

A Quarterly Review of Social Reports and Research on Social Indicators, Social Trends, and the Quality-of-Life.
News Included of Working Group 6 on Social Indicators and Social Reporting of the International Sociological Association.
Newsletter of the International Society for Quality-of-Life Studies

WELL-BEING FOR ALL: CONCEPTS AND TOOLS FOR SOCIAL COHESION

Review of the 20th volume of the "Trends in Social Cohesion" Series by the Council of Europe
(Social Cohesion Development Division, DG III)

The Council of Europe (Social Cohesion Development Division), in partnership with the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) and the Autonomous Province of Trento (Italy), organized a Seminar on 'Involving citizens and communities in measuring and fostering well-being and progress' which was held in Strasbourg on the 27th and 28th of November (http://www.coe.int/t/DG3/SocialPolicies/Platform/seminar/default2008_en.asp)

The seminar aimed at discussing developments in new approaches and tools for measuring how societies are changing by using high quality, reliable statistics to assess progress in a range of areas affecting citizens' quality of life. In order to improve policy making, democracy and citizen well-being, the participation of citizens is important and aims at processing and strengthening their capacity to understand the social and economic context in which they live.

The event provided the opportunity for an exchange of good practices from various Council of Europe member states as well as non-member states such as Australia, Canada, Colombia and Japan and sought to promote international co-operation at governmental and non-governmental level. Participants had the opportunity to attend two round tables and six separate workshops addressing the following issues:

- Well-being and well-being for all: what differences and which indicators?
- Determining the objective and the political aim of involving citizens in developing indicators; identifying responsibilities and clarifying the institutional aspects of the approach

- Links between traditional systems of indicators and those developed with citizens/communities: antagonisms, alternatives or complementarities?

- Working with citizens /communities to develop indicators of well-being/progress

- Assessing needs in conjunction with citizens, collecting data establishing a link with conventional statistical data

- How can the question of goods for well being be taken into account in the work to develop indicators with citizens/communities?

Around 150 participants (including 6 members of the *European Committee for Social Cohesion*, CDCS) and speakers from all over the world attended this seminar including researchers, statisticians, government representatives, local authorities and NGOs. The Chair of the Group on Social and Health Questions (GR-SOC), the Chair of the Committee of Social Cohesion of the Council of Europe (CDCS) and the Chief statistician, Global project «Measuring the Progress of Societies» (OECD) addressed the opening speech.

On that occasion, the Council of Europe (Social Cohesion Development Division, DG III) presented the 20th volume of the "Trends in Social Cohesion" Series (Council of Europe Publishing), launched in order to provide a forum for observation and analysis of the developments taking place on matters of social cohesion in the Council of Europe (COE) member states and non-member states. Each issue will address important aspects concerning social protection and social cohesion. The presented volume is dedicated to a particular

(Continued on next page.)

In this Issue...

REVIEWS:

- Well-Being For All: Concepts and Tools for Social Cohesion 1-5
- International Conference on "Human Development and the Environment: Advances in Quality of Life Studies" . 6-8

ANNOUNCEMENTS:

- Well-Being Research in the News: An Article from The Canberra Times on the Australian Unity Wellbeing Index 9
- The Art of Presenting Statistics 5
- Manual for the Measurement of Indicators for Children in Formal Care 5
- Message from the Pres. of ISQOLS 10
- 2nd International Conference of International Society for Child Indicators (ISCI) 11
- Call for Papers Applied Research in Quality of Life, The Official Journal of the International Society for Quality-of-Life Studies 5
- ISQOLS Homepage 11
- SINET Homepage 12

Editor's Note: This issue contains reviews of two recent seminars/conferences on issues in the measurement and study of quality of life. The first, held November 27-28, 2008 in Strasbourg. The second was held December 11-12-2008 in Hong Kong. Readers will want to read the reviews to learn what their colleagues are studying. A number of short news items and announcements also are presented

SINET

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(Continued from previous page.)

issue: "Well-being for all. Concepts and tools for social cohesion". Social cohesion represents a specific Council of Europe's strategy and it is defined as the «capacity of a society to ensure well-being for all its members, minimizing disparities, and accentuates the importance of "social actors" joint responsibility for its attainment».

The book represents an initial review of the key concepts related to the COE's strategy, with particular reference to well-being for all and joint responsibility. The volume is organized in seven chapters, arranged in four parts.

The **first part** concerns *the well-being of all and citizens' involvement: the approach of the Council of Europe* and its two chapters present the work of the work carried out by the Council of Europe in defining an approach aimed at understanding and measuring well-being for all.

Gilda Farrell, head of the Social Cohesion Development Division, COE aims, in the first chapter at demonstrating the difference between two concepts: "individual well-being" and "well-being for all". Defining individual well-being cannot be done without taking into account non-material aspects, such as (i) the opportunity to take initiatives, (ii) the exercise of responsibility, (iii) the right to make mistakes, and (iv) the right of recognition. Well-being for all is much more than the sum of individuals' well-being since individual well-being involves dimensions (freedom, choices and preferences) developed in terms of interaction between individuals and the community and between individuals and the environment. In this perspective, a particular consideration is drawn on the traditional distinction between subjective and objective well-being. According to the author, a more accurate distinction is that that considers from one side the material aspects of well-being and on the other the sense of well-being. Evidences exist showing how material improvements have only short-term effect on subjective perception of well-being (see the Easterlin paradox, editor's note). Moreover, the «close correlation between objective and quantitative is only relevant when "objective" is defined as being independent of the subject, whereas when "objective" also corresponds to "unanimous", the measure may also become qualitative.» Summarizing, well-being for all represents the product of a multiplicity of personal, occupational and economic interactions that are always

subject to change. In the COE's view, stabilizing the well-being for all requires not the elimination of the day-to-day hazards but the production and continuing availability of common goods as intrinsic elements of democracy and social rights. According to the author, common goods are a key element of keeping the promises and meeting the commitments of well-being, as means of ensuring that everyone has a stake in and can participate in the community, including its aesthetic dimension.

Samuel Thirion, officer of the Social Cohesion Development Division of COE, deals – in the second chapter – with the definition of well-being measures. The conceptual framework of the proposal includes three main components, (i) the situation of individuals, defining well-being for all, (ii) human activities, defining responsibility, and (iii) social capital, defining resources (trust, bonds, shared values, knowledge, etc.). The three components constitute a social cohesion "tree" where the components represent respectively the foliage, the trunk, and the roots. Each dimension should be considered in terms of reality (the present situation), progress and objective, and is defined by a group of key elements. The table on the following page attempts to summarize the whole picture.

The specificity of the COE's approach is represented undoubtedly by the method – described in the chapter – defined in order to develop well-being criteria and indicators by directly involving citizens.¹ The COE's approach in understanding well-being, has the characteristic of being endogenous since it proceeds from the citizens themselves and set this approach against the exogenous approach involving specific philosophical and scientific research. The endogenous approach adopted by the COE shows some unquestionable advantages, such as transversal perspective, mutual learning processes, low cost and easy implementation.

The undoubtedly sharable idea to involve citizens in defining their own well-being needs to take into consideration and to discuss, in our view, at least three basic issues. One concerns the process aimed at

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¹ The method has been applied in pilot-projects that involved a group of municipalities (Mulhouse in France, Timo^oara in Romania, Rovereto in Italy and the 14th arrondissement in Paris) and have been taken place in different settings (companies, schools, etc.)

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Components	Key elements	Objective
Situation of individuals	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Fair access - Dignity and recognition of each person in his/her diversity - Autonomy and personal, family and occupational development - Commitment/participation of citizens 	Well-being for all
Human activities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Responsibility shared among players - Conditions for that sharing (objective of well-being, citizenship, associate approach, democratic skills and economy geared to individual and community well-being) 	Action aimed at facilitating shared responsibility
Social capital	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Values of citizenship (sense of justice and the common goods, solidarity and responsibility, tolerance of openness to/interest in difference) - Transverse links - Trust and shared knowledge 	Production and preservation of the requisite goods for the well-being for all

defining, constructing and developing indicators useful and manageable, e.g., at policy level. This process requires the availability of a particular expertise and the application of a consolidated methodology, both not always possessed by all citizens. The risk is to start and develop a long process not merging into a fruitful outcome. Another consideration concerns the role of experts along the whole process aimed at defining criteria and constructing indicators. With reference to this, we could think at the important role of experts and scientists plaid in warning citizens, authorities, politicians, public administrators, and policy-makers to consider the environmental dimension in defining well-being of societies. The last, but not least, consideration concerns the need to verify the existence of a societal environment allowing citizens to express well-being definitions and criteria in the “best conditions”, without “external” conditioning factors. To this end, we refer to social-political conditions (democracy), to education (freedom of access), communication and expression (e.g. freedom of the press).

These topics are particularly issued in the

second part of the book, which concerns *the understanding and perception of well-being: individual and goods* and is organized in two chapters.

Jean-Luc Dubois, in the first chapter, deals with equitable access to well-being and demonstrates how the two approaches (endogenous and exogenous) converge by bringing out the importance of tangible dimensions and of each individual as key player of society. This recognition allows process conducting to well-being to be promoted by considering joint or mutual responsibility. In order to allow aspirations for well-being to be ensured and shared by all, reaching the basic level of well-being (availability) and accessing resources and capabilities should be ensured by the state and the institutions. Moreover, in order to inspire concerted public policies, a possible starting approach is however taking citizens’ aspirations. This can be accomplished through

the availability of means of expression. From the pragmatic point of view, it is possible to identify a range of indicators for characterizing situations of well-being and ill-being. Subsequently, public measures and policies should be considered, in order to influence the factors aimed at improving well-being and to combat those that cause ill-being. However, the emphasis on social interaction brings back to more comprehensive views of socially sustainable development, with its direct concern for responsibility and equity.

Different models of the distribution of social responsibilities can affect the relationship between the sense of well-being (“subjective well-being”) and the material aspects of well-being (“objective well-being”). Wolfgang Glatzer demonstrates, in the next chapter, how this relationship turns out to be a discrepancy. In particular, Glatzer, after a synthetic review of different definitions of well-being and quality of life, shows, through empirical data produced by different studies², how the level of satisfaction related to private goods is higher than the level of satisfaction related to public goods, while the level of personal well-being is higher than level of national well-being. The existence of this discrepancy between satisfaction with social goods and satisfaction with individual goods turns out to be stable over time and between population groups. In Glatzer’s opinion, the differences can find different explanations:

- private goods are acquired according to individual’s wishes while public goods are acquired according to political decision
- what is free is less appreciated whereas what is directly acquired is highly appreciated
- aspirations and expectations are higher for public goods than for private goods
- the level of satisfaction is related to the level of individual involvement, which is lower with reference to public goods
- dissatisfying individual goods can be more easily removed

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² According to the different studies presented in the chapter, different indicators are compared:

- objective indicators, such as Human Development Index (by UNDP), Human Wellbeing Index (by Prescottt-Allen), Weighted Index of Social Progress (by Estes) and so on;
- subjective indicators, Overall Satisfaction with Life Index (by Halman), Affect Balance Scale (by Veenhoven from Bradburn), Personal Well-Being Index and National Well-Being Index (by Cummins)
- mixed indicators, such as Happy Life Expectancy Index (By Veenhoven).

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- people often have/receive the incorrect information about functions and functioning of public goods
- knowledge of public goods is influenced by media
- differences reproduce actual differences (private prosperity and public poverty)
- differences reproduce actual differences in welfare state approaches

Well-being for all requires the application of approaches relying on joint responsibility and more inclusive governance. This application should take into account the globalized context in which, however, the economic development model demonstrated its limits. As Iuli Nascimento asserts in his chapter, the first of the **third part** dealing with *well-being and responsibilities*, the traditional model of growth (increasing economic activities) is not always reflected in the quality of the living environment and population well-being. As an alternative, development implies greater human fulfillment and requires common goods to be considered in greater depth. A globalized economy should ensure positive externalities for all countries and region in the world. In order to maintain cohesive societies in a globalized context, the concept of common good should be redefined as a result of individual and collective action. Possible paths can be identified in order to reshape the model for the development of human activities especially at regional and local level, by proposing new organizational spaces, promoting population's well-being. In this perspective, the authors shows how the Île-de-France region, in order to ensure the connection between rural areas and the global economic network and the respect of their economic and cultural balance, promoted a particular model based upon the concept of *ecoregion*. Each ecoregion is sub-divided into geographical sub-sectors (living areas) considered the base of society and of all economic and cultural life. The ecoregion combines its ability to meet the legitimate needs of its population and its capacity to react to part of the population's behavior, which can be detrimental to sustainable development.

Actually these approaches can be difficult to achieve, especially when they involve and are addressed to people suffering successive cycles of exclusion. In her chapter, the second of this part, Catherine

Redelsperger describes possible approaches aimed at rebuilding a path of trust and inclusion and gradually stimulating the availability and willingness to share responsibilities. She shows, by examples relying on her coaching experience with people affected by long-term unemployment and over-indebtedness, how vigilance and humility represent indispensable qualities for any player involved in the process.

All the discussions and analyses concerning how to obtain well-being for all reveal the importance of intangible assets, such as human rights, democracy, rule of law and the corresponding regulatory mechanism allowing their existence. In other words, as Bruno Amoroso asserts in his chapter of the **fourth part** concerning *the case for a society focusing on the common good as a condition for well-being*, the democratic system needs to be constantly monitored. During past years, this monitoring process concerned mainly procedures related to the welfare state and the strategy of "rights" to be guaranteed to all citizens by formal declarations. Lately, new key concepts have been considered, such as "participation", which can improve the "access to" and the "use of" dimensions but can represent a functional support for the existing political and economic institutions. This re-directs to the problem of the model of development to be chosen.

Conclusion

The important contribution of the book is its capacity to demonstrate the need for new paradigms and new perceptions shared by the social players in order to secure well-being for all.

The seminar in which the book was presented is part of a process aimed at drafting a guide on the theme "*Promoting well-being for all and societal progress: how to involve citizens in defining and measuring well-being and societal progress indicators*", which is a contribution of the Council of Europe to the Global Project "Measuring the progress of societies" coordinated by the OECD. This overview will be presented and discussed at the seminar "*From life satisfaction to well-being for all*" that has been planned and will be chaired by Gilda Farrell in the ambit of the next ISQOLS Conference that will be held in Florence from the 19th to 23rd of July.

~ Filomena Maggino

Appendix

WELL-BEING FOR ALL. CONCEPTS AND TOOLS FOR SOCIAL COHESION

CONTENTS

Foreword

Alexander Vladychenko

Introduction

Gilda Farrell

Part I – The well-being of all and citizens' involvement: the approach of the Council of Europe

I. Well-being for all as the objective of social cohesion

Gilda Farrell

1. Well-being and well-being for all: the differences
 2. The benefits of the concept of well-being for all
 3. A better understanding of the relationship between subjective and objective well-being
 4. Well-being for all as a means of improving life in the community
- Conclusions
References
Appendix: tables

II. Involving citizens in defining and measuring well-being and progress

Samuel Thirion

Introduction

1. The proposed framework of our study
 2. How to approach the question of well-being (epistemological issues)
 3. Working with citizens to develop knowledge for societal progress: first findings from research
 4. Reflections on the key elements of well-being for all
- Conclusions
References
Appendix: methodology

Part II – The understanding and perception of well-being: individuals and goods

I. Understanding well-being to ensure that it is equitably accessible

Jean-Luc Dubois

Introduction

1. A general aspiration to well-being
 2. Ensuring well-being: in search of a new ethic
- Conclusions
References

(Continued on next page.)

(Continued from previous page.)

II. Well-being: perception and measurement

Wolfgang Glatzer

Introduction

- 1. Well-being and its perception
 - 2. Measurement of well-being
 - 3. Public goods, context characteristics and national well-being in the social state
 - 4. The private-public differentiation and well-being
- Conclusions
References
Further reading

Part III – Well-being and responsibilities

I. The common good, well-being and the responsibility of local authorities

Iuli Nascimento

- 1. The common good and the public interest
 - 2. Well-being and globalisation
 - 3. Local authorities' role and responsibilities and the tools at their disposal – The example of France and the Ile-de-France region
- Conclusion
References
Further reading

II. From ill-being to well-being: individual and collective responsibilities

Catherine Redelsperger

Introduction

- 1. Proposed definitions
 - 2. Learning processes for a person's return to well-being: individual and collective dimensions
 - 3. The learning process of well-being/ill-being as it affects wage-earners
- Conclusion

Part IV – The case for a society focusing on the common good as a condition for well-being

From welfare state to welfare society

Bruno Amoroso

- 1. Collective imagination and well-being: the two utopias
 - 2. Welfare society as a new project for well-being
- Conclusions: access to, and the use of, resources and rights

MANUAL FOR THE MEASUREMENT OF INDICATORS

FOR CHILDREN IN FORMAL CARE

UNICEF, in partnership with the Better Care Network (BCN), recently published the *Manual for the Measurement of Indicators for Children in Formal Care*. The purpose of the manual is to assist countries in designing a national information system to monitor child protection and well-being in formal care. The manual introduces a set of 15 global indicators, practical guidance on data collection, and a common measurement approach to better monitor childcare practices, inform development of policy and programs, and facilitate comparison within and between countries. The manual is available in hard copy, CD-ROM, and on the BCN website – www.bettercarenetwork.org. For more information or to receive a copy contact the BCN, contact@bettercarenetwork.org

THE ART OF PRESENTING STATISTICS

Edward Tufte, Emeritus Professor at Yale U., recently was described by the *New York Times* as “The Leonardo da Vinci of data”. He has produced eight books on how to present data. Four of them:

The Visual Display of Quantities Information, Second Edition. A classic on statistical charts, graphs and tables.

Envisioning Information. Maps of data and evidence.

Visual Explanations. Depicting evidence on cause and effect. Decision making.

Beautiful Evidence. How to produce evidence

You or your library may order them from Graphics Press, 203 272 8600.

~ Abbott L. Ferriss

Call For Papers

Applied Research in Quality of Life

The Official Journal of the International Society for Quality-of-Life Studies

The aim of this journal is to publish conceptual, methodological and empirical papers dealing with quality-of-life studies in the applied areas of the natural and social sciences. As the official journal of ISQOLS, it is designed to attract papers that have some direct implications for or impact on practical applications of research on the quality-of-life. We welcome papers crafted from inter-disciplinary, inter-professional and international perspectives. This research should guide decision making in a variety of professions, industries, nonprofit, and government sectors such as healthcare, travel and tourism, marketing, corporate management, community planning, social work, public administration, human resource management, among others. The goal is to help decision makers apply performance measures and outcome assessment techniques based on concepts such as well-being, human satisfaction, human development, happiness, wellness and quality of life. The Editorial Review Board is divided into specific sections indicating the broad scope of practice covered by the journal, and the section editors are distinguished scholars from many countries across the globe.

Authors interested in submitting manuscripts for publication should consult the website <http://ariq.edmgr.com>. Manuscripts should be directed to the relevant Section Editor of the Editorial Review Board. If an appropriate Section Editor can not be identified, direct the manuscript to the current Editor in Chief, Alex Michalos.

INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE ON

“HUMAN DEVELOPMENT AND THE ENVIRONMENT:

ADVANCES IN QUALITY OF LIFE STUDIES”

In 2003, a conference entitled “International Conference on Quality of Life in a Global World” was organized by the Faculty of Social Science, The Chinese University of Hong Kong. With the kind support of Professor Alex Michalos, Editor of *Social Indicators Research*, selected papers presented at the conference were reviewed and published in a special issue of *Social Indicators Research* (Shek, Chan & Lee, 2005a) and a book (Shek, Chan & Lee, 2005b). To provide another platform to examine advances in quality of life studies with particular reference to human development and the environment in different parts of the world, another international conference entitled “Human Development and the Environment: Advances in Quality of Life Studies” was held on December 11-12, 2008 at The Chinese University of Hong Kong, Hong Kong. The conference also commemorated the 60th anniversary of New Asia College, The Chinese University of Hong Kong. The New Asia College emphasizes the importance of Chinese cultural heritage in the College spirit. Obviously, the humanistic values and virtues underlying the Chinese cultural heritage (particularly Confucian thoughts) are closely related to the concept of quality of life developed in the Western culture.

Papers on Personal and Family Quality of Life

Papers presented at this conference can roughly be divided into two categories, with the first category of papers related to quality of life in children, adolescents and families. These papers included:

Correlates of Adolescent Well-Being and Family Quality of Life

- Life satisfaction, positive youth development and problem behavior in Chinese adolescents in Hong Kong (Rachel Sun and Daniel Shek)
- Volunteering functions, intention to volunteer and purpose in life among adolescents in Hong Kong (Ben Law and Daniel Shek)
- Social problem solving as a predictor of well-being in adolescents and young adults (Andrew Siu and Daniel Shek)

- Personal and family correlates of suicidal ideation in Chinese adolescents in Hong Kong (Sylvia Lai and Daniel Shek)
- Impact of media violence on adolescents in Mainland China (Lian Ming Xu)
- The effects of sports on subjective well-being among university students in Hong Kong (Sai Leung Ng and Andrew Tsoi)
- Impact of work and family conflicts on father-child relationships and quality of parenting – The Hong Kong case (Yuk King Lau)

Promotion of Adolescent Well-Being

- Promoting the quality of life through enhancing resilience in a Chinese context: The effectiveness of a preventive program for children (Tak Yan Lee, Wai Man Kwong, Michael Ungar and Maria Cheung)
- Using students’ weekly diaries to evaluate positive youth development programs: Are findings based on multiple studies consistent? (Daniel Shek)

Adolescents Experiencing Economic Disadvantage/Social Exclusion

- Quality of life of female university students growing up in poverty in Hong Kong (Vera Tang and Daniel Shek)
- Impact of poor quality of life on adolescents in rural Kentucky (Hatim Omar, Søren Ventegodt and Joav Merrick)
- The impact of social exclusion and structural barriers on the well-being of Shanghai migrant children (Xiao Yan Han)

With reference to the growing problem of poverty in the global context, there were two papers examining the well-being of adolescents experiencing economic disadvantage in both Western and non-Western contexts. In the paper by Omar, Merrick and Ventegodt, data collected from middle and high school students referred to a comprehensive school based health promotion center were presented. Analyses showed that a significant proportion of the students concerned had depressed and conduct problems as well as absence of safety procedures. The authors concluded that poor quality of life is a major factor leading to negative outcomes in rural ado-

lescents. In the second paper, Tang and Shek examined the perceived quality of life among seven Chinese female university students growing up in single-mother and economic disadvantaged families via qualitative interviews. The findings showed that the participants perceived their status of being on welfare negatively and they covered it from others because of the negative views on the welfare recipients from the peers or general public, and the unpleasant experiences of being a welfare recipient and living in poverty.

There were two papers examining the promotion of quality of life in Chinese children and adolescents. Lee and his associates presented findings of an adolescent prevention program entitled “Understanding the Adolescent Project” which attempts to promote childhood resilience in Hong Kong. Analyses based on linear mixed models gave support to the following two related hypotheses: (a) children’s resilience beliefs predict positive child development; and (b) such a predictive relationship is stronger with growing adversities in children’s life. In the paper presented by Shek, students participating in the Project P.A.T.H.S. were invited to write reflective journals in the form of weekly diaries to reveal their perceptions and feelings regarding the program and the perceived benefits of the program. Based on multiple studies, results showed that most of the respondents (a) had positive views on the program, (b) had positive views on the instructors, and (c) perceived that they had acquired competencies at the societal, familial, interpersonal and personal levels and their quality of life was promoted after joining the program.

Papers on Emergent Issues on Quality of Life

In the second category of papers, papers pertinent to the emergent issues on quality of life were presented:

Measurement and Indices of Quality of Life

- Knowledge, attitudes and behaviors concerning education for sustainable development: Two exploratory studies (Alex C. Michalos, Heather Creech, Christina

(Continued on next page.)

McDonald and Maurine Hatch Kahlke)

- How are the kids doing? How do we know? Recent trends and international comparisons in child and youth well-being (Kenneth C. Land, Vicki L. Lamb and Hui Zheng)
- Quality of life and persons with intellectual disability. Can we measure QOL in this population? (Joav Merrick, Hatim A. Omar and Søren Ventegodt)
- Social development in Hong Kong: Development issues identified by Social Development Index (Hoi Wai Chua, Anthony Wong and Daniel Shek)
- Application of structural equation models to quality of life (Sik Yum Lee and Xin Yuan Song)

Promotion of Quality of Life

- Mental health promoting behaviors among Hong Kong adults (Winnie Mak and Phoenix Mo)
- Internet communication versus face-to-face interaction in raising quality of life (Paul Lee, Louis Leung, Venhwei Lo, Chengyu Xiong and Tingjun Wu)
- Quality of life as medicine: Can improvement of quality of life cure somatic and mental illness? Salutogenesis and recovery (Søren Ventegodt, Hatim A. Omar and Joav Merrick)
- An exploration of the burnout situation on teachers in two schools in Macau (Andrew Luk, Bessie Chan, Selwyne Cheong and Stanley Ko)

Quality of Life and Poverty

- “I wish to be self-reliant”: Aspiration, quality of life, and exit barriers of welfare recipients in Hong Kong (Chack Kie Wong and Vivian Lou)
- Quality of life of poor people living in remote areas in Hong Kong (Hung Wong)

Quality of Life and Aging

- Older people’s best years of life (Jik Joen Lee)
- Life satisfaction of older adults in Hong Kong – The role of social support from adolescent grandchildren (Vivian Lou)

In this category of papers, several papers pertaining to measurements and indices of quality of life were presented. To celebrate the U.N. Decade of Education for Sustainable Development (2005-2014), Alex Michalos and his associates conducted two surveys in Canada, including a ran-

dom sample of adults and a convenience sample of students. Standardized assessment tools assessing the respondents’ knowledge, attitudes and behaviors concerning the basic themes of the U.N. Decade of Education for Sustainable Development were developed. The percentage of responses to the items assessing behaviors concerning ESD (education for sustainable development) and SD (sustainable development) can be seen in Table 1. The findings also showed that relative to ESD/SD knowledge, ESD/SD favorable attitudes had a stronger influence on ESD/SD favorable behaviors.

In another paper, Ken Land and his associates described the Child and Youth Well-Being Index (CWI) and the related findings. The CWI uses past historical values, other contemporaneous units (e.g., comparisons among subpopulations, states, regions, countries), or goals or other externally established standards for comparisons. Utilizing two base years (1975 and 1985), the general objective of the CWI summary indices is to give an evidence-based picture on the overall direction of change in the well-being of children and youth in the United States. The CWI is able to answer many questions, such as whether well-being in adolescents in different age groups improve or deteriorate. In the presented paper, findings on the Child Well-Being Index covered from 1975 to 2005 are presented. For example, findings presented in Figure 1 show several observations: a) there was an oscillating

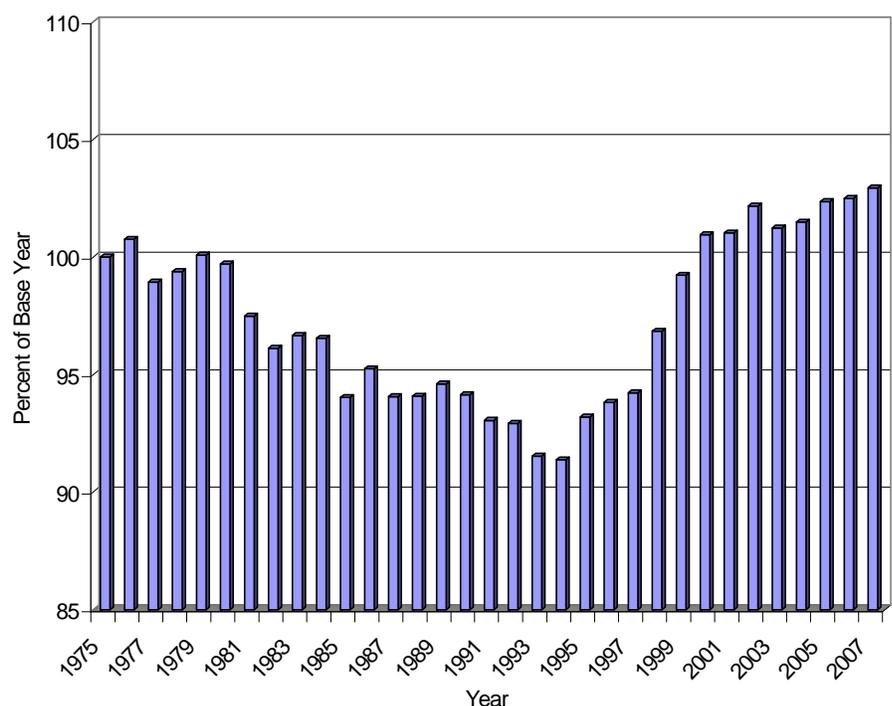
period of ups and downs in the late-1970s; b) there was a decline in child and youth well-being from 1981 to 1994 with a gradual rise from 1994 to 2002; c) improvements in the CWI slowed down in the first few years of the 21st century.

In the paper presented by Joav, Omar and Ventegodt, the question of whether it is possible to measure quality of life in people who are not able to communicate is raised. With reference to the basic concern of whether we are able to read the QOL of other people, four questions were addressed: a) Can strangers read the quality of life of other people? b) Do people know each other guess each others’ quality of life better than people who do not know each other? c) Is it easier to rate the experience of ability than emotional dimensions of quality of relations? d) Is it more difficult to measure quality of life (variable state) than existential dimensions of body/sexuality, emotions, mind, spirit and I-strength (stable state)? Several instruments are recommended for the assessment of quality of life. These instruments are also covered in the paper presented by Ventegodt, Omar and Merrick.

In the paper by Chua, Wong and Shek, the current state of social development in Hong Kong and the major social, political and economic challenges that confront Hong Kong at this point in time were identified using the data collected in the

(Continued on next page.)

Figure 1: Child Well-Being Index, 1975-2006, with Projections for 2007



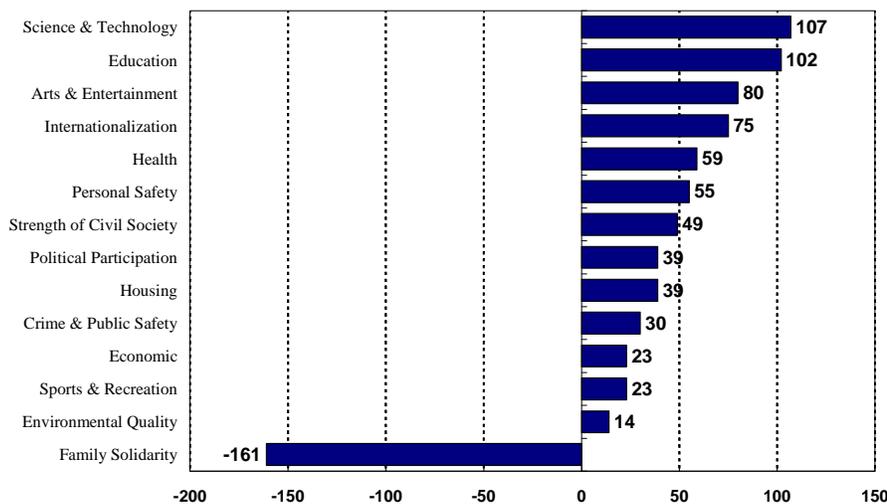
(Continued from previous page.)

Social Development Index (SDI). The SDI is made up of 47 social, political and economic indicators divided across the 14 sectors of development. Although positive performance was observed for the overall Social Development Index, Hong Kong's pace of social development was not uniform for all time periods studied or across all sectors of development. Rather, considerable variation occurred in the development performances of each of the SDI's 14 sectors (see Figure 2). For example, SDI figures show that the Family Solidarity Subindex has always been a negative figure since its first release (SDI-2000). It has dropped very rapidly in the most recent release of SDI-2008, where we observed -535, which is around 150% drop as compared to the previous release in 2006. The figure generally means that it is now 5.35 times worse than that in 1991 (the base year).

The papers presented at this conference and the background of the authors can be seen at the web site of the Social Welfare Practice and Research Centre, The Chinese University of Hong Kong (<http://web.swk.cuhk.edu.hk/~swk/QOL>).

This conference had several unique characteristics. First, this conference was a product of the collaboration between the Social Welfare Practice and Research Centre and Centre for Quality of Life, Hong Kong Institute of Asia-Pacific Studies, The Chinese University of

Figure 2: Social Development Index-2000: Subindex Scores



Hong Kong. The second unique characteristic is that researchers from different disciplines, including community development, counseling, education, geography, journalism, occupational therapy, medicine, nursing, political science, psychology, social work, sociology, and youth work were involved. Third, besides colleagues in different Chinese communities (including mainland China, Hong Kong and Macau), internationally renowned experts from Canada, Denmark, Israel and the U.S.A. presented papers at the conference. Fourth, a Panel Discussion session was scheduled at the end of the conference for the participants to exchange views on specific issues pertinent to the assessment, research and promotion of quality of life research in the global context. It was our intention that through the related discussion, future direction regarding quality of life research in relation to human development and the environment could be further explored.

~ Daniel Shek

Table 1: Behaviors concerning ESD and SD, unweighted and weighted numbers of respondents and percentage of answers favorable to ESD and SD based on the adult survey

Statement	Unweighted		Weighted	
	N	%	N	%
B1. I walk or bike to places instead of going by car.	480	52.3	481	52.9
B2. I invest my savings in funds that are ethically responsible.	448	59.2	447	64.4
B3. At home I try to recycle as much as I can.	498	93.2	501	90.2
B4. I try to ensure that there is gender equity in my home, my work and my volunteer environments.	472	89.8	468	89.3
B5. I have taken a course in which sustainable development was discussed.	368	29.5	350	21.1
B6. I talk to others about how to help people living in poverty.	472	51.9	465	48.1
B7. I vote in municipal elections.	490	91.0	490	89.3
B8. I often look for signs of ecosystem deterioration.	476	56.9	476	58.1
B9. The household tasks in my home are equally shared among family members regardless of gender.	472	75.6	474	77.0
B10. I have a home composting system or use the municipal green box system.	485	67.0	486	64.7
B11. I try to avoid purchasing goods from companies with poor track records on corporate social responsibility.	472	55.9	472	58.9
B12. I have changed to environmentally friendly light bulbs.	480	71.3	479	69.2
B13. I have changed my personal lifestyle to reduce waste.	486	82.3	482	83.1
B14. I do not use chemical fertilizers or pesticides on my lawn.	471	59.0	468	57.7
B15. I volunteer to work with local charities.	480	52.7	477	46.7

References:

Shek, D.T.L., Chan, Y.K., & Lee, P. (Eds.). (2005a). Quality of life research in Chinese, Western and global contexts. *Social Indicators Research*, 71 (1-3), 1-539.

Shek, D.T.L., Chan, Y.K., & Lee, P. (Eds.). (2005b). *Social Indicators Research Series (vol. 25): Quality of life research in Chinese, Western and global contexts*. The Netherlands: Springer.

The Canberra Times

Happy valleys within our reach

The unfolding economic crisis, now generally described as the worst since the Great Depression, is likely to be the subject of close analysis and study for years to come. Its causes, effects (and correctives) will be the most assiduously studied aspects of the crisis, but plenty of researchers will be poring over the psychic and psychological effects as well – whether a slowing in the growth of real incomes that flows from a prolonged depression leads to greater levels of personal unhappiness and dysfunction in the community, and whether (or how) governments can persuade consumers to keep spending on goods and services (so essential for demand and thus underpinning economic growth) when utility (the satisfaction, pleasure and need fulfillment derived from consuming some quantity of goods and services) is trumped by fears and job security and economic uncertainty.

With the current crisis apparently far from being played out (indeed, few economists or analysts are prepared to say just how long or deep it might be), now is an ideal time to see how much it has affected self-reported level of happiness in the community. The Australian Unity Wellbeing Index, first produced in 2001, measures people's subjective wellbeing by reference to satisfaction with their health, personal relationships, personal safety, standard of living, life achievement, community connection, future security and spirituality or religion as a "barometer of their satisfaction with their lives, and life in Australia."

Latest research shows, perhaps not surprisingly, that many inner-city regions in Australia – including south of Canberra, Fairfield-Liverpool in Sydney and Greater Dandenong city in Victoria – have low levels of wellbeing.

The obvious response to this would be to conclude that this is because these localities are occupied predominantly by McMansion-owning aspirational classes whose large mortgages and diminished superannuation and investment portfolios have bred pessimism about their current circumstances and fear of what the future might hold.

That may well be partly true, in which case areas with lower household incomes in more depressed areas might be feeling equally glum. But the research shows that those people in regions less well off than the inner-city areas report higher levels of wellbeing.

Moreover, people living in regions with a relatively small population (fewer than 40,000 inhabitants) report the highest

levels of wellbeing. Surprisingly, these areas are not heavily populated by tree-changers and sea-changer – individuals who have forsaken the rat race of the city for a quieter, more fulfilling life in the country.

Litchfield Shire in the Northern Territory; and Kangaroo Island, along with Yorke Peninsula, in South Australia; are more renowned for their remoteness than their attractiveness as destinations for alternative lifestyles – and they contain some of Australia's most content people.

Though hardly a novel concept, it is one frequently ignored by policymakers. Economists have always assumed that increased consumption of goods and services increases people's utility, though of course the law of diminishing marginal utility states that after a certain point successive equal increments in a good's quantity yield smaller and smaller increases in utility. Nevertheless, they and their governments they advise focus almost exclusively on expanding the economy and increasing real incomes in the belief that utility can be maximized in the community as a whole.

More socially aware economists have long known that reported levels of happiness are not predicated on steady economic growth, rising incomes and low rates of inflation. Factors such as identity, families and human relationships (at work and in the community) and, as the Australian Unity Wellbeing Index shows, community connections are equally if not more important.

Nevertheless, their views continue to be overlooked, perhaps in part because those things that determine quality of life are subjective and somewhat nebulous concepts, not easy to engineer or foster.

The sea-change phenomenon, and the debates about the necessity of a better work-life balance, were part of that trend. As prime minister, John Howard acknowledged the debate, but deviated little from his line that "prosperity is everything."

Despite its social democratic traditions, the federal Labor Government, too, seems unwilling to break with tradition.

Perhaps if it paid closer attention to their findings of this survey its efforts to stimulate a sharply slowing economy might be productive and socially useful.

Message from the President of ISQOLS

Dear Members of ISQOLS

Welcome to 2009 and to the start of my presidency, which will extend until the end of 2010.

Let me begin this communication by expressing deep gratitude to our immediate Past President, Valerie Moller, who so ably guided us through the term of her office. Valerie brought great dignity and wisdom to the role of President and I am most thankful she will remain on the Executive. Valerie's advice will be invaluable as we enter a new era in ISQOLS history.

The reason I describe the next few years in such dramatic terms is that our stalwart Executive Director, Joe Sirgy, who has master-minded the development of our organization since its inception, is going to step down at the end of 2009. Joe will remain as Treasurer and will continue his sterling work in managing our finances. He will also remain on the Executive Committee to advise on our development. However, the Executive Committee and particularly the Vice Presidents will be required to play a more pro-active role than in the past.

By the time you read this I hope that the Vice Presidents listed below will have been elected. However, at the time of writing they have been nominated by me, as our Articles require, but not yet confirmed in their respective positions. Thus, in order to indicate their interim status I have placed parentheses around each VC title.

The full list of Board members and Executive Committee Members is shown below.

BOARD MEMBERS	2009-2010	EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE
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Moller, Valerie	v.moller@ru.ac.za	Past President-07-08
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Zumbo, Bruno	bruno.zumbo@ubc.ca	

There are some changes in the construction of the Executive Committee from previous years as follows:

1. Each Vice-Presidential area of responsibility has only one incumbent, whereas in the past each area had two. This seems to me a more efficient and accountable structure, and one that limits the Executive Committee to a more manageable size.

2. Two new positions have been created as Ad-Hoc Committees. Each committee represents a broad area of the globe where QOL research is strongly emerging and where we have few members. Graciela Tonon will chair the Regional Committee for South America, and Anna Lau will chair the Regional Committee for Asia. I am extremely grateful to both of these people for agreeing to trial this new venture.

Finally, on a different topic, allow me to remind you that the big event in our calendar is the Conference, this year organized by Filomena Maggino in the beautiful city of Florence. The dates are 19-23 July and the conference website is: www.isqols2009.istitutodeglinnocenti.it I look forward to greeting you all there,

Bob Cummins
President, ISQOLS

Counting Children In!
Child Indicators: Research, Theory, Policy and Practice
2nd International Conference of
International Society for Child Indicators (ISCI)
4th and 5th November, 2009
And
The Social Justice and Social Change Research Centre
University of Western Sydney (UWS) Symposium
‘Children as Experts in Their Own Lives:
Developing Child Inclusive Research Policy and Practice
3rd November, 2009

The Conference Organising Committee for the second ISCI conference advises you of the opportunity to participate in the conference **Counting Children In! Child Indicators: Research Theory, Policy and Practice** to be held in Sydney, Australia on Wednesday 4th and Thursday 5th November, 2009. This conference will be held at the Parramatta campus of the University of Western Sydney.

An associated conference - The Social Justice and Social Change Research Centre (UWS) Symposium **‘Children as Experts in Their Own Lives: Developing Child Inclusive Research Policy and Practice’** - will be held at the same venue on Tuesday 3rd November, 2009.

THEISCICONFERENCE Counting Children In!

The ISCI conference has been designed to promote dialogue around concepts of child indicators and of child well-being, amongst diverse stakeholders and between research, theory, policy and practice. Abstracts and poster presentations will be invited from practitioners, researchers, policy makers and academics.

The conference will include plenary sessions addressed by keynote speakers, contributed papers and structured opportunities for conference participants to discuss issues arising at the conference.

THE INTERNATIONAL SOCIETY FOR

QUALITY-OF-LIFE STUDIES:

HEADQUARTERS AND WWW HOMEPAGE

The International Society for Quality-of-Life Studies (ISQOLS) was formed in the mid-1990s. The objectives of ISQOLS are: 1) to stimulate interdisciplinary research in quality-of-life (QOL) studies within the managerial (policy), behavioral, social, medical, and environmental sciences; 2) to provide an organization which all academic, business, nonprofit, and government researchers who are interested in QOL studies can coordinate their efforts to advance the knowledge base and to create positive social change; and 3) to encourage closer cooperation among scholars engaged in QOL research to develop better theory, methods, measures, and intervention programs.

The year 2006 membership fees are US\$75 for regular members and \$50 for students or retired persons. Prof. M. JOSEPH SIRGY (Virginia Tech and State University) is Executive Director of ISQOLS. Anyone interested in knowing more about ISQOLS should contact Prof. Sirgy at the central office.

The ISQOLS central office recently moved to new physical and virtual locations. Please note the new addresses:

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Website: www.isqols.org

SINET WORLD WIDE WEB HOMEPAGE

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SINET

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