Explorations of welfare and well-being
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Writing this thesis has been an adventurous ride. Let me thank my promotor Bernard van Praag for making the ride possible. He is the co-author of the bulk of the articles that make up this thesis\(^1\). I have come to know Bernard as a good judge of character, a tough negotiator when it concerns the content of an article (especially the first page), open for new ideas, and unsparing with his critique though fair in his judgement. After some translation problems with each other’s manual, I believe we found common ground and I thank him for his support.

An empirically oriented thesis such as this one can only be as good as the data sets used. I therefore thank the sponsors and designers of the data sets used in this book: the German Socio-Economic Panel (GSOEP, Germany 1982-1997), the Erasmus survey (Russia 1991), and the Russian National Panel Survey (Russia 1993-1997).\(^2\)

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\(^1\)Chapter one is a re-written version of Van Praag and Frijters (1998). Chapter 2, 3 and 4 are versions of Frijters and Van Praag (1995, 1998, 1998b). Chapter 5 is a submitted article by Van Praag and Frijters. Chapter 6 is a submitted article by Frijters. This high degree of cooperation is reflected by the frequent use of the word ‘we’ in this book. Joint work not included in this thesis is Van Praag and Frijters (1997).

Other work by the author in this period includes Frijters (1998a, 1998b, 1998c,1999).

\(^2\)The GSOEP is a longitudinal household survey sponsored by the Deutsche Forschungsgemeinschaft and organized by the German Institute for Economic Research (Berlin), and the Center for Demography and Economics of Aging (Syracuse University). We are grateful to these institutes and the project director Dr. G. Wagner for making this dataset available.

The 1991 Erasmus Survey was carried out by the Public Opinion Foundation in Moscow, then headed by Dr. U. Levada. The survey was designed jointly by B.M.S. Van Praag, Jan Berting and Ruud Veenhoven, all then at the Erasmus University Rotterdam (EUR). The EUR commissioned the survey and the authors thank the university for making the data set available to us.

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To all my colleagues, family, friends, hairdressers and sleazy bicycle-salesmen: I give you my thanks, my heart, my smile, my shampoo and my rusting bike. Enjoy.

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