that provides little opportunity for otherwise capable citizens.

The summed indexes of 'opportunity to choose' and summed 'capability to choose' were combined in a comprehensive measure of freedom. The rank order on that overall index is somewhat identical with the results presented earlier. Hence this chart is not provided. The scores are given in [appendix 2](#).

3 HAPPINESS

3.1 Concept of happiness

The term happiness can have different meanings, both 'objective' and 'subjective' meanings. In the objective sense, happiness is living in good conditions, such as material prosperity, peace, and ... freedom, and in this interpretation, freedom and happiness are more or less synonymous words.

In the subjective sense happiness is a state of mind and refers to evanescent feelings as well as a stable appreciation of life. For our purposes, the term is used only in the latter sense. *Happiness is defined as the degree to which someone evaluates positively the overall quality of his or her present 'life as a whole'.* In other words, this is about how much one likes the life one lives. In this interpretation, freedom and happiness are different.

The term 'life satisfaction' carries the same meaning and is often used interchangeably with 'happiness'. An advantage of using the term life satisfaction over the word 'happiness' is that it emphasizes the subjective character of the concept. An other current synonym is 'subjective wellbeing'. Though this phrase makes clear that it is the subject who makes the appraisal, it is not so clear what the subject appraises. The term is not only used for satisfaction with one's entire life as a whole, but also for specific discomforts and passing moods.

The concept of happiness denotes an *overall* evaluation of life. So the appraisal that life is 'free' does not indicate it as that 'happy'. There may be too much freedom in life and too little of other qualities. The overall evaluation of life involves all the criteria figuring in the mind of the individual: how good life feels, how well life meets expectations, how desirable life is deemed to be, and so on. The object of evaluation is *'life in its entirety'*, and not a specific domain of life, such as work life. The enjoyment of work will add to the appreciation of life, but does not constitute it.

The appraisals of life can concern different periods in time: how life has been, how life is now, and how life will probably be in the future. These evaluations do not coincide necessarily; one may be positive about past life, but negative about the future. The focus here is on satisfaction with the life one currently leads.

When we appraise how much we appreciate the life we live, we seem to use two sources of information: we estimate our typical affective experience to assess how well we feel generally, and at the cognitive level we compare 'life as it is' with standards of 'how life should be'. The former affective source of information seems generally to be more important than the latter cognitive one (Veenhoven 1996a: 33-35). The word happiness is commonly used for these 'subtotals' as well as for the comprehensive appraisal. I use the terms *'overall happiness'* or 'life satisfaction' for the comprehensive judgment and refer to the affective and cognitive subappraisals as respectively *'hedonic level of affect'* and *'contentment'*. These concepts are

delineated in more detail in Veenhoven (1984: chapter 2).

3.2 Measures of happiness

All these variants of happiness can be measured by the self report. Different questions have been developed for that purpose. For a review of the items and scales, see Veenhoven (1984: chapter 4). The most commonly used item is a single question: "Taking all together, how happy would you say you are? Very happy, fairly happy, not too happy or not at all happy?" Another common question is how 'satisfied' are you with your life as a whole. Hedonic level is often measured by the ten-item 'Affect Balance Scale' (ABS, Bradburn 1969), which concerns the occurrence of specific positive and negative affects in the past few weeks. This ABS method seems best suited for a cross-national comparison.

Since the 1970's happiness has served as a core variable in 'Quality of Life' surveys in many developed nations. This has resulted in a growing body of data on average happiness in nations. These data have been collated in the World Database of Happiness (Veenhoven 1999).

Though currently used, these measures are much criticized. Three main objections have raised. First it is doubted that responses to such simple questions reflect true appreciation of life. Second, there are doubts about the comparability of such ratings across cultures. Third, it is claimed that subjective appraisals of life are meaningless. I will now present a short review of this criticism. For more elaborate discussions of the measurement problems involved see: Diener (1995), Headey & Wearing (1992), Saris et al. (1996), and Veenhoven (1993, 1996a).

3.2.1 *Validity of self reports on happiness*

The first objection is that responses to questions about happiness do not adequately reflect how people really feel about their life. Several reasons have been suggested.

One of the misgivings is that most people have no opinion about their happiness. They would be more aware of how happy they are expected to be, and report on that instead. Though this may happen incidentally, it appears not to be the rule. Most people know quite well whether or not they enjoy life. Eight out of ten Americans think of it every week. Responses on questions about happiness tend to be prompt. The non-response rate on these items is low; both absolutely ($\pm 1\%$) and relative to other attitudinal questions. They 'don't know' responses are also infrequent.

A related claim is that respondents confuse their actual satisfaction with how satisfied other people view them, given their life situation. If this were so, people considered to be well off would typically report being happy, and people regarded as disadvantaged would avow themselves unhappy. This pattern does occur, but it is not widespread. For instance, in the Netherlands good education is seen to be a prerequisite for a good life, but among the best-educated respondents of happiness appear to be slightly lower.

Another objection concerns the presence of systematic bias in responses. It is assumed that questions on happiness are interpreted correctly, but that the responses are often inaccurate. People who are actually dissatisfied with their lives say that they are contented. Ego protection

and social appearances are said to be the causes of these distortions. This bias is said to manifest an overreporting of happiness; with most people claiming to be happy, and most perceiving themselves as happier than average. Other evidence of bias is suggested by the finding that psychosomatic complaints are not uncommon among the happy. These observations could be correct, but the findings also allow other interpretations. First, is the fact that the majority reports themselves to be happy. This may not imply overreport but rather that most people are indeed satisfied with life. When living conditions are not extremely bad this could be a candid response. Second, there are at least three good reasons why many people could think that they are more satisfied than average. One is that we underestimate the happiness of our fellow citizen, since misery is more conspicuous than prosperity. Third, the presence of headaches and worries among the satisfied does not prove response distortion. Life can be a bitter trial at times but still be satisfying on balance. The proof is in demonstrating the response distortion. Some clinical studies have tried to do this by comparing responses to single direct questions with ratings based on in-depth interviews and projective tests. The results are generally not much different from responses to a single direct question posed by an anonymous interviewer.

The suspected flaws in self-reported happiness are discussed in more detail in Veenhoven (1984, chapter 3) and Headey & Wearing (1992, chapter 3). None of the doubts have been corroborated as yet.

3.2.2 *Comparability of across countries*

The evidence above concerns the measurement of happiness within countries. It does remove the questions about the comparability of responses across countries. These need to be addressed in separate tests.

A commonly voiced concern is that differences in language may hinder comparison. Words like 'happiness' and 'satisfaction' do not have quite the same meaning in different languages. Questions applying such terms will therefore measure slightly different matters. This hypothesis was checked by comparing the rank order of nations produced by three kinds of questions on the appreciation of life-as-a-whole: a question about 'happiness', a question about 'satisfaction' with life and a question that invites the respondent to give a rating between 'best' and 'worst possible life'. The rank orders turned out to be almost identical. As another check, responses to questions on happiness and satisfaction in two bi-lingual countries were compared, and they did not show a linguistic bias.

A second objection is that responses to questions on happiness are distorted by social desirability, and that these biases differ across cultures. One of the manifestations is more avowal of happiness in countries where happiness ranks high in the value hierarchy. This claim was inspected by checking whether reported happiness is indeed higher in countries where hedonic values are most endorsed. This appeared not to be the case. A second check was an inspection of whether reports of general happiness deviated from responses made a few weeks earlier in these countries; the former measures were more vulnerable to desirability distortion than the latter, so this notion was also disproved.

A third claim is that convention in communication distort the answers dissimilarly in different countries. For instance, a collectivistic orientation might discourage 'very' satisfied responses, since modest self presentation is more appropriate in this cultural context. This hypothesis was tested by comparing happiness in countries differing in value collectivism, but no effect was found for the predicted direction. The hypothesis also failed several other tests.

A related claim holds that happiness is a typically Western concept. Unfamiliarity with it in non-Western nations is said to involve several effects: responses could be haphazard, and uncertainty could create a tendency to choose middle categories on the response scales, which results in relatively low average scores. If so, more don't know and no answer responses can be expected in non-Western nations; however, that appeared not to be the case. The frequency of responses was about 1% in all regions of the world.

All these claims imply that there is little relationship between average happiness reports and experienced quality of life in nations. Yet correlational studies show huge correlations with nation features such as economic prosperity, peacefulness, and schooling. Together such nation properties explain about 70% of the differences in reported happiness.

These empirical checks have been reported in more detail in Veenhoven (1993, 1996a). There may be other distortions that only time will reveal us. For the present, it appears that self reports of overall happiness can be meaningfully compared across nations.

3.2.3 *Significance of average happiness*

The last objection is that subjective happiness does not reflect real quality of life. This objection has two variants: one variant holds that happiness is 'relative' and the other that it is mere 'folklore'.

Relative? The first variant holds that happiness judgements draw on comparisons *within* the nation, so happiness cannot be meaningfully compared *across* nations. This view is based on the notion that happiness comes from comparative social standing. Some often cited investigations claim support for this theory. Easterlin (1974) saw the theory validated by his observation that happiness is as high in poor countries as it is in rich countries. Brickman et al (1978) saw proof in the fact that lottery winners are no more satisfied with life than paralyzed accident victims. I have analyzed these sensational claims elsewhere (Veenhoven 1991, 1995), and the results can be summarized as follows:

In general happiness is not the same in poor and rich nations neither are accident victims equally as happy as lottery winners. The differences may be smaller than one might have thought, but they undeniably exist.

Some other implications of regarding happiness as relative also failed an empirical test. One that changes in living conditions, for better or worse, do not have a lasting effect on happiness. To the contrary, there is good evidence that people do not adjust to everything. For instance, one does not adjust completely to the misfortune of having a handicapped child or the loss of a partner.

Another implication is that earlier hardship means later happiness. This hypothesis does not fit the data either. For example, survivors of the Holocaust living in Israel were found to be less satisfied with life than Israelis of the same age who had not been persecuted.

A final empirical check to be considered is the correlation of happiness with income. The idea that happiness is relative predicts a strong correlation in all countries, irrespective of their wealth. Income is an important criterion for social comparisons, and it is typically compared within countries. Again, the hypothesis is not confirmed by the data. The correlation of happiness with income is high in poor countries, but low in rich countries (Veenhoven & Timmermans 1998).

The idea that happiness is 'relative' assumes that happiness is a purely cognitive matter and does not acknowledge affective experience. It focuses on 'wants' and neglects 'needs'. In contrast to wants, needs are not relative. An alternative 'affective' theory is that we infer happiness from how we feel generally. If we feel fine, we gather that we must be happy. If we feel lousy most of the time, we conclude we must be unhappy. Unlike conscious comparisons between ideal and real, affects are largely unreasoned experiences that likely signal the degree to which basic needs are met. The evidence for this theory is mounting. It denotes that happiness ratings reflect something universal that can be meaningfully compared cross-culturally.

Folklore? A second variant of the insignificance objection is that reports of happiness have a superficial aspect and do not reflect the actual quality of life in a country. In this view, happiness ratings may be treated as local myths. Comparing happiness reports is like equating apples, pears, and bananas.

The theory of happiness behind this argument is also cognitive. Happiness is seen as a stereotypical state. Support for this view comes from some unexpected differences noted in the average happiness between nations, such as low happiness in France and the high happiness in the U.S. The idea was also nourished by the finding that average happiness remained at the same level in postwar U.S., despite the doubling of the cross national product.

I have put this theory to several tests (Veenhoven 1992b: 66-79, 1994, 1995). One implication is that differences in average happiness are unrelated to variation in the objective quality of life. Four such differences were considered: economic affluence, social equality, political freedom, and intellectual development. These national characteristics explained 70% of the differences in average happiness in a 28 nation set. Further, there were instances of a change in average happiness following the improvement or a decline of quality of life.

The residual variances should have been evident in regression charts. If the French national character is to understate happiness and the American to overstate it, we can expect to find the French less happy than predicted on the basis of objective welfare and Americans more happy than their situation justifies. No such patterns appeared.

Yet another test of happiness involved migrants. If happiness reflects the quality of the conditions one lives in, the happiness of migrants in a country must be close to that of autochthons. If happiness were a matter of socialized outlook, the happiness of migrants should be

closer to the level in their motherland. The former prediction turned out to be true, the latter not.

3.3 Happiness rank of nations

Comparable data on average happiness for 48 nations in the early 1990's is now available. The scores are listed in [appendix 2](#) and presented in the bar diagram of [scheme 8](#).

Sizable differences are evident. In Bulgaria the average score on this 1-4 scale is only 2.4, whereas in the Netherlands it is 3.4. This is 30% of the possible range. In this time period, happiness is lowest in the former by communist countries and highest in the rich countries of North-west Europe.

The scores in [scheme 8](#) are average responses to the single question: "Taking all together how happy would you say you are?". Responses to a 10 step item on life satisfaction scale and on the 10 item Affect Balance Scale show about the same rank order of nations. Earlier studies on a slightly different nation set yielded similar rankings (e.g. Cantril 1965, Inglehart 1990)

4. FREEDOM and HAPPINESS

We compiled our data on both freedom and happiness for 44 countries in the early 1990's. The data are presented in [appendix 2](#). We can now answer the questions at stake.

4.1 Does freedom raise happiness?

The first question was whether freedom tends to work out positively. Correlational analysis suggests it does indeed. See [scheme 6](#).

In the middle column of [scheme 6](#) shows the basic correlations between the measures of freedom and happiness. All the correlations are positive and statistically significant. The last relationship is fully illustrated in [scheme 3](#). The scatter plot shows a cluster of free and happy nations in the upper tight-hand corner. Represented in this cluster are Netherlands (nl), Switzerland (ch), Iceland (is), Britain (gb), and the U.S. Below this appears a cluster of former by communist countries that were not yet entirely free after the fall of the Eastern bloc and quite unhappy, but these least happy countries are not the least free. Freedom scores are lower in Nigeria (ng), China (cn) and India (in). The greater dispersion in the lower left-hand corner of the scatter plot may be due to a temporal happiness dip in the post communist countries caused by the turmoil of the transformation. In time this may change, but there is still a evident clear pattern to the data.

The distribution of data suggests a linear relationship. Except for Canada (cn) there is no evidence of diminishing returns. This is noteworthy because the relationship between

happiness and the wealth of a nation does reveal a convex pattern (Veenhoven 1989, Veenhoven & Timmermans 1998). The implication is that freedom has not yet reached the level where its costs balance the benefits.

If we leave out the Eastern European countries in [scheme 3](#), we even see a tendency in the curve to rise, which suggests that the happiness yields of freedom increases at higher levels.

A look at [scheme 3](#) makes clear that the most free and happy nations are typically rich countries, while the unfree and unhappy nations tend to be poor. So the observed correlations may be spurious. To check this possibility, the wealth of nations was controlled for statistically. See the partial correlations in column 3 of [scheme 6](#). Now all correlations are reduced to insignificance, except the correlation with economic freedom.

This control may be too strict. It removes all common variance with wealth, not only the variance caused by effects of wealth on freedom and happiness, but also possible effects of freedom on happiness through wealth, and vice versa. On the basis of this cross-sectional data we cannot disentangle these effects. So it is still likely that the true correlation is sizable.

4.2 Which kind of freedom?

The second question can be answered more easily. [Scheme 6](#) shows that opportunity to choose is about as equally related to happiness as the capability to choose. The difference in correlation is not significant, neither is the difference in raw correlations nor the difference in partial correlation.

Looking at opportunities more closely, it is clear that economic freedom is most strongly related to happiness; the zero-order correlation is +.69 and the partial correlation is +.43. Political freedom and private freedom are less related to happiness; the zero-order correlations are +.39, and the partial correlations are also positive but insignificant. This is a pleasant surprise for the right-wing free market lobby, but a disappointment for liberals like me. More surprising is that the correlation with economic freedom appears to be largely independent of wealth. The partial correlation is +.43! This means that economic freedom must affect happiness in other ways than through economic growth.

Looking now more closely at the capability to choose, we see that information is less correlated to happiness than inclination to choose. The difference is particularly clear in the partial correlations.

4.3 In which conditions?

Although it is generally acknowledged that the relationships between freedom and happiness is conditional, there is no clear opinion on the kind of contingencies involved. Two possibilities are explored below.

4.3.1 *Only when opportunities match capabilities?*

It seems logical that the opportunity to choose adds to happiness only when accompanied by a capability to choose. Chances one cannot pick are of no help. To test this hypothesis, we separated the countries that score low on capability from those that score high. The data are presented in [scheme 7](#).

The hypothesis is confirmed for political freedom and private freedom. The opportunity to choose is negatively related to happiness among nations of low capability and positively in nations of high capability. The difference in correlations is considerable.

Yet the hypothesis is not confirmed for economic freedom. In fact economic freedom is more strongly related to happiness in low-capability nations than in high-capability nations ($r = +.77$ respectively $+.34$)

This is an interesting outcome. Several explanations come to my mind: one is that making economic choices requires different capabilities than making choices of a political or private nature, possibly this is because the market choice is more structured. Another explanation may be that economic freedom affects happiness rather indirectly, such as by relieving dependency in oppressive family situations or by reducing social tensions. Such effects do not involve individual capabilities.

Similarly one could argue that capability to choose will add to happiness only if there is an opportunity to choose. Capability may even give rise to frustration if it cannot be applied. The data are presented in [scheme 9](#).

As [scheme 9](#) indicates, the hypothesis is confirmed. Among nations where the opportunity to choose is low, happiness is unrelated to the summed capability to choose. Yet among nations that offer much opportunity to choose, the correlations are consistently positive and sizable. This pattern is largely due to the information factor. The correlations with inclination (individualist values and perceived control) differentiate less well.

4.3.2 *Only in affluence?*

Another consideration is that freedom adds to happiness only among affluent nations. One reason may be that poor countries simply cannot afford the luxury of freedom, since all effort is

dedicated to making ends meet. Another logic might be that freedom does not pay in poverty because there is little with which to choose. The data on this matter are presented in [scheme 10](#).

In line with expectation we see that comprehensive freedom is unrelated to happiness in poor nations ($r = +.07ns$), but positive in rich nations ($r = +.49*$). Looking at the summed opportunities and the summed capabilities separately, we see the same pattern. Yet again, economic freedom behaves differently. In this case we see a strong positive correlation among poor nations and a smaller, non-significant correlation among rich nations.

5. DISCUSSION

In view of these findings, we must begin acknowledge some limitations.

Firstly, we must remember that this study deals with limited conceptions of both freedom and happiness. Freedom is considered in the emancipatory sense of limitation to interference by others, in particular restrictions by governments. Happiness is considered as the subjective enjoyment of life. So the data presented here do not conclude philosophical debates in which these term have been used with broader meanings.

Secondly, we must realize that the measures of these concepts are not perfect, especially with regard to the measurement of freedom. The 'opportunity' to choose cannot be measured to incorporate exhaustively all possible restrictions. The three opportunity domains do not cover all relevant areas of life, and the measures of freedom in these domains do not regard all limitations. The measures of 'capability to choose' are not ideal either. The level of education in a country is at best a dim reflection of its citizens' 'awareness of alternatives'. Likewise, adherence to individualist work values does not measure the 'inclination to choose' very well. Though clearly incomplete, these measures do not seem systematically flawed in a particular direction. So the imperfections will probably attenuate the findings rather than produce deceptive relationships. If so, that means that the real relationships are even stronger than the observed correlations suggest.

Thirdly, this study is greatly limited in that it covers only 46 nations. As a result, many of the differences observed do not reach statistical significance. So this study leaves doubt about these modest relationships. Still, several relationships were sufficiently strong to produce significant effects among the differences that did not reach statistical significance several are at least suggestive of the effect.

Lastly, we must remember that the post-communist countries distort the picture somewhat. The data are from the early 1990's when economic and political freedom had just been proclaimed, but perils of transition depressed happiness. This effect is likely to have reduced the correlations as well.

Let us assume that the observed relationships are realistic, what then does that mean? The

correlations mentioned were interpreted as effects of freedom on happiness. Inferred that freedom make life more enjoyable. Although freedom may have some negative effects, the positive effects dominate, in particular, when opportunities match capabilities and in conditions of material affluence. A pattern of diminishing utility was not observed in the data. Economic freedom was identified as a main condition for happiness in poor nations, and political freedom the differentiating factor in rich nations.

Although this interpretation is plausible, it is not the only one possible. The statistical relationships can also be due to effect of happiness on freedom. A high level of happiness in a country can foster a climate of tolerance and reasonableness in which freedom works. In other words, happy people can be better citizens. In this reasoning mass happiness is likely to breed 'opportunities to choose', i.e. foster the development of nonrestrictive regimes. Similarly one could also imagine that happiness nurtures the 'capability to choose', for instance, by its effects on energy and self-esteem (Veenhoven 1988).

Yet, we know from history that freedom often emerges from frustration. The French Revolution was not a hallmark of happiness. The present-day emergence of freedom in the post-communist world was not the fruit of mass happiness either. So, the effects of happiness on freedom seem at best secondary, in particular, the effects on economic freedom.

To settle this question of causality we need to review trenddata over long time periods in a sizable group of countries. Such data are not available yet, though the time-series on all variables are growing. For the time being, I will assume that the data reflect effects of freedom in the first place.

If freedom does foster happiness, the next question is how. One could envision several mechanisms. Freedom may reduce the chance that people will harass each other: in particular this regards political freedom. Further freedom in society may add to the chance that citizens live a way of life that fits well with their preferences and capacities. Conditions of freedom encourage the development of a different lifestyles that allows individuals to experiment. In particular, private freedom can facilitate the selection of best fitting lifestyles. Next to these direct effects, freedom may contribute to happiness in indirect ways, for instance, to the growth of material wealth which leads especially to economic freedom.

This is not to deny the negative effects of freedom. Freedom can also destroy happiness. Obviously, economic freedom often gives rise to income inequality, which according to Marx, contributes to the 'Verelendung' of the working poor. Likewise political freedom and private freedom can create anomie. Nevertheless, the positive correlations of freedom outweigh the negative correlations, though not equally in all circumstances.

6. CONCLUSIONS

The major conclusion is methodological: empirical research can settle this matter which philosophers could not solve. Both freedom and happiness can be measured across nations. Though measures are not ideal yet, and data limited, good evidence is feasible.

The first substantive conclusion is that freedom does not always contribute to happiness, but it does not destroy it either. Significant negative effects of freedom have not been observed. The question is where do the positive effects occur?

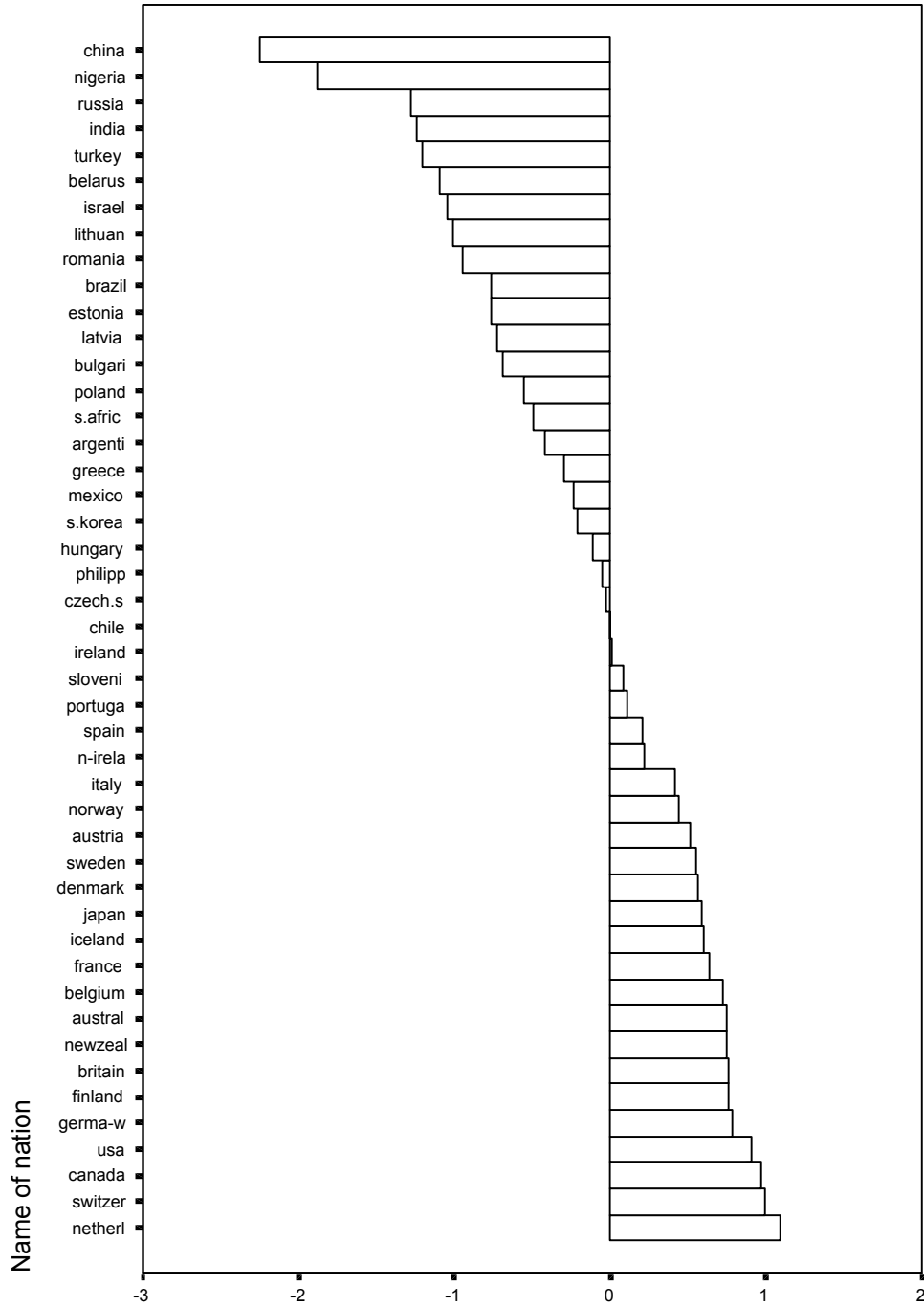
Secondly is that the data strongly suggest that economic freedom leads to happiness, especially for those in conditions of poverty and low capability. Adam Smith rests quit in his grave.

Third is the less sure that political freedom and private freedom also add to happiness. This effect appears to be restricted to rich and capable countries. Though smaller than expected, this is still a windfall for humanistic liberalists.

Scheme 1

Freedom in nations: opportunity to choose

46 nations early 1990's

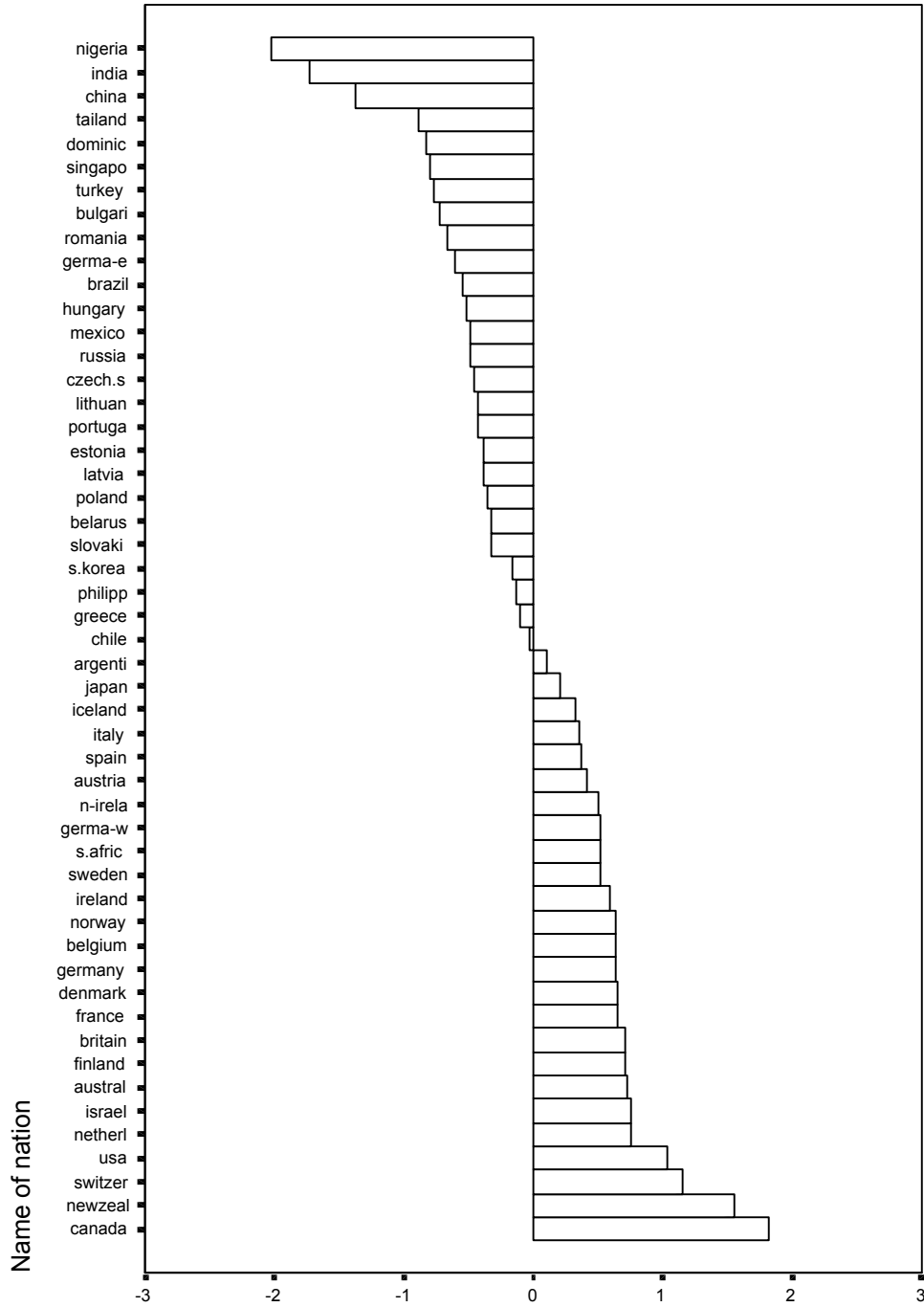


Value 1990 freedom: economic + political + personal

Scheme 2

Freedom in nations: capability to choose

46 nations early 1990's

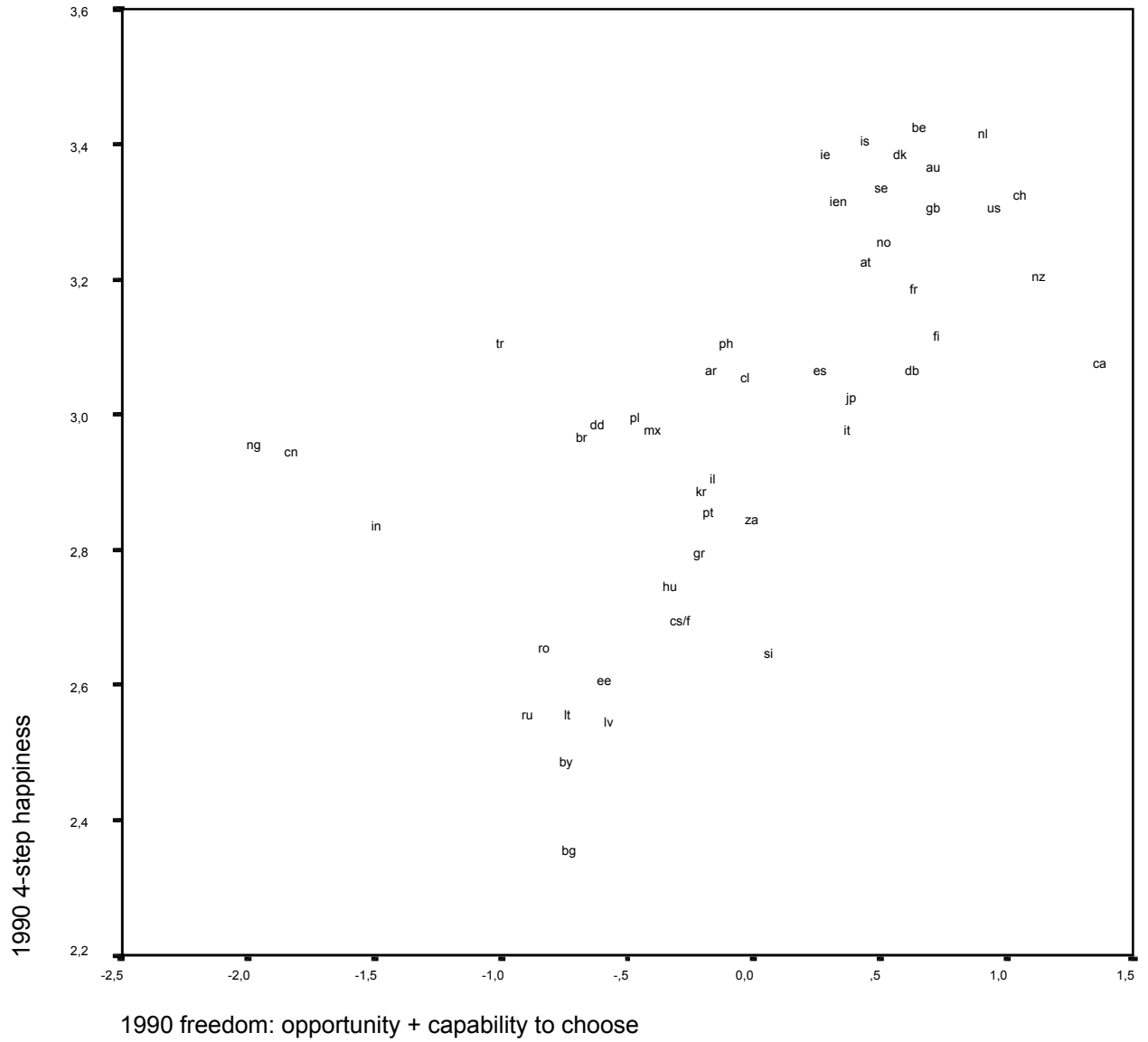


Value 1990 information + inclination to choose

Scheme 3

Freedom and happiness

46 nations in the early 1990's



Scheme 4

Inter correlations of freedom-variants in 44 nations early 1990's

Variants of freedom	Opportunity to choose			Capability to choose	
	Economic	political	personal	information	inclination
Opportunity to choose					
* economic freedom	—				
* political freedom	+0.38 *	—			
* personal freedom	+0.23 ns	+0.69 **	—		
* summed opportunities	+0.74 **	+0.86 **	+0.82 **		
Capability to choose					
* information	+0.24 ns	+0.77 **	+0.70 **	-	
* inclination	+0.45 **	+0.45 **	+0.34 *	+0.38 **	
* summed capabilities	+0.49**	+0.76 **	+0.59 **	+0.82 **	+0.83 **
Comprehensive freedom: Opportunities + capabilities	+0.55 **	+0.84 **	+0.73 **	+0.81 **	+0.76 **

Scheme 5**Freedom and related matters**

	Human rights Humana-index		Perceived freedom (WVS)	Women emancipation UNHDR (1995)	individualism expert rating
Opportunity to choose					
* economic freedom	+.06 ns		+.47 **	+.37 *	+.55 **
* political freedom	+.90 **	1	+.39 *	+.65 **	+.75 **
* personal freedom	+.80 **	2	+.30 ns	+.75 **	+.73 **
* summed opportunities	+.82 **	2	+.54 **	+.70 **	+.79 **
Capability to choose					
* information	+.75 **		+.32 ns	+.74 **	+.67 **
* inclination	+.41 **		+.56 **	+.55 **	+.65 **
* summed capabilities	+.69 **		+.57 **	+.73 **	+.78 **
Summed Opportunities + capabilities	+.79 **		+.56 **	+.73 **	+.82 **

Notes: 1 Humana's index of Human rights overlaps largely with the index of political freedom
2 Some items of the Humana-index figure in the personal freedom factor.

Scheme 6

Happiness and freedom in 46 nations early 1990's

Variants of freedom	Correlation with happiness	
	zero-order correlation	partial correlation wealth of nation controlled
Opportunity to choose		
* economic freedom	+ .69 **	+ .43 **
* political freedom	+ .39 **	+ .16 ns
* personal freedom	+ .39 **	+ .11 ns
* summed opportunities	+ .67 **	+ .29 ns
Capability to choose		
* information	+ .32 *	— .19 ns
* inclination	+ .59 **	+ .30 ns
* summed capabilities	+ .59 **	+ .13 ns
Comprehensive freedom: opportunities + capabilities	+ .64 **	+ .26 ns

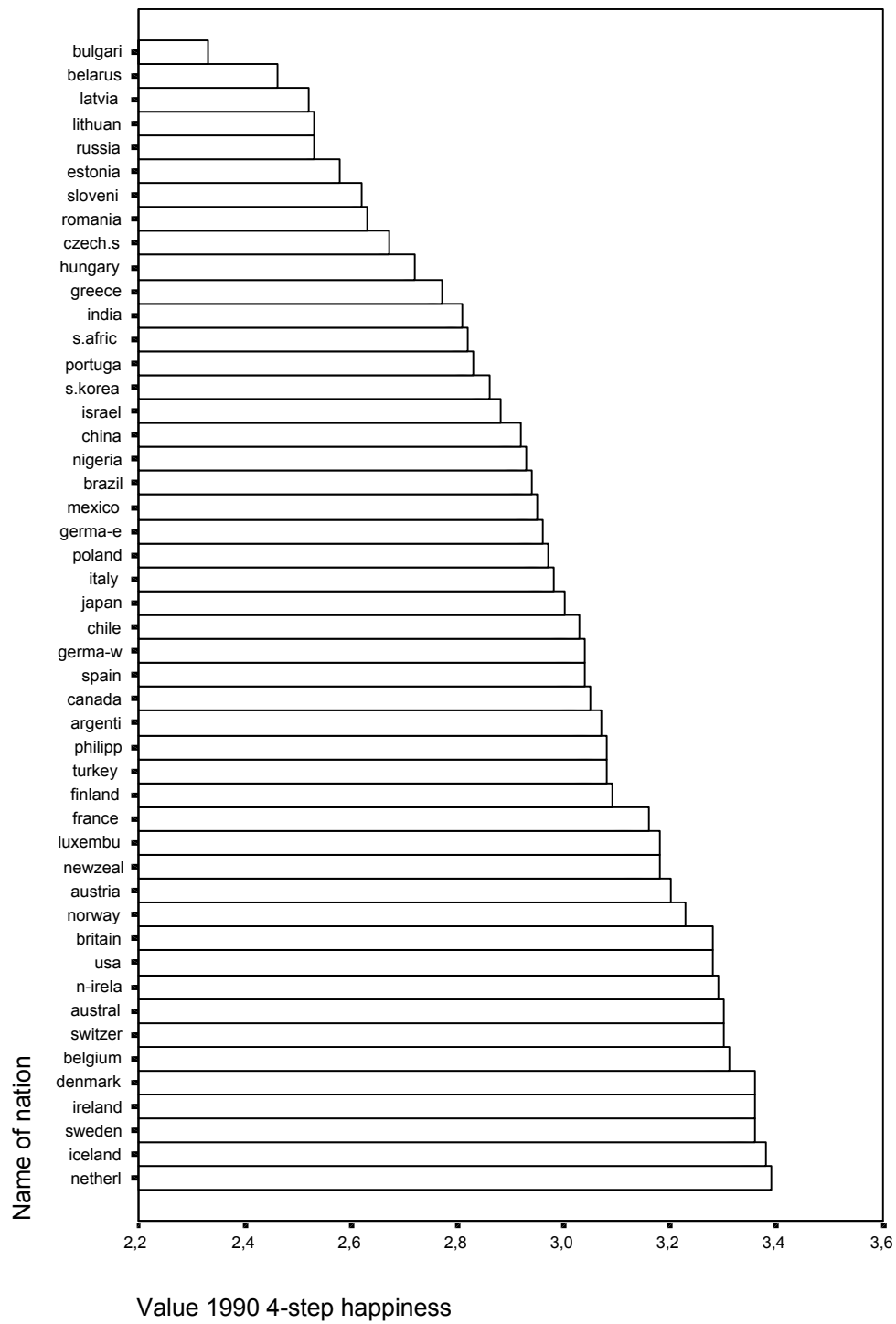
Scheme 7

Opportunity to choose and happiness split-up by capability to choose

Opportunity to choose	Correlation with happiness			
	low capability N = 20		high capability N = 25	
	<i>zero-order correlation</i>	<i>Wealth Controlled</i>	<i>zero-order correlation</i>	<i>wealth controlled</i>
Economic freedom	+ .77 **	+ .80 **	+ .34 ns	+ .03 ns
Political freedom	— .30 ns	— .21 ns	+ .76 **	+ .64 **
Personal freedom	— .21 ns	— .10 ns	+ .58 **	+ .37 ns
Summed opportunities	+ .07 ns	+ .25 ns	+ .63 **	+ .44 ns

Scheme 8**Happiness in nations**

48 nations early 1990's



Scheme 9

Capability to choose and happiness split-up by summed opportunity to choose

Capability to choose	Correlation with happiness			
	low opportunity N = 21		high opportunity N = 26	
	<i>zero-order correlation</i>	<i>Wealth Controlled</i>	<i>zero-order correlation</i>	<i>Wealth Controlled</i>
Information	— .33 ns	— .36 ns	+ .47 *	+ .29 ns
Inclination	+ .27 ns	+ .30 ns	+ .50 *	+ .34 ns
Summed capabilities	— .04 ns	— .05 ns	+ .51 *	+ .33 ns

Scheme 10

Freedom and happiness split-up by wealth of nation

Variants of freedom	Correlation with happiness	
	Poor nations N = 22	rich nations N = 25
Opportunity to choose		
* economic freedom	+ .74 **	+ .24 ns
* political freedom	+ .29 ns	+ .54 **
* personal freedom	— .25 ns	+ .38 ns
* summed opportunities	+ .12 ns	+ .45 *
Capability to choose		
* information	— .26 ns	+ .39 ns
* inclination	+ .38 ns	+ .28 ns
* summed capabilities	+ .01 ns	+ .34 ns
Comprehensive freedom opportunities + capabilities	+ .07 ns	+ .49 *

Appendix 2**Happiness and freedom**

44 nations early 1990's

Nation		Happiness Scale 1-4	Freedom z-scores		
code	name		opportunity	capability	sum
AR	Argentina*	3,07	-0,71		-0,63
AU	Australia	3,30	-0,68	+0,80	+1,79
AT	Austria	3,20	-0,65	+0,86	+0,23
BE	Belgium	3,31	+0,93	+0,44	+0,98
BR	Brazil	2,94	-1,26	-0,75	-0,63
GB	Britain	3,28	+0,87	+0,85	+1,76
BG	Bulgaria	2,33	-0,90		-1,29
CA	Canada	3,05	+1,22	+1,58	+0,83
CL	Chile*	3,03	-0,42		-1,26
CN	China*	2,92		-1,89	-1,09
CZ	Czecho—Slovakia (former)	2,69	+0,34		-0,78
DK	Denmark	3,36	+0,82	+0,82	+1,78
EE	Estonia	2,58			-0,77
FI	Finland	3,09	+1,14	+0,78	+0,94
FR	France	3,16	+0,84	+0,47	+1,73
DB	Germany (former West—)	3,04	+0,80	+0,78	+1,34
DD	Germany (former East-)	2,96		+0,38	-0,69
GR	Greece	2,77	-0,40	-0,13	-0,93
HU	Hungary	2,72	-0,14	+0,26	-0,27
IS	Iceland	3,38	+0,54	+0,32	
IN	India*	2,81	-1,86	-2,40	-0,53
IE	Ireland	3,36	-0,12	-0,08	+0,89

Nation		Happiness Scale 1-4	Freedom z-scores		
code	name		opportunity	capability	sum
IL	Israel	2,88	-0,94	-0,34	-0,36
IT	Italy	2,98	+0,63	+0,40	+1,08
JP	Japan	3,00	+0,47	-0,28	-0,42
LU	Luxembourg	3,18		+0,44	
MX	Mexico	2,95	-0,55	-0,78	-0,85
NZ	New Zealand	3,18	-0,64	+0,72	+0,83
NL	Netherlands	3,39	+1,72	+0,83	+1,46
NG	Nigeria	2,93	-2,79	-2,50	-1,45
NO	Norway	3,23	+0,50	0,47	+1,10
PH	Philippines	3,08	-0,50	-1,04	-0,83
PL	Poland	2,97	-0,91	-0,18	-0,32
PT	Portugal	2,83	-0,02	-0,76	-2,89
RO	Romania	2,63	-1,35		-0,62
RU	Russia	2,53		+0,15	-1,10
ZA	South Africa	2,82	-0,74	-1,40	+0,28
KR	South Korea	2,86	-0,27	-0,76	-2,26
SI	Slovenia	2,62			+0,66
ES	Spain	3,04	+0,21	+0,89	+0,28
SE	Sweden	3,36	+0,69	+0,82	+1,04
CH	Switzerland	3,30	+1,19	+0,85	+1,33
TR	Turkey*	3,08	-1,74	-1,20	-0,99
US	United States of America	3,28	+0,99	+1,76	+1,97

Happiness from World Database of Happiness (update 1996), tables 1.1.1a and 1.1.1b. Most of the data from World Value Study 2.

* Happiness score probably too high. Score based on samples in which poor rural population was underrepresented

Appendix 1**Correlations happiness and freedom 44 nations early 1990**

<i>Indicators of freedom in nation</i>	<i>Data source</i>	<i>correlation with average happiness</i>		<i>N</i>
		<i>zero-order</i>	<i>wealth controlled</i>	
OPPORTUNITY TO CHOOSE				
Economic freedom	Gwartney 1996 table A1-1			
Security of money				
* little money expansion		+ .22 ns	-.22 ns	38
* little inflation variability		+ .37 *	-.10 ns	38
* domestic foreign currency accounts allowed		+ .59 **	+ .28 ns	38
* deposits abroad allowed		+ .59 **	+ .33 *	38
Freedom to produce and consume (little government interference)				
* little government consumption		-.18 ns	+ .31 ns	38
* little share government enterprises		+ .62 **	+ .38 *	38
* little price controls		+ .61 **	+ .33 *	38
* little interference on credit market		+ .36 *	-.10 ns	38
Freedom to keep what one earns				
* low transfers and subsidies		-.06 ns	+ .38 *	38
* low marginal tax rates		-.06 ns	-.09 ns	38
* no conscription		+ .28ns	+ .26 ns	38
Freedom of exchange				
* low trade taxes		+ .17 ns	-.40 *	38
* little exchange rate controls		+ .71 **	+ .47 *	38
* trade sector relatively big		+ .21 ns	+ .22 ns	38
* little restraint on capital mobility		+ .63 **	+ .24 ns	38

<i>Indicators of freedom in nation</i>	<i>Data source</i>	<i>correlation with average happiness</i>		<i>N</i>
		<i>zero-order</i>	<i>wealth controlled</i>	
Index of the above based on expert weights		+ .73 **	+ .43 *	38
Political freedom	Karantnycky 1996			
Respect of political rights		+ .35 *	— .11 ns	47
Respect of civil rights		+ .41 *	— .03 ns	47
Personal freedom				
Freedom of religion:				
* legal/practical opportunity	Humana 1992, item 38	.22 ns	.14 ns	
Freedom to travel				
* legal/practical opportunity				
* travel in country	Humana 1992, item 1	+ .17 ns	+ .01 ns	46
* travel abroad	Humana 1992, item 2	+ .05 ns	— .35 *	46
Freedom of marriage				
* legal/practical opportunity				
* marriage	Humana 1992, item 36-37	+ .19 ns	— .17 ns	46
* public acceptance of				
* divorce	World Value Survey 2, item 310	+ .18 ns	+ .01 ns	42

<i>Indicators of freedom in nation</i>	<i>Data source</i>	<i>correlation with average happiness</i>		<i>N</i>
		<i>zero-order</i>	<i>wealth controlled</i>	
Freedom of procreation:				
* legal/practical restrictions to:				
* abortion	PAI 1995	+ .13 ns	— .21 ns	38
* sterilization	IPPF 1990	+ .18 ns	+ .02 ns	35
* public acceptance of				
* abortion	World Value Survey 2, item 309	— .02 ns	— .19 ns	21
* planned single motherhood	World Value Survey 2, item 217	+ .01 ns	+ .11 ns	41
Freedom of sexuality:				
* public acceptance of:				
* homosexuality	World Value Study 2, item 307	+ .72 **	+ .38 *	42
* prostitution	World Value Study 2, item 308	+ .35 ns	+ .07 ns	42
Freedom to die:				
* public acceptance of:				
* suicide	World Value Study 2, item 313	+ .29 ns	+ .09 ns	42
* euthanasia	World Value Study 2, item 312	+ .28 ns	+ .05 ns	42
Average private freedom (mean z-scores)	religion + travel + sex + marriage + death	+ .38 *	— .13 ns	43
Average opportunity to choose (mean z-scores)	economic + political + private	+ .60 **	+ .04 ns	43

<i>Indicators of freedom in nation</i>	<i>Data source</i>	<i>correlation with average happiness</i>		<i>N</i>
		<i>zero-order</i>	<i>wealth controlled</i>	
CAPABILITY TO CHOOSE				
Awareness of alternatives				
Education				
* literacy + school-enrolment	Human Development Report 1995	+ .32 *	— .19 ns	47
Inclination to choose				
Individualistic work-values	Hofstede 1991 + Smith 1997	+ .52 **	+ .30 ns	39
Perceived fate-control	World Value Survey 2, item 95	+ .50 **	+ .31 ns	42
Average capability to choose	Information + inclination	+ .59 **	+ .13 ns	46
COMPREHENSIVE FREEDOM	Opportunities + capabilities	+ .64 **	+ .26 ns	46

REFERENCES

Bay, C. (1965)

The structure of freedom

Stanford University Press, Stanford CL, USA

Berlin, I. (1958)

Two concepts of liberty

in: Four essays on liberty

Oxford University Press, Oxford, UK

Blokland, H.T (1997)

Freedom and culture in western society

Routledge, London, UK

Bradburn, N.M. (1965)

The structure of psychological wellbeing

Aldine, Chicago, USA

Cantril, H. (1965)

The pattern of human concern

Rutgers University Press, New Brunswick, USA

Diener, E., Diener, M. & Diener, C. (1995)

Factors predicting subjective wellbeing in nations

Journal of personality and social psychology, vol 69, pp 851-864

Fromm, E. (1941)

Escape from freedom

Rhinehart, New York, USA

Gastril, R.D. (1987)

Freedom in the world: political rights and civil liberties 1986-1987

Greenwood Press, New York, USA

Gwartney, J.D. (1996)

Economic freedom in the world 1975-1995

Fraser Institute, Vancouver BC, Canada

Headey, B. & Wearing, A. (1992)

Understanding happiness: a theory of subjective wellbeing

Longman Cheshire, Melbourne, Australia

Hofstede, G. (1991)

Cultures and organizations

McGrawHill International, UK

Humana, C. (1992)

World Human Rights Guide

Oxford University Press, New York, USA

Inglehart, R. (1990)

Culture shift in advanced industrial society

Princeton University Press, Princeton NJ, USA

Inglehart, R. Basenez, M. & Moreno, A. (1998)

Human values and beliefs: a cross cultural sourcebook

University of Michigan Press, Ann Arbor, USA

IPPF (1990)

Reproductive rights

International Planned Parenthood Federation

Wallchart distributed with People magazine, vol 7 nr 4

Karantnycky, A., Cavanaugh, C. & Finn, J (eds) (1996)

The annual survey of political rights and civil liberties

Freedom House, New York USA

Saris, W.E., Scherpenzeel, A.C., Veenhoven, R. & Bunting, B. (eds) (1996)

A comparative study of satisfaction with life in Europe

Eotvos University Press, Budapest, Hungary

Smith

UN DP (1995)

Human Development Report 1995

United Nations Development Program, Oxford University Press

Veenhoven, R. (1984a)

Conditions of happiness

Kluwer Academic, Dordrecht, Netherlands

Veenhoven, R. (1989d)

National wealth and individual happiness

in Grunert, K.G. & Olander, F (eds) 'Understanding economic behavior', Kluwer Academic, Dordrecht, Netherlands pp 9-32

Veenhoven, R. (1991a)

Is happiness relative?

Social Indicators research, vol 24, pp 1-34

Veenhoven, R. (1993b)

Happiness in nations. Subjective appreciation of life in 56 nations 1946-1992

RISBO, Erasmus University Rotterdam, Netherlands

updated version on Internet <http://www2.eur.nl/fsw/research/happiness/>

Veenhoven, R. (1994)

Correlates of happiness: 7838 findings from 603 studies in 69 nations 1911-1994

RISBO, Erasmus university Rotterdam, Netherlands

Updated version on Internet: <http://www2.eur.nl/fsw/research/happiness/>

Veenhoven, R. (1994a)

Is happiness a trait? Tests of the theory that a better society does not make people any happier.

Social Indicators Research, vol 32, pp 101-160

Veenhoven, R. (1996a)

Developments in satisfaction research

Social Indicators Research, vol 37, pp 1-46

Veenhoven, R. (1997a)

Progress dans la comprehension du bonheur

Revue Quebecoise de psychologie, vol 18, pp 29-74

Veenhoven, R. (1997a)

Quality of life in individualistic society. a comparison of 43 nations in the early 1990's

in: M.J. deJong & A.C. Zijderfeld (eds) 'The gift of society', Enzo Press, Nijkerk, the Netherlands
pp 149-170

Veenhoven, R. (1999)

World Database Of Happiness

<http://www.eur.nl/fsw/research/happiness>

Veenhoven, R. & Ouweneel, P. (1995)

Livability of the welfare state: appreciation-of-life and length-of-life in nations varying in state-welfare-effort.

Social Indicators research, vol 36, pp 1-49

Veenhoven, R. & Timmermans (1998)

Welvaart en geluk

Economisch Statistische Berichten (ESB) vol 83, pp 628-631

**World Value Survey, cumulative file, ICPRS file 6160, Ann Arbor, Michigan USA
(See also Inglehart 1998)**

NOTES

1. Earlier versions of this paper were presented at 1) 'International Conference of Psychology' in Montreal Canada, August 1, 2) the 'International Conference Social Change in an Enlarged Europe', Collegium Budapest, Hungary, May 1998, and 3) 'International Conference of Political Psychology', Amsterdam, Holland, 1999.
2. The Affect Balance Scale (ABS) has at least three advantages in a cross-national context. 1) The ABS is less vulnerable to language-differences than the single happiness- and satisfaction-items. Since the ABS involves 10 items, any distortions in translation and understanding are likely to neutralize each other. 2) The ABS is less vulnerable to desirability distortion, and therefore also less vulnerable for differential distortion of this kind. The ABS concerns about recent affective experience, which is a more tangible matter than general happiness and satisfaction. Also admitting oneself to have felt bad within the last few weeks is less threatening than avowing to be unhappy. 3) The ABS does not require acquaintance with concepts such as 'happiness' and 'satisfaction'. Though single items on happiness do not appear to be vulnerable for these distortions either (Veenhoven 1993, chapter 5), the ABS is still safer method.
3. Inter-correlations are as follows: happiness by life-satisfaction $r = +.89$, happiness by affect balance $r = +.57$ and life-satisfaction by affect balance $r = +.55$.