

## **Measured Integral Indexes Revealing AUCA Students' Consciousness, Attitudes and Perceptions**

**Natalia Korosteleva<sup>1</sup>**

### **Abstract**

---

This article tells about the number of measured indexes which are of crucial importance to understand people's perceptions about their life, social welfare, what norms and values do exist currently for young generation; those indexes also help to reveal attitude towards various ethnicity.

---

### **Relevance of the Research Conducted**

This research was carried out during 2011-2012 Academic year within the framework of the Research activity supported by American University of Central Asia. The topic was selected due to the inter-ethnic clash that occurred in June 2010. Immediately after the conflict, humanitarian aid in the form of food, medications and building materials were provided. Eventually, during the next stage of assistance, aid has been transformed into development projects, various trainings and conflict mitigation activities. As mitigating is tightly linked with changes of people's consciousness and perceptions and requires theoretical understanding /conception, it (mitigating activities) should be carried out on a basis of the concept selected.

---

<sup>1</sup>Associate Professor on MNG, BA Department, AUCA.

As the Research activity was aimed at identification and measuring of Indexes we identified the goal of the research as follows.

### 1. The Goal of the Research

The goal was to discover and measure the indexes which reveal students' consciousness, attitude and perceptions on specific spheres of their lives.

### 2. Research Instruments

As a result of literature analysis the most acceptable concept for discovering and measuring parameters/indexes was identified. It is the Concept of Social Anomia (anomie), developed by E. Durkheim in his book 'The Division of Labor in Society', further developed by Merton in his publication 'Anomie Theory' and Srowl, who actually developed an instrument to measure the level of anomie. Anomie refers to a breakdown of social norms (expectations on behaviours) and is a condition where norms no longer control the activities of members in society. Changing conditions as well as adjustment of social systems and normlessness lead to dissatisfaction, conflict, and deviant behavior. The collapse of the Soviet Union can be used as an example of changing conditions and social systems. Consequently, this concept is relevant for us.

Anomie cannot last for too long. Possible reactions of mass consciousness are normative and not normative. In the case of normative reactions there will be increase in the level of authoritarianism, whereas, in the case of not normative reactions – there will be an increase in the level of cynicism. Consequently we need to measure three indexes: *anomie, authoritarianism and cynicism*.

The next index, which is of great interest, is the *integral index of social welfare*, offered and developed by Professors of the Institute of Sociology, Ukrainian Academy of Science, N. Panina and E. Golovakha (Панина Н.В. Методика измерения жизненной удовлетворенности / / "Lifeline" и другие новые методы психолого-биографического исследования. - М.: Прогресс, 1993. - С.97-105.). This index reflects the level of tension in 11 spheres of vital social activity of an individual. Measured indexes reveal the most tension sphere (s) and this allows for the forecasting of an increase of dissatisfaction and possible conflict situations in the society.

Since the conflict of 2010 is characterised as that of an ethnic character, the authors think it is crucial to utilise an instrument which reveals people's attitude towards other ethnic groups in accordance with the scale: tolerance - xenophobia. The instrument chosen is Bogardus' Test (*index of tolerance*).

To identify societal "temperature" we measured the *index of life satisfaction*, developed by R.J. Havighurst. It is an integrative indicator of the emotional state of a person and his/her attitude towards life.

If the value of this index of an individual is high, the level of emotional tension and anxiety uneasiness is low, so an individual is emotionally stable and psychologically he/she feels comfortable and that individual is satisfied with the current situation and the role he/she plays in the society.

In accordance with the goal, general requirements were developed for the selection of empirical indexes. Firstly, each empirical index had to reflect the characteristics of a certain social group - students and secondly, the indexes were selected to be able to cross-reference them in a year or two to indicate tendencies in social development and changes of students' perceptions.

The system of indexes utilised must not only register an unbiased status, but also allow forecasting possible changes which may occur. However, this will only be possible under the condition that such research is repeated. In particular, the research results (indexes identified), after being compared with the future results, may lead to conclusions about the efficiency of the changes brought by the Government in general – to develop a prognosis and identify vectors of social development.

### 3. Sampling and Research Design

Respondents were freshmen, sophomore, junior and senior students of AUCA, totally 221. There was no pre-selection process of respondents apart from knowing Russian. The total number of AUCA students (excluding MBA Department) was equal to 931, out of them 48<sup>2</sup>- representatives of foreign countries who do not speak Russian, therefore, we will use the number - 883. That means that number of respondents is 25% of total students' community.

---

<sup>2</sup> Data received from Registrat office of AUCA

Among respondents almost 70% were Kyrgyz. At the University there are 547 students of Kyrgyz ethnicity, so on ethnicity sampling is representative as well as on gender. Among respondents there were 73 male (one third) 148 female (two thirds) corresponds to the gender ration within the students of the University: 336 male and 555 female.

Basic socio-demographic characteristics (gender, age, level of welfare, and level of religious commitment and ethnicity) and explanation are given in the Table format in subchapter 4.

Respondents were asked to fill in questionnaires in Russian, which consisted of 4 blocks of questions. Before filling in all respondents were instructed on how to fill in the forms. It was clearly stated the questionnaire was anonymous and should be filled in only on a volunteer basis. Time was not strictly limited. Respondents were requested not to discuss answers with other respondents.

Limitation of sampling: We could find no documentation to indicate that this instrument had previously been used by any individual or organization in Kyrgyzstan apart from the authors who conducted similar research in Kyrgyz Russian Slavik University one year earlier.

#### 4. Presentation of Results

The results of the research are presented within explanation of each index the main text. We believe this way allows a comprehensive overview of the obtained results. To visualise results and to give a reader an opportunity to compare and to analyze the results, tables and graphs are developed.

#### **Revealing Students' Consciousness, Attitudes and Perceptions.**

As our research is indirectly connected with June events of 2010, we should understand what are the attitudes of students among themselves as the communality is international, what their consciousness and perceptions are. As all these three categories are quite difficult to change, changes can take long time.

General Statistic data:

Research conducted among 221 respondents mainly from CIS countries.

Table 1. Distribution on gender

gender	Frequency	Percent
male	73	33,0
female	148	67,0
Total	221	100,0

Table 2. Distribution on ethnicity

	Frequency	Percent
Kyrgyz	150	67.9
Uzbek	2	0.9
Kazakh	6	2.7
Tajiks	8	3.6
Uigurs	6	2.7
Dungans	1	0.5
Tatars	1	0.5
Koreans	10	4.5
Russians	22	10.0
Ukrainians	3	1.4
Germans	1	0.5
Jews	1	0.5
Azerbaijani	1	0.5
Turks	1	0.5
other	8	3.6
Total	221	100.0

As we mentioned earlier in the relevance of the research conducted we will discover and measure the following indexes: *integral index of social welfare, index of tolerance, index of life satisfaction and indexes of anomie, authoritarianism and cynicism.*

The values of the Integral Index of Social Welfare (IISw)<sup>3</sup> for all respondents are presented in Table 3. The values are presented as mean value  $\pm$  mean error.

This type of presenting computation results was chosen due to the following reasons - it corresponds to the tradition that existed in the Soviet Union and it allows comparing other authors' results with ours.

IISw identifies the 'tension sphere' of people's (in our case students') lives. The higher the index the more tension there is in that sphere. The value varies from 1 to 3, which is maximum value for this index.

The research shows the most tensed spheres are the social security sphere, the political sphere, and sphere of social security, the professional/labour sphere, information and cultural sphere and sphere of ethnic relations. The least tensed spheres are personal sphere, sphere of interpersonal relations and sphere of communal- material. Recreational and cultural sphere has "a borderline" value.

Table 3. IISw for AUCA students

Integral Index of Social Welfare	mean value $\pm$ mean error
Personal sphere	1,48 $\pm$ 0,038
Sphere of interpersonal relations	1,54 $\pm$ 0,036
Sphere of communal- material , 1 <sup>st</sup> level	1,58 $\pm$ 0,043

<sup>3</sup> Social Welfare is identified by the degree of need satisfaction: the more an individual feels lack of social goods the worse his/her wellbeing is. That reflects on emotionally evaluating attitude of an individual towards the society. Totally 44 social goods/benefits are being tested, clustered in 11 spheres. A respondent evaluates existence or absence of a specific kind of social benefits (we used the Welfare Sufficiency Scale —"enough — difficult to decide whether it is enough or not - not enough —not interested"). In our modification, the scale varies from 1 to 3, if the average meaning on all social benefits comprising one sphere is less than 2, it indicates adequacy/sufficiency; if it is higher than 2, it indicates tension.

Sphere of communal- material , 2nd level	1,83±0,044
Recreational and cultural sphere	2,09±0,040
Sphere of ethnic relations	2,20±0,035
Information and cultural sphere	2,28±0,038
Professional/labour sphere	2,35±0,036
Sphere of social relations	2,51±0,030
Socio- political sphere	2,61±0,027
Social security sphere	2,71±0,021

The next crucial index is that of tolerance. It is measured through Bogardus' "Scale of Social Distance" (from tolerance to xenophobia, on a scale of 1 to 7). The higher the scores on the scale, the stronger the xenophobic attitude among respondents towards a certain ethnic group is. In Table 4 there are results of an analysis of computation towards 17 ethnic groups + 1 generalised group (Americans).

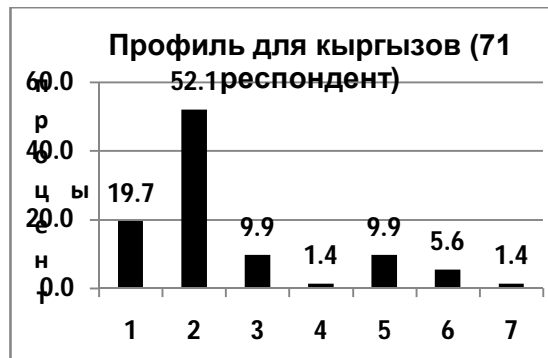
Table 4. Index of Tolerance

Ethnic group Distance to.....	Distance mean ± se	Ethnic group	Distance mean ± se
Kyrgyz	2,5±0,18	Dungans	3,8±0,11
Russians	2,6±0,10	Uigurs	3,8±0,13
Kazakh	2,9±0,12	Uzbek	3,8±0,13
Koreans	3,0±0,11	Turks	4,1±0,12
Americans	3,2±0,12	Chinese	4,1±0,13
Tatars	3,3±0,12	Azerbaijani	4,2±0,12
Germans	3,4±0,11	Tajiks	4,2±0,13
Ukrainians	3,5±0,12	Armenians	4,2±0,12
Jews	3,8±0,13	Gipsy	5,4±0,12

*Note:* The attitude of the ethnic group towards itself was not considered.

It is evident from the table that the level of xenophobia is very high. Various ethnic groups are ready to accept only Kyrgyz quite closely, however, only as 'neighbours', not as the closest relatives. The Russians come next. Starting from Turks all ethnic groups are classified as 'outsiders'. Jews, Dungans, Uigurs, Uzbeks are close to the boundary of being 'outsiders'. The majority of respondents feel xenophobia towards Gypsies. This level of 'outsiders', moreover of xenophobic attitude is leading to social segregation and even the isolation of some groups along the ethnic boundaries.

As the main ethnic groups involved in June clashes are Uzbek and Kyrgyz, let us make a detailed 'profile' of these two groups.



Graph 1. Attitude towards Kyrgyz



Graph 2. Attitude towards Uzbek



Graph 1 shows much more positive picture compared to graph 2. “Veiled” xenophobia towards Kyrgyz and Uzbek are 9.9% and 21% and open xenophobic attitude show 7% and 25.1% correspondingly.

The Index of Anomie refers to a breakdown of social norms (expectations on behaviour) and conditions where norms no longer control the activities of members in society. We used a special methodical approach to measure the level of anomie, which is through medians calculated.

Таблица 5. Level of Anomie

#### Descriptive Statistics

	N	Percentiles		
		25th	50th (Median)	75th
Anomie	221	0,67	1,00	1,33

*Note:* The maximum value is 2.

Table 5 shows that the level of anomie among students is not crucially, but high. The highest value of 1.33 reveals that almost 66% of all respondents are anomie demoralised.

It is a well-known fact that a society with such high levels of anomie is not stable. An unstable society is characterised by a breakdown in the system of values and norms, which is the basis for social integration. If the general basis of social integration is not valid any more, sub-cultures, with their own norms, appear. When we analyse the environment considering sub-cultures, we find that this result corresponds with the low index of tolerance that shows the trend towards the social isolation of ethnic groups.

The high level of anomie is always accompanied with a high level of authoritarianism and cynicism as these are natural reactions to the destruction of normality. Authoritarianism is the attempt to save at least some norms through the strict adherence of instructions and obedience. It also means searching for Authoritarian Leaders. Cynicism is quite the opposite as it involves the rejection of following any norms accepted in the society. Both of these trends may result in aggression.

Table 6. Indexes of life satisfaction, authoritarianism and cynicism for the whole group

### Descriptive Statistics

	N	Percentiles		
		25th	50th (Median)	75th
Life satisfaction	221	1,25	1,50	1,62
Authoritarianism	221	1,14	1,43	1,71
Cynicism	221	1,14	1,29	1,57

*Note:* Maximum value is 2

Surprisingly, the level of life satisfaction is much higher than 1. This indicates that the respondents are satisfied with their lives.

Summarising, we can state that a high level of anomie and cynicism may increase the risk of conflict behaviour dramatically. What is also significant is that it corresponds to a low index of tolerance that shows the trend to social isolation of ethnic groups.

As for IISw, some spheres measured are inertial and do not reveal quick changes. As a result the measurements of social characteristics should be conducted regularly, at least annually.

In general the level of tolerance is quite low. Most probably, conflict situations between ethnic groups left a deep print in the minds and souls of young generation. Taking into consideration "tension" in the socio-political sphere and the high level of insecurity we can conclude our students have doubts in timely resolving ethnic conflicts although the high probability of conflict situations in the Republic does exist.

National issue has never been easy for resolving and most probably will remain the same in the nearest future. It shifted from philosophical research sphere into our reality long ago. Data analysed in this article confirms this statement. No doubts elements of resolving this issue is based in many spheres of our life and first of all in education.

## Bibliography

- Головаха Е.И., Панина Н.В. Интегральный индекс социального самочувствия (ИИСС): конструирование и применение социологического теста в массовых опросах. - Киев: ИС НАНУ, 1997. – 64 с.
2. Головаха Е.И. Феномен "аморального большинства" в постсоветском обществе: трансформация массовых представлений о нормах социального поведения в Украине // Мониторинг общественного мнения: экономические и социальные перемены. К., 2002. № 6 (62). С. 20-22.)
  3. Коростелева Н.Н. Социальное самочувствие студенческой молодежи // Общечеловеческое и национальное в философии: сборник научных статей кафедры философии и социально-политических наук КРСУ. Выпуск 2.-Б.,212 п.л. с. 40-56.
  4. Панина Н. Факторы национальной идентичности, толерантности, ксенофобии и антисемитизма в современной Украине. <http://polit.ru/research/2006/03/29/panina.html>
  5. Панина Н.В. Индекс жизненной удовлетворенности // LIFELINE и другие новые методы психологии жизненного пути. М., 1993. С. 107—114.
  6. Сорокин А.А., Коростелева Н.Н. Статистические оценки некоторых индексов нормативно -ценностной системы студентов IV курса медицинского и экономического факультета КРСУ// Физиология, морфология и патология человека и животных в условиях Кыргызстана: ежегодный сборник научных статей медицинского факультета КРСУ. Выпуск 8. –Б., 2008.-с. 108-114.
  7. Сорокин А.А., Коростелева Н.Н., Сологубова Т.И. Интегральный индекс социального самочувствия у студентов АУЦА. В сб.: Физиология, морфология и патология человека и животных в условиях Кыргызстана. – Бишкек, 2012. – с. 24 – 28.
  8. Panina N., Golovakha E. Tendencies in the development of ukrainian society (1994-1998). sociological indicators (tables, illustrations and commentaries). — К.: Institute of Sociology, 1999. — P. 1641.