



Ferran Casas: a Pioneer in Child and Adolescent Subjective Wellbeing

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If a pioneer is someone who is among the earliest to explore, endeavour or enterprise, then this is true of Professor Ferran Casas in the study of child and adolescent subjective well-being (SWB). Professor Casas is not only a Pioneer in the sense of his early and sustained contributions to understanding in this area, but also for his collaboration with other researchers and practitioners and generous sharing of ideas and mentoring of others.

Ferran Casas is an Emeritus Professor at Girona University (Spain), and is currently a member of the Executive Committee for the International Society for Child Indicators (ISCI) and for the International Society for Quality of Life Studies (ISQOLS), and co-coordinator of the Children's Worlds International Survey (ISCWeB, promoted by ISCI and the Jacobs Foundation (www.isciweb.org)).

Over the last 20 years, much of Ferran's research has concerned children's and adolescents' SWB. He has been involved in many major international research collaborations and contributed greatly to this area over his career, having authored 22 books

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and edited eight more, personally contributed to 100 book chapters in nine different languages, and has published more than 100 research papers in peer-reviewed scientific journals. He has also co-edited the 5-volumes *Handbook of Child Well-Being. Theories, Methods and Policies in Global Perspective* (Ben-Arieh, Casas, Fronès & Korbin 2014).

For these contributions, in 2014, Professor Casas received the ISQOLS 'Distinguished Fellow Award' for 'evidence of a lifetime and substantial contribution to QOL research' and in 2016 the ISCI Award in Honour of Alfred J. Kahn and Sheila B. Kamerman in recognition of his 'outstanding contribution to the field of child indicators research from an international perspective'.

Professor Casas was born in 1950 in a rural area at the limits of Barcelona municipality and grew up with a love of nature and all things living - for a brief period, wishing to graduate with a degree in marine biology. In fact, his two first scientific publications concerned marine molluscs. For a variety of reasons, however, Ferran went on to study management.

At the age of 24, Ferran participated in the creation of a NGO devoted to youth and was a volunteer in another NGO caring for children. Around this time, he also trained as a social educator and, by the age of 34, became a social psychologist. In 1977 he worked managing the Barcelona's municipality macro-institutions transformation into new services for children at social risk. In 1980 he participated in the creation of the new social services system in Catalonia. In 1983 he became Social Services professor at the Barcelona School of Social Work and responsible for a project supporting municipal social services at provincial government. In 1986, back to the regional government, he created the interdisciplinary teams responsible to assess and improve the children's needing state's care situation - nowadays in Catalonia there are 45 of these teams in work (Casas & Montserrat 2002).

His doctoral dissertation (1988) at Barcelona University was on social and psychosocial indicators of social risk for children and adolescents and was published in 1989, the same year he coordinated the publication of an extensive risky situations social indicators report for children in Catalonia. 1989 was also the year that Professor Casas became Social Psychology Professor at Barcelona University, where he linked professional practice to the theoretical background provided by quality of life (QOL).

In 1990 he became director of the *Centro de Estudios del Menor* (Social Affairs Ministry) in Madrid, where he intensively participated in the promotion of Spanish, European and Latin American networks aiming to improve children's rights and QOL. In July 1990, he met Alex Michalos and other notable figures of the social indicators movement at the ISA conference in Madrid.

From 1992 to 1996, Ferran chaired the Committee on Childhood Policies of the Council of Europe (Strasbourg, France), where he promoted a Recommendation on children participation in family and social life that was adopted by the Committee of Ministers in 1998, and he was the first Childwatch International (Oslo, Norway) Advisory Board President.

In the first ISQOLS international conference in 1996 in Prince George, he presented a pioneer paper on children's rights and children's QOL (Casas 1997). This year he published a book introducing SWB and QOL to university students: '*Social well-being: a psychosocial introduction*' (Casas 1996).

In 1997, he became Director of the newly-created QOL Research Institute (IRQV: www.udg.edu/irqv) at the Girona University (Casas & Planes 2014), where the ERIDqv

research team started (www.udg.edu/eridiqv). Alex Michalos proposed him to organise the second international ISQOLS conference at the Girona University in July 2000 – and he accepted (Casas & Saurina 2001).

In 1998, Ferran published *Infancia: perspectivas psicosociales (Childhood: psychosocial perspectives)*, articulating and summarising his previous work on child well-being, became involved in the Socrates European network on children's rights, and promoted the Catalan Interdisciplinary Network of Researchers on Childhood, recognized as Childwatch International 'key institution'.

Being the director of *Intervención Psicosocial*, articles by Alex Michalos, Ed Diener, Ruut Veenhoven, Robert Cummins, Joe Sirgy and other internationally well-known authors on QOL research were published in Spanish, making their work more accessible to the Spanish speaking audience.

When he is not travelling, Ferran is supporting many visiting international research students, and devotes much time and energy to helping them design, develop and articulate research projects and ideas on child well-being.

Over a lifetime of travels, Ferran has amassed an enviable sea-shell collection from all over the world. In another life, or perhaps there is still time in this one, Ferran would have made an extraordinary marine biologist. However, he has no regrets turning his professional life away from molluscs to the complex, exciting and rewarding field of child and adolescent SWB.

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