

A Quarterly Review of Social Reports and Research on Social Indicators, Social Trends, and the Quality-of-Life.
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CHILD WELL-BEING AND CHILD SUFFERING:

CROSS-NATIONAL RELATIONSHIPS TO HUMAN DEVELOPMENT¹

Kenneth C. Land², Vicki L. Lamb³, and Qiang Fu²

“How are the kids doing?” is a well-being question for children. Reversing the spectrum of this question, it becomes “Are the kids suffering?” Adults might be able to answer these questions for their own children or those in their immediate surroundings, and many children could provide information about their own well-being/suffering or those of other children. However, applied to large populations of children at the national and cross-national levels, well-being/suffering questions are more challenging and have stimulated the rapid development of studies of child well-being indicators in recent decades.

Child well-being research is an outgrowth of the social indicators movement of the 1960s and 1970s (Lamb and Land 2014) that has received increasing attention since UNICEF’s annual reports on The Progress of Nations were initiated in 1993. The reports were designed to monitor the well-being of children across the globe in order to chart the changes and advances made since the 1990 World Summit for Children (UNICEF 1997). The reports documented that available indicators were not adequate for monitoring children even in the developed world where most of the children’s survival needs had already been met. The reports also recognized that suffering is a barrier to the realization of child well-being and happiness. Anderson (2014, p. 10) recently has re-invigorated the concept of suffering within the social indicators/social reporting domain, noting that suffering includes distress resulting from threat or damage to one’s physical being (i.e., physical suffering), distress

originating in one’s cognitive or affective self-identity (mental suffering), and distress cumulating from threat or damage to one’s social identity (social suffering).

This essay picks up on Anderson’s theme with respect to children at the global level. It commences with a brief review of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child and how the Convention has been used in cross-national studies of child well-being. It then reports some descriptive international comparisons of country-specific indicators of child suffering in relation to corresponding values of the Human Development Index and discusses what this tells us about child suffering in relation to human development. The essay concludes with some suggestions for future research directions and needed conceptual and data developments to advance the global monitoring of child suffering.

The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child

In 1989, the United Nations adopted the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC). There are four core principles in the CRC that encompass the human rights to be held by all children:

- (1) non-discrimination,
- (2) devotion to the best interests of the child,
- (3) the right to life, survival, and development, and
- (4) respect for the views of the child.

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Editor’s Note:

This issue features an essay by the Editor and colleagues Vicki L. Lamb and Qiang Fu that reviews cross-national studies of child well-being, discusses the relationship of child well-being to child suffering, and describes the cross-national relationship of child suffering indicators to human development as measured by the Human Development Index. This is followed by reports and announcements – from Stefan Weick, ISQOLS President Rhonda Phillips, and Giovanna Boccuzzo and Filomena Maggino.

¹ Portions of this report were presented in the World Suffering and Quality-of-Life Session at the September 15-18, 2014 Quality of Life Conference of the International Society for the Quality of Life Studies in Berlin, Germany. Similar material will appear in a chapter of the forthcoming book: Anderson, R. E. (Ed.) (2015). World Suffering and the Quality of Life, NYC: Springer.

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SINET

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Children are to be recognized as active members of a society with entitled rights, while also being dependents of their families. A major goal of the CRC is to establish criteria regarding the improvement of child well-being and child quality of life with the recognition that children are to be considered full citizens with basic human rights.

Cross-National Studies of Child Well-Being Using the CRC Approach

The CRC has been used as the basis of several recent cross-national studies of child well-being, including:

- a UNICEF (2007) study of child well-being for OECD countries in which multiple domains of child well-being were calculated to measure child well-being;
- a study by Jonathan Bradshaw and Dominic Richardson (2009) of child well-being in 27 EU countries plus Iceland and Norway; they found that, in general the Nordic countries (the Netherlands, Sweden, Finland, and Denmark) ranked in the top third and the former Eastern bloc countries, except Slovenia, were in the bottom third;
- a study by Lau and Bradshaw (2010) evaluated children's well-being in 13 countries in the Pacific Rim; countries within the Pacific Rim were at various levels of successful economic growth and development; the study found that Japan, Singapore, Taiwan, Hong Kong, and New Zealand were the five top-ranking countries in overall child well-being; as with other multinational studies of child well-being, no Pacific Rim country was consistent in its ranking among the multiple domains of well-being.

A notable omission in existing cross-national comparisons of child well-being is the systematic study of child well-being in countries in Africa, Central and South America, and South and West Asia. In addition, the main emphasis of recent cross-national studies of the condition of children has been on measures of well-being, the positive end of a suffering-to-well-being dimension. The question to which we now turn is:

- ✓ To what extent can existing sources of cross-national data be used to assess the suffering end of this spectrum for children?

Child Suffering and Human Development

For comprehensive comparisons across large numbers of countries that range from developed to less developed, the short answer to this question is that the available indicators of child suffering tend to be very limited and concentrated among indicators of health and education. Because of this we focus our analysis on the extent to which cross-national indicators of child suffering correlate with human development indicators, specifically, the UNDP Human Development Index (HDI). The objective of the HDI is to rank as many countries as possible on a scale of human development. The HDI is a composite social indicator/well-being index based on life expectancy, education, and income statistics at the country or national level.

Conceptually, the HDI is based on the work of Sen and Nussbaum (Nussbaum and Sen 1992; Sen 1987), who developed the capabilities approach to human well-being, which focused attention on what human beings can do and be, instead of on what they have. Sen and Nussbaum defined capabilities as the abilities and the power of individuals to do certain things, to obtain what they desire, to achieve desired states of being, to utilize the resources they have in the way they desire and to be who they want to be. By comparison, goods are the things that individuals possess. Capabilities facilitate using goods in ways that are meaningful to individuals.

With the 2010 HDI Report, the HDI was revised. It combines the following statistical measures of the three dimensions:

- A Long and Healthy Life as measured by Life Expectancy at Birth (LE)
- An Education Index as measured by mean years of schooling (MYS) and expected years of schooling (EYS)
- A Decent Standard of Living as measured by Gross National Income per capita (GNIpc) in purchasing power parity with the United States dollar (PPP US\$).

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Beginning with the HDR 2010, the HDI applies geometric means of the three dimensional indices to construct the overall composite HDI, as arithmetic means can be substantially affected by extreme values on any one of the three component indices of the HDI, while the geometric mean is less influenced in this way. Thus, the Revised HDI geometric mean formula places more emphasis on consistency among the three HDI component statistics for a country and makes an extremely large or small value on any one of the three components less influential on the calculated value. The HDR 2010 contains HDI numerical values and rankings for a total of 186 countries. These are grouped into quartiles labeled from high to low as: Very High Human Development, High Human Development, Medium Human Development, and Low Human Development.

The Relationship of The HDI To Child Suffering Indicators

The empirical question to which we now turn is the cross-national relationship of the HDI to indicators of child suffering. At this inclusive global level of cross-national comparisons, in contrast to the region-specific studies of child well-being reviewed above, the available indicators of child suffering tend to be very limited and are concentrated among indicators of health and education.

Figure 1 shows cross-national scatterplots of six child suffering indicators (on the vertical axes) for 2010 or 2011 with HDI values (on the horizontal axes) for 2010. The HDI values are bounded by 0.34 and 0.955.

The first three panels of Figure 1 show scatterplots of bivariate relationships between health statistics that are indicative of early childhood suffering and the HDI values. Panel A of Figure 1 contains a plot of the infant mortality rate (deaths between birth and age 1 per 1,000 live births) for 2010 and the HDI. The infant mortality rates range from a low of 3 to a high of 114. Overall, countries scoring in the Very High and High quartiles of the HDI have relatively low infant mortality rates compared to those at Medium and Low Human Development levels. The overall relationship is one of curvilinear decline in the form of a reverse J-curve as the HDI ranges from lower to higher levels. The scatterplot also shows evidence of heteroscedasticity, with countries at lower values of the HDI have a larger range of infant mortality rates than countries at the higher levels.

These properties of the Panel A scatterplot are evident in the next two graphs as well. Panel B shows the scatterplot of the child mortality rate for children ages zero to 5 per 1,000 live births in 2010 and the HDI values. Again, the relationship is heteroscedastic with larger variance among the rates at lower levels of human development. The relationship also is strongly negative in that higher levels of the HDI are associated with lower child mortality rates in the form of a reverse J-curve form. Panel C displays the scatterplot of the percentage of children under age 5 who are moderately or severely underweight for their age in 2010 and the HDIs. Data for this statistic is missing for 77 countries. Nonetheless, the scatterplot shows a reverse J-curve, heteroscedastic relationship between levels of human development and this health indicator of child suffering.

Panels D and E of Figure 1 show relationships between the HDI and measures of public health immunizations against childhood diseases that are associated with child suffering. Panel D contains plots of the percent of children with DTP (Diphtheria, Tetanus, and Pertussis/ Whooping Cough) immunization vaccinations in 2010 and the HDIs. Panel E gives similar data for measles vac-

inations. These scatterplots show quite different cross-national relationships of the HDI to the immunization coverage statistics. In Panel D, it is evident that DTP immunization coverage is 90 percent or above for countries at Very High and High levels of human development as measured by the HDI. At Medium and Low HDI levels, all countries have DTP immunization percentages of 60 percent or greater and many are at the 80 percent or greater level. The measles immunization percentages plotted in Panel E are more dispersed – at all levels of the HDI, there are countries with percentages of coverage below 80 percent – although the numbers of such countries are larger at Low to Medium HDI levels.

In addition to the health indicators of child suffering in Panels A through E of Figure 1, another indicator for which there are data on a large number of the world's countries that is indicative of levels of child suffering is the combined (both sexes) gross enrollment in primary educational institutions percentage plotted in Panel F. Larger levels of this indicator can be regarded as associated with lower levels of child suffering in the sense that more education opportunities are indicative of lower levels of social suffering in Anderson's (2014: 10) conceptualization. The scatterplot of this school enrollment and HDI statistics in Panel F show a positive linear relationship, with higher levels of human development associated with higher percentages enrolled. This positive relationship is to be expected, because, as noted above, Education is one of the three dimensions of the HDI. At the same time, the plot also evidences some heteroscedasticity at the Very High and High Human Development levels of the HDI, with some countries having percentages enrolled in the 60 to 80 percent range even though most countries at this level of development have enrollment percentages of 80 percent or more. There also is some heteroscedasticity at the Low Human Development end of the HDI scale, with some countries having percentages enrolled in the 20 to 40 percent range even though most countries at this human development level are in the 40 to 70 percent range. In sum, Panel F shows that higher levels of human development as measured by the HDI are associated with greater educational experiences of children and, by inference, lower levels of social suffering.

Conclusions

On the basis of these analyses, two tentative generalizations can be formulated:

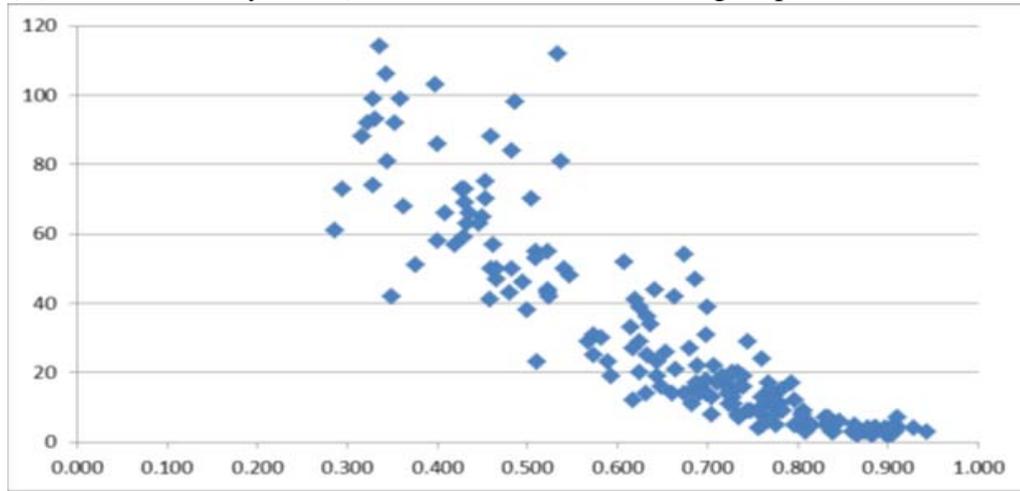
- First, national level (and likely, subnational level as well) indicators of the incidence or prevalence of child physical, mental, or social suffering generally decline as human development, conceptualized in the human capabilities terms of Sen and Nussbaum and as measured by the HDI, increase. For some indicators, the nature of the functional relationship to the HDI will take the form of a reverse J-curve, with large decreases in child suffering as human development increases from the Low to the Medium to the High levels of the HDI. Others will exhibit a linear functional relationship.
- Second, for those countries for which sufficient statistical data are available to construct a broad array of child well-being indicators measuring several dimensions of well-being, such as the OECD and EU studies cited above, there generally will be a negative relationship between increases in the child well-being indices and indicators of child suffering.

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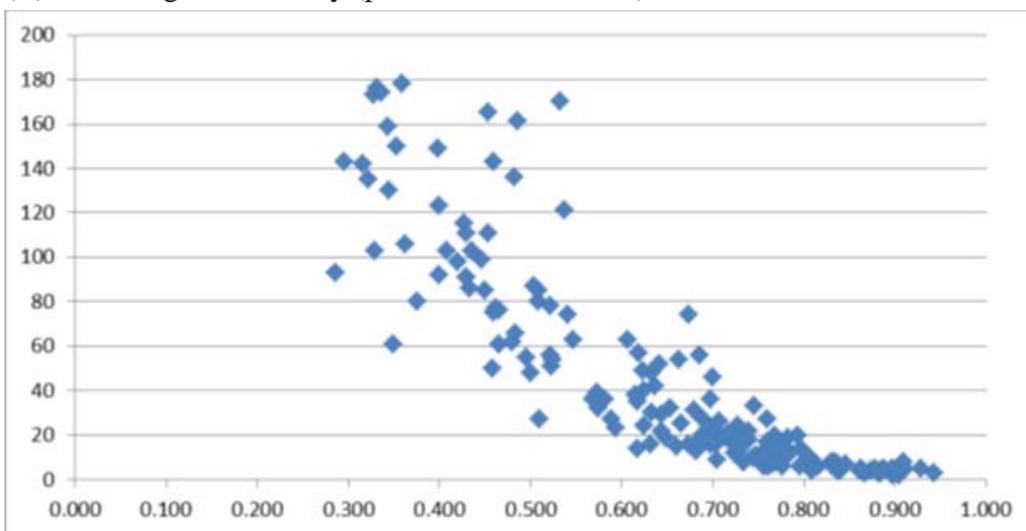
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Figure 1. Cross-National Scatterplots of Relationships Between 2010 Human Development Index Values (Horizontal Axes) and Measures of Child Suffering (Vertical Axes)

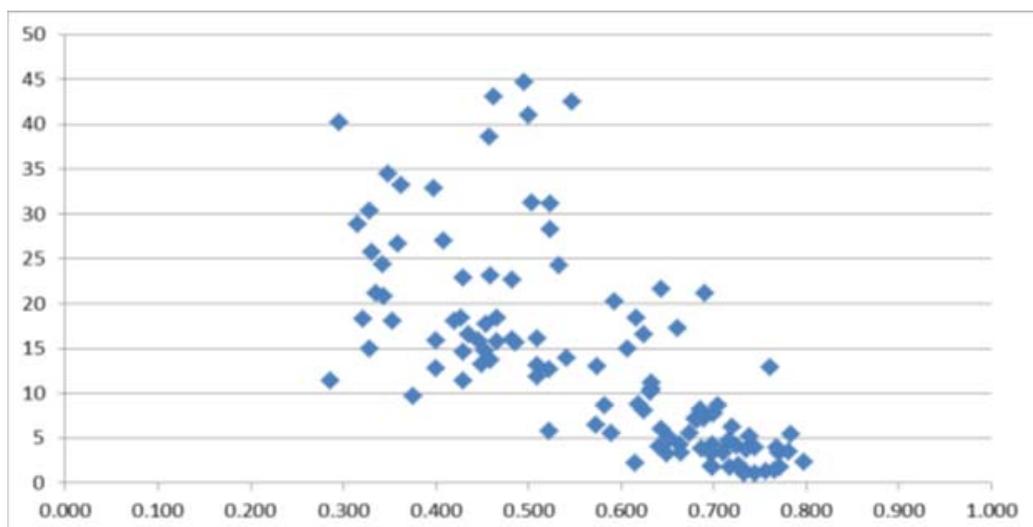
(A) Infant Mortality Rate (Deaths Between Birth and Age 1 per 1,000 Live Births), 2010



(B) Under Age 5 Mortality (per 1,000 Live Births), 2010



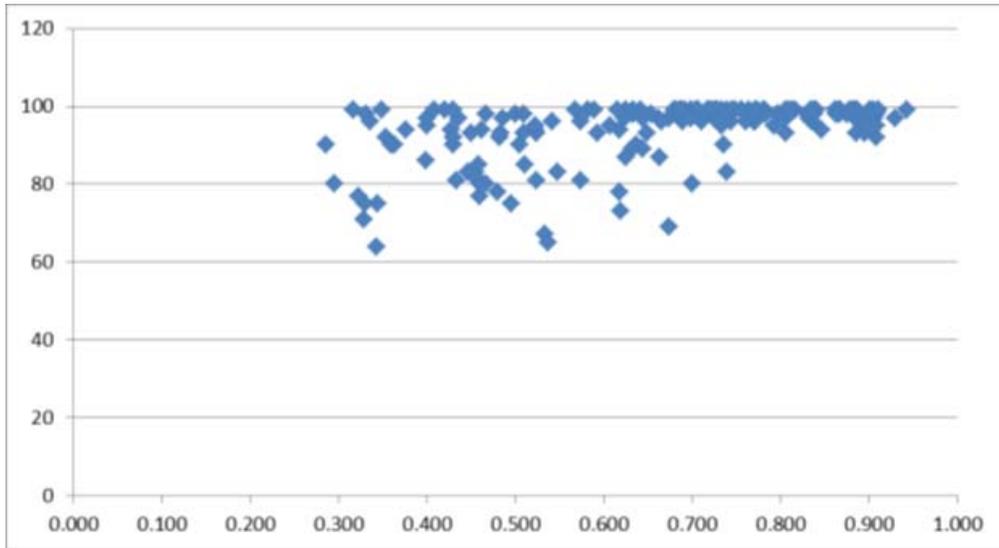
(C) Children Under Age 5 Who Are Underweight For Their Age (Moderate or Severe, Percent), 2010



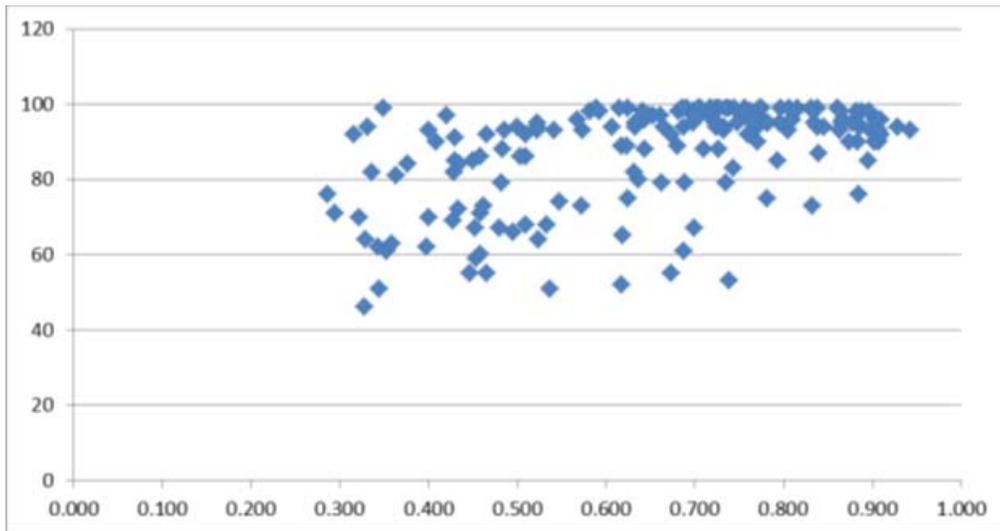
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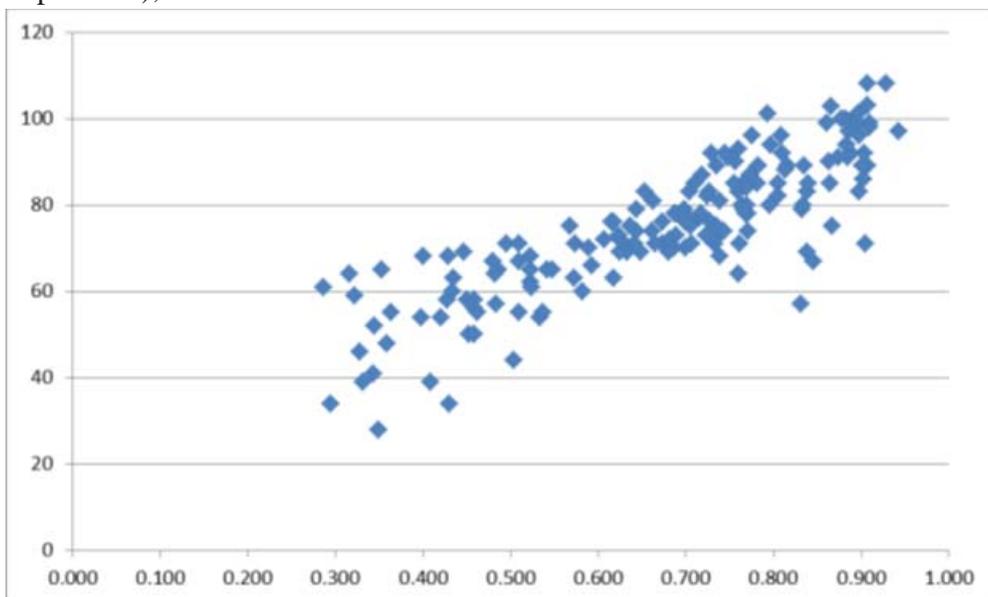
(D) DTP (Diphtheria, Tetanus, and Pertussis (Whooping Cough)) Immunization Coverage (Percent), 2010



(E) Measles Immunization Coverage (Percent), 2010



(F) Combined (Both Sexes) Gross Enrollment in Education (Percent of a Theoretical School Age Population), 2011



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Does this mean that effort does not need to be expended to develop a more complete array of indicators of child suffering at the national level? Not at all. To begin with, a systematic application of Anderson's physical, mental, or social suffering constructs to develop a more complete array of country-level indicators needs to be pursued. The few examples of child suffering indicators we have presented are only illustrative. A systematic identification of a full range of such indicators, especially in conjunction with the CRC, would be most desirable.

In addition, while the general negative functional relationships of national level child suffering indicators with the HDI and with indices of child well-being stated might hold on the whole, there likely will be a number of indicators of specific forms of child suffering that deviate from the general cross-national functional forms and thus provide additional information leading to additional analysis. In this way, the child suffering perspective can advance the global monitoring of suffering and add value to existing HDI and well-being data and analyses.

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Conference On

Dealing with Complexity in Society: From Plurality of Data to Synthetic Indicator

**Padua (ITALY), September 17-18,
2015**

Mid-term Conference of ISA-RC55 (<http://www.isa-sociology.org/rc55.htm>)

Satellite Meeting of the Italian Statistical Society 2015 Conference "Statistics and Demography: The Legacy of Corrado Gini" (<http://meetings.sis-statistica.org/index.php/ginilegacy/SIS2015>)

The globalized world in which we live is characterized by complex human and social phenomena, like well-being, human development, environmental sustainability, welfare, etc., whose conditions determine the progress of the society.

At the same time, data availability and technical opportunities increase day by day. The need of effective synthesis of data, based on robust conceptual and methodological framework is even more evident.

In the last ten years, the methodology of multivariate analysis and synthetic indicators construction significantly developed. In particular, starting from the classical theory of composite indicators many interesting approaches have been developed to overcome the weaknesses of composites.

The Conference will focus on recent developments in synthesizing indicators and, more generally, in quantifying complex phenomena. The conference will also identify important problems and new research directions in the field of social indicators.

Subthemes proposals (other proposals for conference sessions are welcome):

- Easy interpretation need vs. complex methodology
- Dashboards for decision makers: composites, system of indicators, or both?
- Indicators for forecasting
- Rating or ranking?
- To weight or not to weight?
- The experts' role in weighting: the correct use and quantification of their expertise
- Methodology of synthetic indicators related to individuals

The Conference Program will include:

- a Round Table (The role of composite indicators in the data revolution, Chair and organizer: Enrico Giovannini) and
- two lectio magistralis (Much ado about complexity: what remains after noise removal?, Alberto Peruzzi; and Scalability of Composite Indices: Complexity Complications, Kenneth Land).

For more information: <http://complexity.stat.unipd.it>

The best papers will be considered for publication in *Social Indicators Research*.

Giovanna Boccuzzo & Filomena Maggino, Conference Chairs

Global Handbook of Quality of Life: Explorations of Well-Being of Nations and Continents

Edited by Wolfgang Glatzer, Laura Camfield,

Valerie Moller, and Mariano Rojas, Springer, 2015

Publication Announcement and Description

This volume has just appeared in electronic and print forms. To give a brief description of the contents of the handbook, the Foreward written by Alex Michalos and Wolfgang Zapf is reproduced below followed by reproduction of the Chapter Title and Author Contents – 41 chapters (894 pages) grouped into 7 parts.

This is an extra-ordinary collection of papers designed to be comprehensive with respect to topics covered and methodologies employed by scholars across the whole globe with diverse disciplinary backgrounds. The editors are well-known productive academics who promise a great deal and deliver the goods as promised. Since the middle 1960s an enormous amount of research has been accumulated on quality of life and/or wellbeing. So some overviews of accomplishments of the work of the past 50 years or so have been needed. There have been a few overviews of the field, including most recently the Handbook of Social Indicators and Quality of Life Research edited by Land, Michalos and Sirgy (2012, Springer). While there is some overlap with the Land, Michalos and Sirgy collection, this collection goes beyond the earlier handbook in its worldwide scope of topics, including, for example, discussions of demographic and health development, the spread of democracy, global economic accounting, multi-item measurement of perceived satisfaction and expert-assessed quality of life (i.e., subjective and objective measures of wellbeing), wellbeing of children, women and poor people, wellbeing in North and Sub-Saharan Africa, Asia, South America, Eastern and Western Europe, worries, pains, hopes and fears of people around the world.

For anyone requiring a comprehensive historical account of the field in a single volume, this volume would be an excellent resource. For a much longer and even more comprehensive view, the Encyclopedia of Quality of Life and Wellbeing Research (2014, Springer) would be the place to go. The American sociologist Robert K. Merton said that if he was able to see farther than anyone before it was because he stood on the shoulders of giants. Regardless of the path taken, handbooks, encyclopedia or both, researchers over the next 50 years will have robust, if not gigantic, shoulders to stand on.

University of Northern British Columbia, BC, Canada Alex Michalos

Freie Universitat Berlin, Berlin, Germany Wolfgang Zapf

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Part VI Social Reporting on Wellbeing in Supranational Organizations

Part VII Basic Dimensions of Global Wellbeing

~ Kenneth C. Land

Wolfgang Glatzer Honored

The Social Indicators Section of the German Sociological Association (DGS) has honored Prof. Dr. Wolfgang Glatzer for his lifetime achievements. The honor took place at the end of the section's meeting as part of the DGS-Congress at the University of Trier on October 9th in 2014. On the occasion of Glatzer's 70th birthday, the section thereby recognized his vast accomplishments in the field of social indicators research. Wolfgang Glatzer has done pioneer work in this field of research, first as a doctoral student at the SPES-Project "Sozialpolitisches Entscheidungs- und Indikatorensystem" (System of Social Political Decisions and Indicators) at the University of Frankfurt, and later as a managing director at the Sonderforschungsbereich 3 "Mikroanalytische Grundlagen der Gesellschaftspolitik" ("Microanalytical Foundations of Societal Policy") at the universities Frankfurt and Mannheim. Additionally, he was a professor for sociology at the University of Frankfurt from 1984 till 2009. Furthermore, he published books and articles, which are not just widely received within the sociological community, but also by the media and the general public. As one of the initiators of the "Datenreport," he contributed essentially to the emergence of one of the widest circulating publications in German social reporting. Yet his activities are not limited to Germany, but also continue on an international level as well. He thereby was engaged in diverse scientific research institutions around the world throughout his whole career: he was Chair of the working group "Social Indicators" (which became a research committee in 2008) of the International Sociological Association and President of the International Society for Quality of Life Studies (ISQOLS). He also served as editor and member of many editorial boards for international social science journals, for example, Social Indicators Research. In addition, he served as a spokesman of German Sociological Association's section Social Indicators for many years. During these six years, from 1989 till 1995, the section's work shifted towards a stronger focus on social structural analysis and diagnosis in the newly unified Germany.

After being honored, Glatzer thanked his former colleagues for their friendly support, especially Wolfgang Zapf, Karl Otto Hondrich, Richard Hauser, Eike Ballerstedt und Regina Berger-Schmidt from the SFB 3, his colleagues and friends in the international scientific community, and the section "Social Indicators" for acknowledging his work by honoring him.

~ Stefan Weick, Chairman

13th ISQOLS Quality of Life Conference Phoenix, Arizona October 15-17, 2015

Make plans to join us for the 13th ISQOLS Quality of Life Conference in Phoenix, Arizona October 15 - 17th, 2015. Arizona State University's Lodestar Center for Philanthropy and Nonprofit Innovation (<https://lodestar.asu.edu/> [lodestar.asu.edu]) will co-host our event. The conference will be held in vibrant downtown Phoenix in the cultural district - walking distance to numerous restaurants, museums and entertainment venues (<http://www.visitphoenix.com/index.aspx> [www.visitphoenix.com]).

Our opening session and reception will be held at the renowned Heard Museum of American Indian Art and History (<http://heard.org/> [heard.org]) with Richard Easterlin and a panel of speakers initiating our conference. A special session around happiness and philanthropy will follow the next day, along with our keynote luncheon address by Ed Diener. Friday evening will be free to join one of the guided dinner groups and explore the city (including options for an outdoor western cookout). Saturday will conclude the conference with an awards dinner banquet featuring speakers, Southwestern cuisine and live entertainment. Information will be provided about optional tours on Sunday to the Grand Canyon and sights around Phoenix, located in the beautiful and lively Sonoran desert where it is sunny 85% of the time!

The theme of this year's conference is The Future of Quality of Life, and the call for sessions and papers will open in March. We invite you to submit proposals and be part of this society of scholars focused on QOL research and application across a wide spectrum of interests. There will be numerous sessions for presenting research and ample opportunity to engage with colleagues from around the world. Watch for an email announcing the opening of the online system to accept proposals and be sure to check the ISQOLS website where we will link and post updates on the conference program and related details.

~ Rhonda Phillips, ISQOLS President

SINET

Subscription Information

As a service to the world-wide social indicators community, SINET is issued quarterly (February, May, August, November). Subscribers and network participants are invited to report news of their social indicator activity, research, policy development, etc., to the Editor for publication. Deadlines are the 20th of the month prior to each issue.

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