

Analysing the social quality of life in Australia: results from a national survey

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Plan of session

- > Context and background
 - The Theory of Social Quality
 - Asian Network on Social Quality

- > Details of survey Australian national survey

- > Main findings
 - Description of 4 conditional Social Quality factors
 - Analysis of systematic differences in Social Quality

- > Conclusion

Social Determinants of Health

- > The Commission on the Social Determinants of Health (CSDH) recognised the multiple forms of oppression and disadvantage experienced by the poorest members of society
- > Lots of research which provide evidence that certain population groups are
 - more socially excluded
 - have lower levels of social capital
 - have poorer access to financial resources, health promoting or curative services
 - are disempowered
- > Taken on their own, these studies are useful only in so far as they paint **part** of the picture as to both the problems and solutions for increasing the health of such groups.
- > They do not provide a conceptual and methodological framework for **linking** these various concepts for the same population groups, which would then highlight the potentially multiple ‘problems’ that certain population groups encounter, or the particular ‘problems’ that other groups encounter.

Social Quality - Definition

> WHAT IS SOCIAL QUALITY?

‘Social Quality is the extent to which people are able to participate in the social, economic and cultural life of their communities under conditions which enhance their well-being and individual potential (Beck, 2001).’

Social Quality - conceptualisation

- > First developed in Europe.
- > It about understanding and responding to the quality of people's lives, NOT about individual quality of life measures.
- > Action-oriented theory.
- > The theory was developed to identify weaknesses in social structures, so as to help improve social quality via informed processes of policy making decisions.

Social quality – normative factors

- > 4 key *normative factors* that determine the quality of the social structures, policies and relationships within a society:
 - social justice;
 - solidarity;
 - equal value of all humans;
 - human dignity

- > A society can be judged according to these normative factors, both in a global sense (i.e. how good is the social quality of a particular society) but also in terms of the specific normative factors (i.e. which factors require policy response in a particular society).

- > However, normative factors are not easily operationalised and do not have a methodological framework.

Social quality – conditional factors

> Conditional Factors (Dimensions of Human Actions)

i) Socio-economic security

Financial resources, housing & environment, health & care, work, education

ii) Social cohesion

Trust, other integrative norms & values, social networks, identity

iii) Social inclusion

Citizenship rights, labour markets, services (public & private), social networks

iv) Social empowerment

Knowledge base, labour market, supportiveness of institutions, public space, personal relations

- > Socio-economic security
 - the extent to which people or groups have access to, utilisation of, and successful outcomes related to, a variety of resources over time, and the protection from poverty and other forms of material deprivation. These resources may be associated with, among other things, finance, housing, healthcare, employment and education.
- > Social cohesion
 - the extent to which people and groups share social norms and values (and is broader than the popular notion of social capital), and to issues of solidarity and trust, which are again, particularly important in terms of public health.
- > Social inclusion (or at least, the minimisation of social exclusion)
 - the extent to which people and groups have access to and are integrated into the different institutions and social relations of ‘everyday life’ and the extent to which people and groups ‘feel part of’ or included in society at an everyday level.
- > Social empowerment
 - the extent to which the personal capabilities of individual people are enhanced by social relations. This domain focuses on the enabling factors which empower people to act as social agents and fully and meaningfully participate in society.

The architecture of the Theory of Social Quality

**Socio-economic
Security**

Social Justice

Social cohesion

Solidarity

Social Inclusion

**Equal value of all
humans**

Empowerment

Human dignity

Asian Network on Social Quality

- > A number of countries across Asia doing research on social quality
 - Mainland China (Zhejiang University, Nanjing University, Shanghai University Xiamen University)
 - Japan (Chiba University)
 - Taiwan (National Taiwan University)
 - Hong Kong (Chinese University Hong Kong)
 - Thailand (King Prajadhipok Institute)
 - Korea (Seoul National University)
 - Singapore (National University of Singapore)
 - Australia (Flinders University)

- > All Universities have undertaken a survey of Social Quality in their countries – I will present the findings from Australia part of the International study.

Australian survey on Social Quality

National survey

- > Pre-pilot and pilot studies – valid and reliable questionnaire
- > Questionnaire then mailed to 5000 householders across Australia
- > Reminder postcards sent at 2 weeks

National survey

- > Sampling frame – electronic White Pages (list of all people with a telephone)
 - Some biases (people with phones, private listings etc)
- > Stratified by population in each Australian State and Territory (e.g. more to New South Wales, less to Tasmania)
- > Random selection

National survey

- > Almost 1000 addresses were incorrect
 - No longer there
 - Partial addresses
 - Returned to sender

- > Of the final 4000 sample
 - 1044 questionnaires returned

Results

- > Take each of the 4 conditional SQ factors in turn
 - Socio-economic security
 - Social cohesion
 - Social inclusion
 - Social empowerment
- > Use specific questions from survey as indicators of the conditional factor

Socio-economic security

- > 2 questions from the survey

- > During the past year, did you
 - Save money
 - Just get by
 - Spent some savings
 - Spent savings and borrowed money

- > Please indicate whether you or your family have experienced any of the following in the last 12 months?
 - Costly medical expenses
 - Job loss or business bankruptcy
 - Job insecurity
 - Work injury
 - Becoming a victim of crime
 - Investment loss

Socio-economic security

Saving or spending money

	n	%
Save money	370	36.6
Just get by	325	32.1
Spend some savings	238	23.5
Spend savings and borrowed money	78	7.7
Total	1011	100.0

Multivariate odds ratios of factors associated with those who spent money

	OR	p value
Marital status		
Never married	1.00	
Separated/divorced	1.32 (0.67-2.63)	0.417
Married/defacto	2.20 (1.24-3.92)	0.007
Widowed	1.26 (0.58-2.76)	0.555
Income (financial year)		
\$105,000-\$150,000+	1.00	
\$45,000-\$104,999	1.28 (0.87-1.89)	0.215
\$0-\$44,999	2.17 (1.46-3.22)	<0.001
Membership		
Not a member	1.00	
Member of at least one organisation	1.52 (1.08-2.13)	0.015
Discrimination		
No discrimination	1.00	
Experienced at least one form of discrimination	1.57 (1.12-2.21)	0.009

Socio-economic security

- > In terms of the question relating to family experiences of a variety of negative or costly events
 - 31% had experienced costly medical experiences,
 - 10% had experienced job loss or bankruptcy,
 - 14% had experienced job insecurity,
 - 6.5% had experienced work injury,
 - 6% had been a victim of crime,
 - 50% had experienced investment loss.

Multivariate odds ratios of factors associated with those who experienced at least one event

	OR	p value
Age		
18-34 years	1.00	
35-44 years	1.06 (0.57-1.98)	0.847
45-54 years	1.81 (1.00-3.32)	0.051
55-64 years	2.19 (1.19-4.04)	0.012
65-74 years	2.53 (1.32-4.87)	0.005
75 years and over	1.02 (0.50-2.08)	0.948
Income (financial year)		
\$105,000-\$150,000+	1.00	
\$45,000-\$104,999	0.79 (0.51-1.24)	0.312
\$0-\$44,999	0.57 (0.35-0.91)	0.018
Trust		
Don't trust everyone completely or somewhat	1.00	
Trust everyone completely or somewhat	0.64 (0.43-0.96)	0.032
Positive views		
No positive views	1.00	
At least one positive view	0.19 (0.04-0.83)	0.027

Social cohesion

- > For each of the following organisations, please indicate your membership status
 - Church or religious organisation
 - Sport or recreational organisation
 - Art, music, educational, or cultural organisation
 - Other community based organisation

- > How much do you trust various groups of people?
 - Your family
 - Your neighbours
 - Doctors in general
 - People of another religion
 - People of another nationality
 - National political leader
 - Your local politician
 - Police officers

Social Cohesion

- > Membership of organisations
 - 26% were members of church organisations,
 - 41% were members of sporting organisations,
 - 22% were members of art/cultural organisations
 - 36% were members of community based organisations.

	OR	p value
Age		
18-34 years	1.00	
35-44 years	1.65 (0.89-3.09)	0.114
45-54 years	1.40 (0.79-2.48)	0.246
55-64 years	2.43 (1.33-4.44)	0.004
65-74 years	5.13 (2.54-10.35)	<0.001
75 years and over	5.87 (2.49-13.84)	<0.001
Income (financial year)		
\$105,000-\$150,000+	1.00	
\$45,000-\$104,999	0.66 (0.42-1.04)	0.071
\$0-\$44,999	0.46 (0.28-0.77)	0.003
Spent money		
None	1.00	
Spent savings or spend and borrow	1.54 (1.02-2.33)	0.041
Trust		
Don't trust everyone completely or somewhat	1.00	
Trust everyone completely or somewhat	2.11 (1.28-3.50)	0.004
Political action		
Have not done at least one political action	1.00	
Have done at least one political action	1.75 (1.18-2.61)	0.006

Social Cohesion

- > In terms of the variables relating to trust in different groups of people
 - 82% trust family completely,
 - 34% trust neighbours completely,
 - 22% trust doctors completely,
 - 18% trust people of another religion completely,
 - 15% trust people of another nationality completely,
 - 2% trust national political leaders completely
 - 25% trust police officers completely.

Multivariate odds ratios of demographic factors associated with those who trusted all groups completely or somewhat

	OR	p value
Sex		
Male	1.00	
Female	1.77 (1.18-2.66)	0.006
Age		
18-34 years	1.00	
35-44 years	2.02 (0.87-4.71)	0.104
45-54 years	1.29 (0.56-2.98)	0.548
55-64 years	2.67 (1.18-6.05)	0.019
65-74 years	2.49 (1.07-5.80)	0.035
75 years and over	5.44 (2.12-14.01)	<0.001
Marital status		
Never married	1.00	
Separated/divorced	1.98 (0.67-5.85)	0.217
Married/defacto	3.33 (1.28-8.66)	0.014
Widowed	1.80 (0.54-6.02)	0.340

Social Inclusion

- > During the past 12 months, have you ever experienced discrimination against you due to any of the following reasons?
 - Physical/mental disability
 - Age
 - Sexual harassment
 - Gender
 - Nationality
 - Physical appearance
 - Ethnic background
 - Criminal record
 - Religion
 - Other

Social Inclusion

- > The proportion of respondents who had experienced discrimination varied:
 - 4% experienced disability discrimination,
 - 14% age discrimination,
 - 2% sexual discrimination,
 - 7% gender discrimination,
 - 4% nationality discrimination,
 - 6% physical appearance discrimination,
 - 3% ethnic background discrimination,
 - 1% criminal record discrimination,
 - 2% religious discrimination,
 - 4% other discrimination.

	OR	p value
Sex		
Male	1.00	
Female	1.53 (1.06-2.12)	0.022
Age		
18-34 years	1.00	
35-44 years	1.16 (0.62-2.17)	0.651
45-54 years	0.64 (0.35-2.17)	0.141
55-64 years	0.54 (0.29-1.03)	0.060
65-74 years	0.54 (0.28-1.08)	0.080
75 years and over	0.43 (0.19-0.98)	0.044
Income (financial year)		
\$105,000-\$150,000+	1.00	
\$45,000-\$104,999	1.09 (0.69-1.71)	0.716
\$0-\$44,999	1.71 (1.04-2.81)	0.034
SEIFA IRSD		
Lowest quintile	1.00	
Low quintile	0.93 (0.54-1.59)	0.782
Middle quintile	0.81 (0.47-1.41)	0.453
High quintile	0.45 (0.25-0.81)	0.008
Highest quintile	0.86 (0.49-1.48)	0.575

Social Empowerment

- > *Have you or would you participate in any of the political actions listed below?*
 - *Petition*
 - *Boycotts*
 - *Protests*
 - *Strikes*
 - *Online political actions*

- > *Please rate how strongly you agree/disagree with each of the following statements below:*
 - *I am optimistic about the future*
 - *In order to get ahead nowadays you are forced to do things that are not appropriate*
 - *I feel left out of society*
 - *Life has become so complicated today that I almost can't find my way*
 - *I don't feel the value of what I do is recognised by others*

Social Empowerment

- > In terms of political actions, the proportion of people taking part are:
 - 70% in petitions,
 - 19% in boycotts,
 - 23% in protests,
 - 19% in strikes
 - 13% in online political action.

Multivariate odds ratios of demographic factors associated with those who participated in a political action

	OR	p value
Age		
18-34 years	1.00	
35-44 years	1.60 (0.87-2.94)	0.132
45-54 years	2.20 (1.25-3.90)	0.007
55-64 years	2.00 (1.13-3.55)	0.018
65-74 years	2.16 (1.18-3.97)	0.013
75 years and over	1.21 (0.61-2.39)	0.581
Income (financial year)		
\$105,000-\$150,000+	1.00	
\$45,000-\$104,999	0.79 (0.51-1.21)	0.274
\$0-\$44,999	0.56 (0.36-0.89)	0.014
ARIA		
Major cities	1.00	
Inner regional	1.43 (0.54-1.59)	0.080
Outer regional	1.73 (0.47-1.41)	0.039
Remote and Very remote	1.47 (0.52-4.14)	0.464

Social Empowerment

- > In terms of the variable relating to social empowerment, there was agreement on the following factors:
 - 75% were optimistic about the future,
 - 20% were forced to do something that was not appropriate,
 - 9% felt left out of society,
 - 18% felt that life was too complicated,
 - 24% felt that the value of what they do is not recognised.

Multivariate odds ratios of factors associated with those who had at least one positive feeling

	OR	p value
Age		
18-34 years	1.00	
35-44 years	0.23 (0.03-2.00)	0.183
45-54 years	0.11 (0.01-0.78)	0.027
55-64 years	0.24 (0.03-2.04)	0.192
65-74 years	0.78 (0.07-8.76)	0.837
75 years and over	0.25 (0.02-2.84)	0.263
Marital status		
Never married	1.00	
Separated/divorced	1.84 (0.58-5.82)	0.296
Married/defacto	3.18 (1.10-9.21)	0.033
Widowed	-	
Income (financial year)		
\$105,000-\$150,000+	1.00	
\$45,000-\$104,999	0.59 (0.19-1.84)	0.365
\$0-\$44,999	0.25 (0.08-0.78)	0.017
Experienced an event		
None	1.00	
At least one event	0.14 (0.03-0.65)	0.012

Conclusion

- > Social quality in Australia is fairly high.
- > Socio-economic security is fairly high
 - except for rising medical costs and the decreasing value of investments, and also around a third of people spent savings and/or borrowed money
- > Social cohesion is fairly high
 - relatively high levels of membership of organisations and high levels of trust in some groups but very low levels in others
- > Social inclusion is high
 - low levels of perceived discrimination
- > Social empowerment is fairly high
 - generally low levels of negative feelings about issues such as being left out of society

Conclusion

- > **People on lower incomes (less than \$45,000)**
 - more likely to have spent their savings (lower socio-economic security),
 - lower levels of membership of organisations (lower social cohesion),
 - experienced higher levels of discrimination and were involved in less political action (lower social inclusion)
 - had less positive feelings about their place in society (lower social empowerment).

- > **More mixed in terms of age - older people:**
 - experienced more negative life events (lower socio-economic security),
 - had higher levels of membership of organisations and were more likely to trust (high social cohesion),
 - experienced lower levels of discrimination (high social inclusion)
 - engaged in more political action (higher social empowerment).

- > **In terms of gender**
 - women are more likely to trust (higher social cohesion)
 - experience more discrimination (lower social inclusion)

- > **Overall – some systematic differences (inequities) in social quality on the basis of income, age and gender.**