

Robson Hatsukami Morgan

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CURRENT POSITION

Postdoctoral Research Scholar

Center for Economic and Social Research, University of Southern California

FIELDS

Labor and development economics with a focus on subjective well-being, well-being in China

EDUCATION

Ph.D. in Economics

University of Southern California
Advisor: Richard A. Easterlin

Spring 2016

M.A. in Economics

University of Southern California

Spring 2010

B.A. in Economics

Minor in Chinese language (Mandarin)
University of British Columbia, Canada

Spring 2008

PAPERS

Published

“China's Life Satisfaction, 1990-2010” with Richard A. Easterlin, Malgorzata Switek, and Fei Wang (2012), *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences*, 109(25): 9775-9780.

Working Papers

“Labor Market Policy and Subjective Well-being during the Great Recession”

“Experienced Life Cycle Satisfaction in Europe”

“The Impact of Social Assistance Programs on Subjective Well-being: Regression Discontinuity Evidence from a Cash Transfer Program in Colombia” with Titus J. Galama and Juan E. Saavedra

“Well-being in Transition: Life Satisfaction in Urban China from 2002 to 2012” with Fei Wang

AWARDS AND FELLOWSHIPS

Tuscany: A Global Laboratory for Quality of Life Winter School Fellowship

Winter 2015

Merit Fellowship, University of Southern California

2010-2015

RESEARCH AND TEACHING EXPERIENCE

Research Assistantships

The Center for Economic and Social Research, University of Southern California

Current

Richard Easterlin, University of Southern California

2012-2014

Invited Guest Lecturer

Econ 599: Happiness and the Welfare State (PhD level class)	<i>Spring 2015</i>
Econ 432: The Economics of Happiness	<i>Fall 2014, Fall 2013</i>
Master of Science in Applied Psychology (online lecture)	<i>Fall 2014</i>
Psyc 550a: Proseminar in Human Behavior	<i>Fall 2014</i>

SEMINAR AND CONFERENCE PRESENTATIONS

ISQOLS Annual Quality of Life Conference, Seoul, South Korea *Fall 2016*

- “The Impact of Social Assistance Programs on Subjective Well-being: Regression Discontinuity Evidence from a Cash Transfer Program in Colombia”

Loyola Marymount University, Economics Seminar, Los Angeles, CA *Fall 2015*

- “Labor Market Policy and Subjective Well-being during the Great Recession”

Tuscany: Quality of Life Global Congress, Tuscany, Italy *Fall 2015*

- “Labor Market Policy and Subjective Well-being during the Great Recession”

ISQOLS Annual Quality of Life Conference, Phoenix, AZ *Fall 2015*

- “Labor Market Policy and Subjective Well-being during the Great Recession”
- “Well-being in Transition: Life Satisfaction in Urban China from 2002 to 2012”

Center for Economic and Social Research Brown Bag, USC, Los Angeles, CA *Fall 2015*

- “The Impact of Social Assistance Programs on Subjective Well-being: Regression Discontinuity Evidence from a Cash Transfer Program in Colombia”

Western Economic Association International Annual Conference, Honolulu, HI *Summer 2015*

- “The Impact of Social Assistance Programs on Subjective Well-being: Regression Discontinuity Evidence from a Cash Transfer Program in Colombia”
- “Labor Market Policy and Subjective Well-being during the Great Recession”

The 2nd Biennial Conference of China Development Studies, Shanghai, China *Summer 2015*

- “Well-being in Transition: Life Satisfaction in Urban China from 2002 to 2012”

Renmin University, Economics Department Weekly Seminar, Beijing, China *Spring 2015*

- “Well-being in Transition: Life Satisfaction in Urban China from 2002 to 2012”

Tuscany: A Global Laboratory for Quality of Life Winter School, Tuscany, Italy *Winter 2015*

- “Labor Market Policy and Subjective Well-being during the Great Recession”

ISQOLS Annual Quality of Life Conference, Berlin, Germany *Fall 2014*

- “Experienced Life Cycle Satisfaction in Europe”

ESPAnet Annual Conference, Oslo, Norway *Fall 2014*

- “Labor Market Policy and Subjective Well-being during the Great Recession”

Western Economic Association International Annual Conference, Denver, CO *Summer 2014*

- “Well-being in Transition: Life Satisfaction in Urban China from 2002 to 2012”

Population Association of America Annual Meeting, Boston, MA

Spring 2014

- “Experienced Life Cycle Satisfaction in Europe”

Western Economic Association International Annual Conference, Seattle, WA

Summer 2013

- “Experienced Life Cycle Satisfaction in Europe”

**Inclusive and Sustainable Development in East and North-East Asia,
United Nations-ESCAP, Beijing, China**

Fall 2012

- "China's Life Satisfaction, 1990-2010"

JOURNAL REFEREE EXPERIENCE

The Social Science Journal

Summer 2016

Journal of Population Aging

Winter 2016, Summer 2014

International Journal of Psychology

Fall 2015

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

Citizenship

United States

Computer skills

Stata

LaTeX

Language skills

English (native)

Mandarin (limited working proficiency)

Available to start working

Summer 2017

REFERENCES

Richard A. Easterlin (Dissertation Chair)

University Professor of Economics

University of Southern California

Phone: (213) 740-6993; Email: easterl@usc.edu

Jeffrey B. Nugent

Professor of Economics

University of Southern California

Phone: (213) 740-2107; E-mail: nugent@usc.edu

Titus J. Glama

Senior Economist and Director of the Center for Study of Inequality

Center for Economic and Social Research, University of Southern California

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(updated Fall 2016)

ABSTRACTS

“Labor Market Policy and Subjective Well-being during the Great Recession” (job market paper)

Average subjective well-being decreased in Europe during the Great Recession, primarily among people with less than a college education and among all age groups less than retirement age. The primary aim of this paper is to examine whether different types of labor market policies mitigated or exacerbated the negative impact of the Great Recession on subjective well-being for these vulnerable groups. The analysis is based on a multi-level regression model using the variation in labor market policy across 23 European countries. The subjective well-being measure used is self-reported life satisfaction. The results demonstrate that for all vulnerable groups with the exception of youth, labor market policies had a significant effect on subjective well-being during the Great Recession, but the effect was either mitigating or exacerbating depending on the type of labor market policy. Unemployment support that provided income replacement or programs to help unemployed workers find jobs mitigated the negative effect of the Great Recession on subjective well-being. Conversely, stricter employment protection legislation exacerbated the negative effect of the Great Recession. Suggestive evidence is presented that the exacerbating effect is explained by strict employment protection legislation imposing rigidities on the labor market, making people feel less optimistic about their future job prospects.

“China's Life Satisfaction, 1990-2010” with Richard A. Easterlin, Malgorzata Switek, and Fei Wang (2012), Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences, 109(25): 9775-9780.

Despite its unprecedented growth in output per capita in the last two decades, China has essentially followed the life satisfaction trajectory of the central and eastern European transition countries— a U-shaped swing and a nil or declining trend. There is no evidence of an increase in life satisfaction of the magnitude that might have been expected to result from the fourfold improvement in the level of per capita consumption that has occurred. As in the European countries, in China the trend and U-shaped pattern appear to be related to a pronounced rise in unemployment followed by a mild decline, an accompanying dissolution of the social safety net along with growing income inequality. The burden of worsening life satisfaction in China has fallen chiefly on the lowest socioeconomic groups. An initially highly egalitarian distribution of life satisfaction has been replaced by an increasingly unequal one, with decreasing life satisfaction in persons in the bottom third of the income distribution and increasing life satisfaction in those in the top third.

“Experienced Life Cycle Satisfaction in Europe” (submitted for publication)

The average pattern of experienced life cycle satisfaction for the 17 European countries included in this study resembles a wave like M-shape. The M-shape arises because patterns in the majority of countries share the following characteristics: a local maximum in life satisfaction around age 30, declining life satisfaction until around age 50 followed by rising life satisfaction, and declining life satisfaction after age 75. Other features that are shared among the majority of countries are male life satisfaction improving relative to female life satisfaction as people age, and more educated people reporting higher levels of life satisfaction throughout the entire life cycle. Although these characteristics are shared by the majority of countries, taking the entire life cycle into consideration there is no uniform life satisfaction pattern shared by all countries. The findings from this study are based on a non-parametric analysis using repeated cross sectional Eurobarometer data spanning 1973 to 2010. The analysis includes controls for cohort effects and other characteristics that are fixed throughout the life cycle. Controls for non-fixed characteristics are not included because the aim of the study is to describe and compare experienced life satisfaction over the life cycle. An advantage of this study is the analysis uses the same methodology to analyze data that were collected using uniform methods among countries, so it can be concluded that results in this study are identified due to differences in life cycle patterns, not differences in the methodologies or data.

“The Impact of Social Assistance Programs on Subjective Well-being: Regression Discontinuity Evidence from a Cash Transfer Program in Colombia” with Titus J. Galama, and Juan E Saavedra

This paper estimates the effect of the Familias en Acción conditional cash transfer program on life satisfaction during the first wave of program expansion to large cities in Colombia. Familias en Acción provides cash transfers to poor households with children under the age of 18 conditional on the children meeting school

attendance or doctor checkup requirements. All households with children under the age of 18 and a government assigned poverty score under a specific level are eligible for the program, creating exogenous variation in program participation around the eligibility cutoff. This study re-creates the poverty score and uses the sharp cutoff in eligibility as the basis for a regression discontinuity research design. The results show that the program positively affected many aspects of life – households that received a cash transfer increased spending on a wide variety of goods to make their lives more comfortable, household members were more likely to be formally employed, and household heads reported higher levels of satisfaction with their income. However, the positive outcomes did not result in a statistically significant increase in head of household self-reported life satisfaction.

“Well-being in Transition: Life Satisfaction in Urban China from 2002 to 2012” with Fei Wang

Many aspects of life changed for urban residents as the economy continued to liberalize in China from 2002 to 2012. This paper examines the changes in various aspects of life which contributed to the increase in average self reported life satisfaction observed in urban China over this time. The results demonstrate that the improving labor market is chiefly responsible for the overall increase in life satisfaction. This is especially true for the subset of the population whose life satisfaction is most vulnerable during the on-going liberalization of the economy – people with less than a college education. Increasing income also positively contributed to the increase in life satisfaction, but to a lesser extent. The positive contribution of increased personal income was largely offset by income comparison and adaptation to income effects. The data source for this analysis is repeated cross-sectional survey data used in the annual economic reports published by the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences. A modified version of the Oaxaca decomposition method is developed to utilize annual data and is employed to divide the increase in life satisfaction from 2002 to 2012 into segments explained by changes in specific aspects of life over this time.