

## **Title: Diffusion of Democracy and Market Economy in the World Gender Challenges**

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### **Abstract**

The growing scholarly interest in worldwide diffusion of democracy is clearly a response to increasing globalization, economic dominance of liberal democracies and economic and political interdependence of the world. Scholarly interest is also generated by historical events of the widespread democratization in Latin America in the 1980, and the 1990s democratization of the former Soviet bloc states and countries in Africa. This rapid diffusion of liberal democracy across the world (see Figure 1) has brought substantial changes to the lives of residents of newly democratized states (Dahl 1982; Stephenson 1998, Wejnert 2001). Figure 1. Total Number of Countries in the World Exhibiting Principles of Democracy in Their Polity from 1800-2000. (Here should be a graph that is not well taken by my email but will be included in the full abstract)

Source: Database Nations, Democracy and Development: 1800-1999 (Wejnert, 2000). Notes: numbers in brackets represent ratio of democratic to nondemocratic countries in the world (in percentage).

But democratization that is assisted by transition towards a market economy has also been associated with changes in life-styles, employment levels, family relationships, redistribution of resources, and the emergence of new class systems (Dahl 1998; International Labor Office 1985; Wallerstein 1995; Wejnert 1996a, b,c; Wejnert 2001a). Although many of the contemporary democratic trends have been commonly assumed to enrich people's lives and to increase their life opportunities, the costs of democratization are often substantial. The connectedness of democratic freedom with economic liberty frequently leads to social inequality, social discomfort and cause the status of ordinary citizens to decline (Held 1990; Wallerstein 1998, 1999; Wejnert 2001). Women especially are in a particularly difficult situation and face several problems that are unique because of their greater variety of social roles, and also because their employment status is always more tenuous than that of men (Amott & Matthaei 1996; Bonvillain 2001; Stycos, Wejnert, & Tyszka 1999; Wejnert & Spencer 1996). How could we assess the impact of world's trend towards democratization and market economy on women's lives? In this paper I apply the theoretical concept of quality of life (QOL) to measure the impact of spreading democratization on gender. This paper presents initial results of empirical studies on women's perceived (subjective) QOL in two newly democratic Eastern European countries: Poland and the Ukraine. Three sets of data are compared in this paper: results of a pilot research conducted by Stycos, Wejnert and Tyszka in Poland, in 1995; Polish research, in which the same methodology and the same questionnaire was applied, conducted by Wachowiak in 1999; and Ukrainian research conducted by Wejnert and Muller in 2000 (also using the same methodology and the same questionnaire).

I believe that the transition to democracy alone does not necessarily mean improvement in women's QOL. Rather, as I argue, the increase of QOL is a function of (a) women's position before transition to democracy, (b) a country economic situation before and during transition period, and (c) a temporal rate of democratization. Therefore, an assessment of women's life and their economic or social position using only indicators of a country development level (GNP or education level) might not lead to realistic evaluation of women's quality of life in new democracies. I propose to supplement objective indicators with subjective material collected from respondents to shed more light on the issues assessed by objective measurement.