ABSTRACT. Quality of life is an increasingly important issue in developing countries in general and in Thailand in particular. This study investigates mainly the level of satisfaction of Thais with their lives in general and with various aspects/domains of their lives. Based on the sample of Thais living in Bangkok Metropolitan area, the results of this study reveal that Thais are somewhat pleased with their lives in general and tend to be more satisfied with personal domains of life rather than environmental domains of life. It is also found that two significant contributors to Thais' quality of life are economic well-being and better education.

INTRODUCTION

One word often mentioned by policy-makers in a developing country is 'development', especially economic development. However, many researchers argue that the real meaning of development is to improve human quality of life (Todaro 1977: 62) and the development or quality of life (QOL) should extend beyond an economic level to include other aspects, for instance, social and environmental aspects of life (Singer 1971; Elgin et al. 1974). 'Objective' QOL research (i.e., social indicators) has been carried out widely in several countries (Rossi and Gilmartin 1980). Although the "objective" measures of QOL can be easily defined and quantified, the measures are only the surrogates of the subjective experience of life (Andrews and Withey 1976; Campbell et al., 1976). Additionally, it has been pointed out that the relationship between objective conditions and psychological states is imperfect. It follows then that to learn about QOL experience it would be necessary to go directly to the individual for his/her description of how that person feels about their life. The studies of QOL in Thailand have dealt mostly with objective measures of QOL, or the so-called 'social indicators', which are typically measured over specific geographical areas or population segments without accounting for the
wide variation of the QOL of individuals within the selected populations or geographical areas.

A report on social indicators was first issued by the Development Studies and Information Division, Office of the National Economic and Social Development Board (1975) and has been published annually since then. The notion of using 'subjective' measures of QOL or life satisfaction is adopted in this study. QOL as indicated by life satisfaction is far less often studied in developing countries than in developed countries (Michalos 1986). The issues of QOL has as much relevance in third world nations as they do in highly developed nations. Basically, this study seeks to investigate two main issues: (1) how satisfied are Thais with their lives and whether or not this level of life satisfaction varies across the population subgroups of different age, gender, education, household income, race, marital status, and employment status, and (2) how satisfied are Thais with various aspects/domains of their lives and whether or not these levels of satisfaction with aspects of lives vary across the population subgroups as mentioned before.

**Conceptualization of QOL/Life Satisfaction**

From a part-whole perspective, life as a general construct, can be viewed as consisting of various specific domains. That is to say, when someone says that he/she is satisfied with his/her life it may mean that he/she has just bought a new house or got a promotion. In the terms of state theory, we are happy because of an accumulation of happy moments (Lewinsohn and MacPhillamy 1974; Chekola 1975; Lewinsohn and Amenson 1978).

The identification of important domains of life is inevitably somewhat arbitrary. Although a list of areas of life's activities may not be exhaustive, it should be broad enough, at least, to cover most of the domains of life utilized in major studies of the QOL, for instance, Andrews and Withey 1976; Campbell *et al.* 1976; Liu 1976; Campbell 1981. With this objective in mind, 13 separate domains of life's activities have been identified by Day (1987). They are family life, work life, social life, leisure/recreation, personal health, health care, purchase and consumption of goods and services, material possessions, self, spiritual life, life in the U.S., the federal government, and state and local