

Foreward to the ARQOL Special Edition on Religion/Spirituality and Quality of Life

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At a time when current world events continue to lead many in questioning what gives meaning and quality to life, it gives us great pleasure as co-editors of this special edition of *Applied Research in Quality of Life (ARQOL)* to present this collection of six outstanding papers representing diversity in both sample profile and focus. This special edition is truly international in scope with qualitative and quantitative studies offering unique and rich insights from approximately 18,000 people (representing age groups from the young to the old) into what it means to live a satisfying and meaningful life. In terms of geography, this special issue is strikingly like an issue of *National Geographic* as the articles capture life and well-being in places from the lower lands of Germany to the high altitude of Bolivia, from the arid Saharan desert of Algeria to the Mediterranean hills of Catalan Spain and to the verdant mountains and valleys of British Columbia, Canada. In terms of methodologies, the issue includes ethnographic methods, as well as multivariate modeling. In sum, diversity and rich data characterize this special issue of ARQOL.

Two papers using large-scale sampling focus upon adolescent respondents. “An Investigation of the Relationships Between Spirituality, Health Status and Quality of Life in Adolescents” by Richard Sawatzky, Anne Gadermann and Barbara Pesut is set in British Columbia. Drawing upon a data set of more than 8,000 respondents,

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the authors employ multivariate modeling. Key findings in this study highlight the strong relationship between ratings of overall QOL and 1) perceived meaning in life and 2) feelings about the future. “Satisfaction with Spirituality, Satisfaction with Religion and Personal Well-Being among Spanish Adolescents and Young University Students” by Ferran Casas, Mònica González, Cristina Figuer and Sara Malo is set in Catalan Spain. Again, meaning in life is found to be a strong correlate of overall QOL. However, traditional religion is reported not to be an important correlate of overall QOL. Casas et al conclude their exploratory study by proposing hypotheses to be focused upon in future research.

Using an anthropological approach, “‘SUERTE’ (Luck): Spirituality and Well-Being in El Alto, Bolivia” by Melania Calestani addresses the importance of faith and the consequent resort to supernatural forces to acquire a sense of well-being for those living in a poor neighborhood in the city of El Alto, Bolivia. Informants in Calestani’s study believe that luck can be controlled and changed by treating the spirits better. Based on twelve-months as a participant observer and interviewer, Calestani’s findings suggest that commitment to spiritual beings is essential to create a sense of well-being.

Another large-scale sampling effort is included in “Reliance on God’s Help as a Measure of Intrinsic Religiosity in Healthy Elderly and Patients with Chronic Diseases. Correlations with Health-Related Quality of Life?” by Arndt Büssing, Julia Fischer, Thomas Ostermann and Peter F. Matthiessen. Here, about half of the elderly Germans studied had a strong belief that God would help in their medical treatment and prayed to become healthy again. While the construct of Reliance on God’s Help was not generally associated with better physical or mental health-related quality of life, Büssing et al suggest that Reliance on God’s Help should nevertheless be considered as a resource for coping.

Finally, Habib Tiliouine makes two valuable contributions to the special issue using large-scale sampling in Algeria. Because of the paucity of field research from Muslim countries, these two articles are particularly noteworthy. “Measuring Satisfaction with Religiosity and Its Contribution to the Personal Well-Being Index in a Muslim Sample” provides empirical evidence supporting the addition of a Satisfaction with Religion/Spirituality Domain item to the Personal Well-Being Index (PWI). Sub-group analysis offers the most compelling reason for inclusion of such an item to the PWI, as higher satisfaction with religiosity/spirituality is found in women compared to men, married individuals compared to single ones, and inhabitants of the Sahara desert locations compared to people from other regions of Algeria. In “An exploratory study of Religiosity, Meaning in Life and Subjective Wellbeing in Muslim Students from Algeria” Habib Tiliouine and Abbes Belgoumidi turn their attention to college and university students in Algeria. Here the authors develop a sixty-item scale called the Comprehensive Measure of Islamic Religiosity (CMIR) which covers four broad areas with high inter-correlations: 1) Religious Belief, 2) Religious Practice, 3) Religious Altruism, and 4) Enrichment of Religious Experience. Results of correlation and regression analysis suggest that Religious Belief and Religious Altruism significantly contribute in providing subjects with meaning in life.

In summary, the rich results from the diverse set of studies presented in this special issue signal the rewards for scholars investigating the relationship between religion/spirituality and QOL. Of course, much remains to be done. For example,

longitudinal research focused upon how changing levels of religiosity or spirituality influence QOL for individuals, communities and regions would be most welcome now. As co-editors, we hope that readers will be inspired by the content of the papers herein and will consequently consider including religion/spirituality topics in their own QOL research studies and programs of research in order to gain a more comprehensive understanding of QOL phenomena.