



IMCSP
MASTER / SOCIAL SCIENCES IN
COMPARATIVE SOCIAL POLICY
(INTERNATIONAL)



Lingnan 嶺南大學
University 香港 Hong Kong

**Department of Sociology and
Social Policy**

MASTER / SOCIAL SCIENCES IN
COMPARATIVE SOCIAL POLICY
(INTERNATIONAL)



2025 Comparative Social Policy Symposium

Aligning Lives and Systems: Cultural, Institutional & Policy Perspectives on Well-being

Co-organised by GRF Project No. 13604023

SUN
02
NOV
9:00AM ~
5:30PM



Speakers

ARAKI Satoshi
CHEN Xi Celia
CRUZ C Joy
KÜHNER Stefan
LEE Kristen
OLIVOS Francisco
ROJAS Mariano

Lingnan University

Room 201/2,
Lau Lee Yuen Haan Amenities
Building (LYH201/1),
Lingnan University,
8 Castle Peak Road,
Tuen Mun, N.T.,
Hong Kong

Light food, and tea/coffee will be reserved
during the symposium.

**Scan for Free
Registration**



**For Inquiries
For more info**

imcsp-admissions@LN.edu.hk

<https://www.ln.edu.hk/socsp/2025-comparative-social-policy-symposium>

COURSE INSTRUCTORS | Dr. CUATON Ginbert Permejo & Dr. LIN Jiaying

About the Symposium & Speakers

About the Symposium

Aligning Lives and Systems: Cultural, Institutional, and Policy Perspectives on Well-being

This symposium brings together interdisciplinary perspectives on the relationship between well-being and social protection in contemporary societies. As governments, communities, and individuals navigate the aftermath of global disruptions—ranging from pandemics and demographic shifts to changing work arrangements and persistent inequalities—there is an urgent need to reconsider how well-being is defined, supported, and sustained. Composed of local and international scholars from the Hong Kong SAR, Mexico, Spain, Germany, the USA, and the Philippines, this event will explore the multifaceted nature of well-being and invite participants to rethink how societies can better align individual needs with structural conditions to build more inclusive, responsive, and sustainable models of population well-being.

Speakers



Prof. LEE Kristen
Professor

Department of Sociology and Criminology
The State University of New York at Buffalo



Prof. ROJAS Mariano
Professor

Tecnológico Nacional de México



Prof. FOSTER Liam
Professor

School of Sociological Studies, Politics & International Relations
University of Sheffield



Prof. CRUZ C Joy
Assistant Professor

Population Institute
University of the Philippines



Prof. ARAKI Satoshi
Assistant Professor

Department of Sociology
The University of Hong Kong



Prof. CHEN Xi Celia
Assistant Professor

Department of Sociology & Social Policy
Lingnan University



Prof. KÜHNER Stefan
Associate Professor

Department of Sociology & Social Policy
Lingnan University



Prof. OLIVOS Francisco
Assistant Professor

Department of Sociology & Social Policy
Lingnan University

Symposium Programme

Morning Panel: Perspectives on Well-being: Needs, Norms, and Life Satisfaction in Context	
8:45	Student Registration and Arrival of Speakers
9:00	Welcome Remarks Prof. KÜHNER Stefan, Associate Professor and IMCSP Programme Director
9:05	Introduction of Speakers and Group Photo
9:15	Structural fit: understanding macro-level conditions of subjective well-being from a sociological perspective <i>Prof. OLIVOS Francisco, Lingnan University</i>
9:45	Hierarchy of Needs, Human Relationships, and Implications for Social Policy <i>Prof. ROJAS Mariano, Tecnológico de México</i>
10:15	Culture or Social Structure? Assessing cross-national variation in happiness returns to education and skills <i>Prof. ARAKI Satoshi, The University of Hong Kong</i>
10:45	Well-being, Gender, and the Life Course <i>Prof. LEE Kristen, The State University of New York at Buffalo</i>
11:15	Panel Discussion <i>Moderator: Dr. CUATON Ginbert Permejo</i>
12:00	LUNCH
Afternoon panel: Social Protection and the Life Course: Institutions, Support, and Vulnerability	
14:15	Introduction of Speakers and Group Photo
14:30	Social Justice, Inequality, and Subjective Child Well-Being: A Fuzzy Set Ideal Type Analysis Through a Rawlsian Lens <i>Prof. KÜHNER Stefan, Lingnan University</i>
15:00	Growing Old Before Getting Rich: A Tale of Two Countries <i>Prof. CRUZ Christian Joy, University of the Philippines</i>
15:30	Perceived Ageism, Macro-Level Sociopolitical Factors, and Subjective Well-Being: A Cross-National Study of Older Adults in 43 Societies <i>Prof. CHEN Xi Celia, Lingnan University</i>
16:00	Ageing (un)equally? The impact of (productivist) active ageing approaches and extending working lives on gender inequalities in retirement in the UK <i>Prof. FOSTER Liam, University of Sheffield, UK</i>
16:30	Panel Discussion <i>Moderator: Prof. OLIVOS Francisco</i>
17:30	Closing Remarks <i>Dr GWENZI Getrude Dadirai</i> Research Assistant Professor and IMCSP Associate Programme Director

Morning Panel:

Perspectives on Well-being: Needs, Norms, and Life Sat



09:15

Prof. OLIVOS Francisco

Assistant Professor

Department of Sociology & Social Policy
Lingnan University

BIONOTE

Francisco Olivos obtained his PhD in Sociology from The Chinese University of Hong Kong. He also holds a master's degree in Sociology and Social Research from Utrecht University, The Netherlands, and a master's degree in Sociology from Pontificia Universidad Católica de Chile. His research lies at the intersection of subjective well-being, social stratification, and cultural sociology, with a particular focus on how cultural values and institutional contexts shape people's perceptions of justice and life satisfaction.

He is the Principal Investigator of the General Research Fund (GRF) project "Institutional Logics and Subjective Well-Being Across Nations," which investigates how macro- and micro-level cultural determinants interact to influence individual well-being across diverse societies. His broader research agenda combines experimental and comparative methods to understand the cultural foundations of inequality, and happiness in different cultural settings. His work has been published in leading international journals such as The British Journal of Sociology, Poetics, Social Science Research, and the Journal of Happiness Research, among others.

Structural fit: understanding macro-level conditions of subjective well-being from a sociological perspective

ABSTRACT

A longstanding body of literature has examined the link between culture and happiness, yet culture is often reduced to shared country-level values. This study introduces a framework that applies a multi-level approach and the concept of structural fit. We view culture as both a macro-level phenomenon and an individual-level manifestation, while also recognizing it as a dimension of broader social structures. Structural fit captures the alignment between individuals' cultural orientations and objective social structures. We illustrate this framework by examining how the consistency between individuals' perceptions of democracy and wider social structures shapes well-being. Using data from the joint EVS/WVS 2017–2022, we show that perceptions of democracy significantly influence happiness, especially when they align with both actual democratic conditions and collective representations of democracy. Our findings demonstrate that when personal perceptions align with society's shared understanding and political realities, individuals report substantially higher levels of happiness.

Keywords: happiness, cultural sociology, cultural differences, structural fit



Morning Panel:

Perspectives on Well-being: Needs, Norms, and Life Sat



09:45

Prof. ROJAS Mariano

Professor

Tecnológico Nacional de México

BIONOTE

Mariano Rojas holds a PhD in Economics from The Ohio State University. His research focuses on happiness, well-being, quality of life, social progress, and economic development in Latin America. With over 140 academic publications, he has made significant contributions to these areas, authoring three books: *The Scientific Study of Happiness*, *Can Economics Bring Happiness?*, and *Well-being in Latin America: Drivers and Policies*. He has also edited 11 books, including *The Economics of Happiness*, *Handbook of Happiness Research in Latin America*, and *Measuring Progress and Well-Being: Proposals from Latin America*.

Mariano Rojas served as President of the International Society for Quality-of-Life Studies and coordinated the Measuring the Progress of Societies initiative in Mexico, which acted as the Latin American correspondent for the OECD's Global Project. He is also a member of Mexico's National Research System.

Hierarchy of Needs, Human Relationships, and Implications for Social Policy

ABSTRACT

This presentation empirically explores the hierarchy of human needs, drawing on data from Latin America. Using the subjective well-being approach, it identifies the human needs whose fulfillment has the most profound impact on overall well-being. It then investigates the factors that meet these needs, with a particular emphasis on one key type of interpersonal relationship: person-based relationships. Finally, the presentation critiques the shortcomings of current social programs - such as poverty alleviation initiatives- that focus primarily on increasing income, while overlooking other crucial factors. In conclusion, it advocates for the design of more comprehensive social policies that account for all relevant factors that satisfy human needs.



Morning Panel:

Perspectives on Well-being: Needs, Norms, and Life Sat



10:15

Prof. ARAKI Satoshi

Assistant Professor

Department of Sociology

The University of Hong Kong

BIONOTE

Satoshi Araki holds his DPhil in sociology from the University of Oxford and an MA/BA from the University of Tokyo. Prior to starting his academic career, he had extensively contributed to policy-making as a consultant of the World Bank/Global Partnership for Education, a researcher of the Mitsubishi Research Institute, and a fellow of the Southeast Asian Ministers of Education Organization - Regional Centre for Higher Education and Development (SEAMEO-RIHED), among others.

His current research ranges from social stratification and inequality to the sociology of education and work, family issues, well-being, and research methods. In addition to more than 50 policy papers, Prof Araki has published his work in top journals across disciplines, including *the American Sociological Review*, *Socio-Economic Review*, *Social Science & Medicine*, *Sociology*, *European Sociological Review*, *British Journal of Sociology*, *Research in Social Stratification and Mobility*, *Higher Education*, *Social Psychological and Personality Science*, *Journal of Happiness Studies*, *Social Indicators Research*, and *Journal of Applied Gerontology*.



Culture or Social Structure? Assessing cross-national variation in happiness returns to education and skills

ABSTRACT

Research argues that highly educated individuals are more likely than their less-educated counterparts to be happy, particularly through enhanced economic outcomes. Recent evidence further shows that this happiness return to education has increased over the past decades in tandem with societal-level educational expansion. However, we know little about (1) whether everyone can expect equal happiness returns to higher education (heterogeneous effects) and (2) how the potentially heterogeneous happiness returns to education vary across societies (cross-national patterns). From a gender and comparative perspective, this paper investigates the happiness premium for higher education across genders and its cross-national variation. Using data from the latest OECD Survey of Adult Skills (PIAAC) for over 54,000 individuals in 25 countries and leveraging several mediation analysis techniques, the study reveals (1) higher education contributes to happiness in most countries; (2) the education-happiness linkage is substantially gendered, with women likely to receive smaller premiums due to the limited economic return to education; and (3) the degree and mechanisms of gender inequality differ substantially across societies. Some implications and the potential for future research are discussed.

Morning Panel:

Perspectives on Well-being: Needs, Norms, and Life Sat



10:45

Prof. LEE Kristen

Professor

Department of Sociology and Criminology
The State University of New York at Buffalo

BIONOTE

Kristen Schultz Lee is a professor in the UB Department of Sociology and Criminology who studies gender, family and the life course in a comparative perspective. Her research leverages variation in social context (e.g., changes in policy or government, differences across time, differences between countries, differences among states) to better understand how social context shapes individual beliefs, behaviors, emotional well-being, and family outcomes. In other research, she investigates education and inequality among children and adolescents. Her research has been supported by the Japan Foundation, the Spencer Foundation and the Fulbright Foundation.



Well-being, Gender, and the Life Course

ABSTRACT

Research on happiness and well-being is mainstream in the public discourse, discussed widely in policy circles, academia, and the popular media. Across the social sciences, it is flourishing, with each discipline making their own contributions to the discovery of the sources of happiness and of unhappiness. My research showcases the sociologist's contribution: what makes people happy depends on the social-institutional context. Accounting for social context allows sociologists to observe that what makes people happy in one social setting may not do so in another. An individual's well-being is conceptualized as shaped by social status characteristics (e.g., gender and class) and as rooted in family and interpersonal relationships. While economists search for a universal model of happiness, sociologists seek answers that are specific to the institutional context. After detailing the sociological perspective on happiness, I will discuss the findings from my past international empirical research on happiness and my current research on well-being in a relational context.



Afternoon panel:

Social Protection and the Life Course: Institutions, Supp



14:30

Prof. KÜHNER Stefan

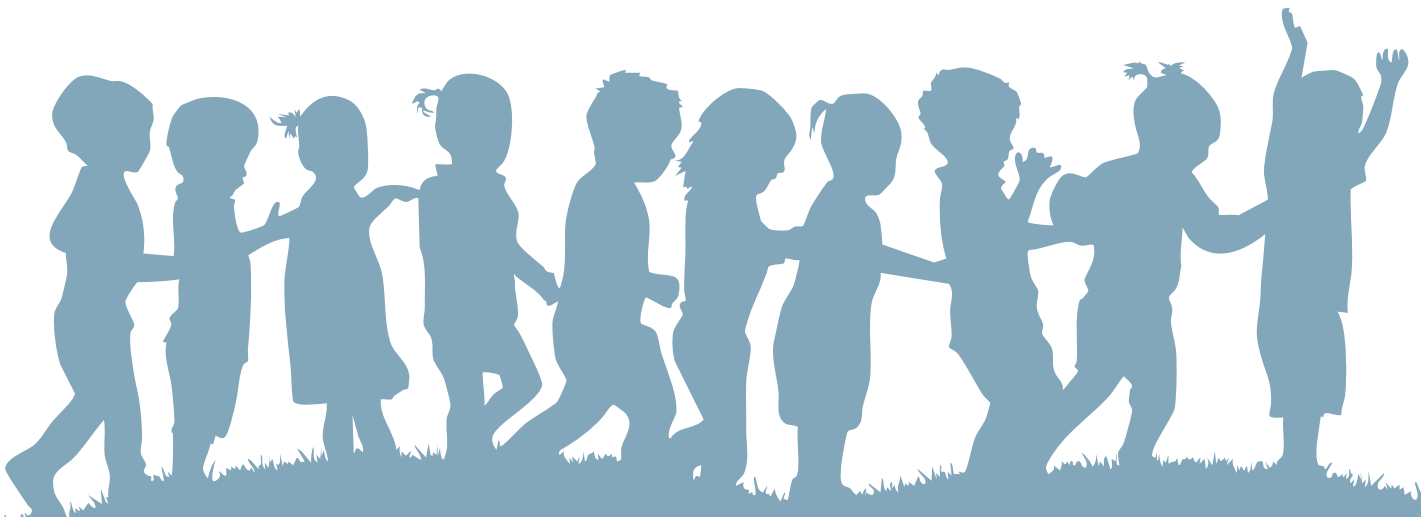
Associate Professor

Department of Sociology & Social Policy

Lingnan University

BIONOTE

Stefan obtained his Ph.D. from the Department of Social Policy and Social Work, University of York, United Kingdom. He joined Lingnan University in August 2016. His research interests centre on comparative social policy, poverty and well-being, and research methods. Stefan is the Editor of the Journal of International and Comparative Social Policy (Cambridge University Press) and the Research in Comparative and Global Social Policy book series (Bristol University Press). Stefan is the Director of the Department's MSocSc Programme in Comparative Social Policy (International).



Social Justice, Inequality, and Subjective Child Well-Being: A Fuzzy Set Ideal Type Analysis Through a Rawlsian Lens

ABSTRACT

This Presentation employs a Rawlsian perspective on social justice to analyse subjective well-being outcomes among children aged 6-14 from 23 societies worldwide. Combining Wave 3 (2016-2019) of the International Survey of Children's Lives and Well-being (Children's Worlds) with fuzzy-set ideal type analysis (FSITA), it goes beyond ranking these societies from 'best' to 'worst', instead classifying them on the extent to which they meet the conditions of Rawls's model society. Inequalities in child well-being outcomes are observed in all societies. Here, extending ideas advanced in UNICEF Innocenti's (2016) Report Card 13: Fairness for Children, the Presentation asks whether it is possible to establish when and where these "inequalities" in children's subjective well-being become "inequities." The analysis finds no perfect cases, but highlights several societies, including Spain (Catalonia), Belgium, Hungary, and Norway, as closest to meeting a Rawlsian notion of "justice as fairness".

Keywords

Social justice – equity – inequality – child well-being – fuzzy set analysis

Afternoon panel:

Social Protection and the Life Course: Institutions, Supp



15:00

Prof. CRUZ Christian Joy

Assistant Professor

Population Institute
University of the Philippines

BIONOTE

Dr. Christian Joy Pattawi Cruz is an Assistant Professor and Academic Program Coordinator at the University of the Philippines Population Institute (UPPI). She holds a Master in Business Administration and Master of Arts in Demography degrees from the University of the Philippines and earned her PhD in Public Policy from the Hong Kong University of Science and Technology. Her research interests span a range of topics, including formal demography, ageing, survey methodology, and public policy. Dr. Cruz has played a key role in major research initiatives such as the Longitudinal Study of Ageing and Health in the Philippines, National Migration Survey, Young Adult Fertility and Sexuality Study, and the Hong Kong Generations and Gender Survey. She served as the President of the Philippine Population Association from 2023 to 2025.



Growing Old Before Getting Rich: A Tale of Two Countries (Viet Nam and the Philippines)

ABSTRACT

This study examines and explains the economic wellbeing disparity between two rapidly developing Southeast Asian nations, Viet Nam and the Philippines. Macro-level indicators, such as the Human Development Index (HDI) and Gross Domestic Product (GDP per capita, show broad similarities between these two countries, however, micro-level indicators reveal a stark difference in the economic resilience of their older populations. Baseline data from the Longitudinal Study of Ageing and Health in the Philippines (LSAHP) and the Longitudinal Study of Aging and Health in Viet Nam (LSAHV) show that a significantly higher proportion of older Filipinos report difficulty meeting household expenses (57.0%) and experiencing household hunger (13.5%) compared to their Vietnamese counterparts (15% and 0.9%, respectively). This analysis seeks to resolve this research puzzle: Why does it appear that older Vietnamese are economically better off than older Filipinos?

This study first explores conventional explanations — including living arrangements, filial piety, and retirement preparedness — and argues that these factors, which show converging experiences between the two countries, may be insufficient to explain the observed economic gap. In addition, the study suggests that the disparity may be rooted in three deeper, country-level structural differences between Viet Nam and the Philippines: a) the contrasting political systems and corruption experiences (a Democratic Republic versus a One-Party Socialist Republic versus a Democratic Republic), b) differences in religion (Buddhism versus Roman Catholicism), and c) the divergent societal implementation of egalitarianism as influenced by colonial and post-regime histories.

There is a complex interplay of these macro- and micro-level factors that influence the differences in the economic wellbeing of older people in these two countries. Understanding the interrelationship of these factors is needed in order to develop appropriate and targeted policies and programs to ensure positive economic wellbeing of older people in Viet Nam and the Philippines.

Afternoon panel:

Social Protection and the Life Course: Institutions, Supp



15:30

Prof. CHEN Xi Celia

Assistant Professor

Department of Sociology & Social Policy
Lingnan University

BIONOTE

Dr. Xi Chen is an Assistant Professor of Sociology at Lingnan University. Her research examines the social determinants of health, with a focus on mental health, substance abuse, and health inequality. Dr. Chen's work has been recognized with several prestigious awards, including the Early Career Researcher Award (Runner-up) at Lingnan University (2025), the Asian Journal of Criminology Best Article Award (2021), and a Best Conference Paper Award (Third Award) from the Asian Association for Substance Abuse Research (2025). She was also a recipient of the Harvard-Yenching Institute Fellowship (2013 - 2014).



Perceived Ageism, Macro-Level Sociopolitical Factors, and Subjective Well-Being: A Cross-National Study of Older Adults in 43 Societies

ABSTRACT

Ageism against older adults is a global concern with significant implications for health and well-being. While the individual-level consequences of ageism are well-documented, the moderating role of structural sociopolitical factors remains underexplored. This study addresses these gaps by examining the relationship between perceived ageism and subjective well-being among older adults and investigating how macro-level sociopolitical conditions, such as economic conditions, political systems, and cultural values, moderate these effects. This study utilizes data from Wave 6 of the World Values Survey, comprising 15,697 older adults (aged 55+) across 43 countries. The results show that perceived ageism was negatively associated with both life satisfaction and happiness, after adjusting for sociodemographic variables and macro-level sociopolitical factors. Higher GDP per capita mitigated these adverse effects, suggesting that economic prosperity buffers against the negative impact of ageism. Conversely, political stability unexpectedly amplified the detrimental effects of ageism on subjective well-being. Additionally, long-term cultural orientation strengthened the negative association between age-related stereotypes and well-being, while individualism did not exhibit a significant moderating effect. These findings highlight the crucial role of structural conditions in shaping the well-being outcomes of ageism. By demonstrating how economic and political contexts influence the consequences of ageism, this study provides valuable insights for policymakers aiming to develop targeted interventions and policies that promote the well-being of older populations.

Afternoon panel:

Social Protection and the Life Course: Institutions, Supp



16:00

Prof. FOSTER Liam

Assistant Professor

School of Sociological Studies, Politics & International Relations
University of Sheffield

BIONOTE

Liam Foster is a Professor in Social Policy, and Co-Director of CIRCLE (Centre for International Research on Care, Labour and Equalities) at the University of Sheffield, UK. He specializes in theories of ageing, pensions, extending working lives, care and social inequalities. In total, Professor Foster has authored over 70 publications in peer-reviewed journals and book chapters and has authored or edited eight books.



Ageing (un)equally? The impact of (productivist) active ageing approaches and extending working lives on gender inequalities in retirement in the UK

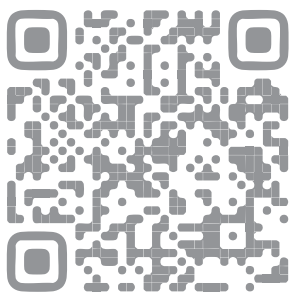
ABSTRACT

Responses to the challenges of ageing in Europe and beyond have largely focused on productivist notions of active ageing, with more comprehensive responses tending to be reactive and largely remedial. This approach prioritizes the extension of working life (EWLs) and individual responsibility to reduce the 'burden' of population ageing. This presentation will briefly identify some of the key challenges and responses associated with demographic ageing, including active ageing. Using the example of the UK, it will define and chart the development of active ageing responses to demographic change, and the emergence of the EWLs agenda. It will then focus on pension measures associated with extended working lives, including raising the pension age, restricting access to early retirement, and providing a stronger link between pension benefits and contributions, indicating how they incentivise remaining in the labour market. However, it will also show that opportunities and choices to extend working lives have not been experienced equally, with implications for well-being in retirement. In practice most of these policies are gender blind. Women's existing employment and pension disadvantages have been largely ignored in the development of EWLs policy, which has perpetuated or expanded many women's financial disadvantages in older age. It highlights the need for a greater focus on gendered inequalities in the development of EWLs policy, in order to ensure they don't adversely impact on women's financial circumstances and well-being in later life. This needs to be considered in the context of a wider more inclusive and comprehensive life course focused approach to active ageing.

MSocSci in Comparative Social Policy (International) | IMCSP



Symposium Website



IMCSP Website

FOR GENERAL INQUIRIES :

TEL | (852) 2616 8113 | (852) 2616 7639

EMAIL | imcsp-admissions@ln.edu.hk

ADDRESS :

Room WYL219, Dorothy Y.L. Wong Building,
Lingnan University, 8 Castle Peak Road,
Tuen Mun, N.T., Hong Kong

SOCIAL MEDIA :

INSTAGRAM | [@lingnan.imcsp](https://www.instagram.com/lingnan.imcsp)