

Editorial

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Editor-in-chief

The extensive social changes taking place globally have provoked an increased interest in and valuing of scholarship relating to social wellbeing. It is in this context that we are happy to publish the second issue of *Studies in Social Wellbeing (SiSW)*.

The challenges of climate change, the developments in artificial intelligence, international conflicts, and the post-COVID-19 context call for more research and scholarship about how these are impacting social wellbeing. In relation to the impact of climate change, Beltrán et al. (2016) argue that environmental justice is clearly a social justice issue and that there is evidence that oppressed peoples and the more marginalised people in society are the ones who bear the brunt of the impacts on the physical and natural environment which are the result of human activity.

It is in this global context that we would like the journal to continue to draw readers who have a very broad range of interests. The papers in this edition are once again reflective of the journal's broad scope.

In an interesting article entitled **Usury: A Normalised Phenomenon?** Dr Mary Grace Vella and Dr Yana Mintoff draw on empirical research with key stakeholders in the field to explore the causes and impact of usury on wellbeing (pp.7-19). Acknowledging the neo-liberal backdrop they note that usury is nonetheless considered an economic crime.

They call for more attention to usury in terms of policy development and evidence-based practice. Their research, which was carried out in Malta, indicates that both structural and personal factors might lead a person to usury. They then articulate the broad-ranging negative impacts of usury on the victim's life and wellbeing.

Professors Andrew Azzopardi, Marilyn Clark, Marvin Formosa and Dr Claudia Psaila share **Intersectional reflections on the Impact of COVID-19 across the life course** (pp. 20-32). Although the head of the World Health Organization (WHO) declared the end of COVID-19 as a public health emergency in May 2023, he emphasised that this did not mean that "the disease was no longer a global threat" (WHO, 2023, para.1) This statement highlights the continued relevance of such contributions. The authors trace the development of the COVID-19 pandemic in Malta and the related climate of fear and uncertainty which prevailed during this process. Their reflections focus on how the COVID-19 pandemic affected people differently depending on their social position and stage during their life course. The authors highlight how some groups were made more voiceless during this process. In conclusion, they pose a number of questions about the prospected return to 'normality' post COVID-19.

This issue, as did the previous one, features a stimulating interview with Professor

Sherrie Tucker a professor of American Studies at the University of Kansas entitled **Pauline Oliveros' Adaptive Use Musical Instrument** (pp.33-35). Professor Tucker highlights the influence of Pauline Oliveros' (1932-2016) work. Oliveros was one of electronic music's most important early figures. Her pioneering work communicated the message that "sound and its effects are powerful equalisers". Professor Tucker was interviewed by Professor Ruth Falzon, a member of the editorial board of the journal.

For the first time we are happy to be including a book review. The book is an edited publication that explores the challenges faced by young people in forming a family across Europe. The book, published in 2022, is entitled "**Disadvantages in Starting a Family Across Europe. Family Formation Among Youth in Europe: Coping With Socio-Economic Disadvantages**" (pp.36-40) and is edited by Emirhaizovic Mirza, Tali Heiman, Marton Medgyesi, Catarina Pinheiro Mota, Smiljka Tomanovic, and Sue Vella. The book is reviewed by Ms Selma Alispahić of the Department of Sociology, University of Sarajevo.

I would like to thank all the contributors to this issue, the members of the Editorial Board and the reviewers. Your contributions are very much appreciated. Special thanks are also due to Dr Pat Bonello and Professor Jeannie Wright who have stepped down from the Editorial Board. I would also like to acknowledge the support of the former Assistant Editor, Ms Jamie Bonnici and the current Assistant Editor, Ms Maria Giulia Borg.

The Editorial Board in agreement with the authors has removed the article "Risk and Protective Factors in Violent Youth Crime" from Volume 1 Issue 1, 2021 of *Studies in Social Wellbeing (SiSW)*.

References

- Beltrán, R. Hacker, A. & Begun, S. (2016). Environmental Justice Is a Social Justice Issue: Incorporating Environmental Justice Into Social Work Practice Curricula. *Journal of Social Work Education, 52*(4), 493-502. <https://doi.org/10.1080/10437797.2016.1215277>
- World Health Organization (2023, May 3). WHO chief declares end to COVID-19 as a global health emergency. <https://news.un.org/en/story/2023/05/1136367>