

Richard J. Estes

# The Social Progress of Nations Revisited, 1970–2020

50 Years of Development Challenges  
and Accomplishments

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Richard J. Estes

# The Social Progress of Nations Revisited, 1970–2020

50 Years of Development Challenges  
and Accomplishments

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*This book is dedicated to my 4 daughters, to their extraordinary husbands, and to my 12 grandchildren who already are making the world a better place to live. A special dedication goes to my grandson, Nic Payne, who helped me re-see the world through a wonder of the eyes of a child. Izzy Payne, too, has been a constant source of inspiration to me as has been Andrew Calkins, Brendan and Julia O'Connor, and Kieran Lynch.*

*and*

*To some very special caregivers who have helped me along a difficult journey:*

*Mellia*

*Stephanie*

*Nancy*

*Dawn*

*Paul Marcotte*

*Gary Walters Crooks*

# Preface

I began my study of comparative social development and well-being in the early 1970s as part of my doctoral studies at the University of California, Berkeley. This body of research became a central life interest and, following my graduation from Berkeley, continued to preoccupy me during my early years of employment initially as an Assistant and then Full Professor in the School of Social Work (now the School of Social Policy & Practice) of the University of Pennsylvania. My early mentors in these efforts were the late Harold L. Wilensky (1923–2011), Professor of Sociology and Organizational Intelligence in the Department of Political Science at Berkeley (Wilensky, 1975, 2002), and the late John Stewart Morgan, Professor of Comparative Social Policy at the University of Pennsylvania (Rodgers, Greve, & Morgan, 1968). Both men taught me the importance of rigor in conducting international and comparative studies and provided me with a wide range of skills for achieving that goal in my own research. They also reinforced another dimension of research for me—that of translating research findings into positive actions that would work to the benefit of others, including to the world as a whole, i.e., the foundation on which the Greek concept of *praxis* is built (Estes, 2018; Estes & Morgan, 1976).

These intellectually formative years were to shape the entirety of my professional career, even into my retirement years from Penn. In all my scholarly work, I have sought to bridge knowledge gained through research into action at all levels of social and political organization, especially as that knowledge pertains to the hundreds of millions of people living on the margins of society. I have been fortunate in the many opportunities that this area of research has opened to me including an invitation from a collaborative group of consultative nongovernmental organizations to the United Nations to develop analytical tools for measuring the underlying nature and dynamics of social development, and not just its critical economic components (United Nations Development Programme, 2018). Their goal, as was mine, was to create more valid and reliable time-series measures of development that would provide a fuller picture of the development at various units of analysis from the nation-state or country level to the planet. These organizations also were interested in the creation of new analytical tools for use in measuring the changing socio-economic conditions of society's most vulnerable population groups—children and

youth, the aged, women, persons with severe disabilities, the poor, economic and political migrants, persons with serious diseases, and the like.

I was very appreciative of the opportunity to serve these organizations while, at the same time, advancing my own research agenda as an academic and scholar. The intellectual and methodological challenges before me were many and varied; the vast array of economic tools that already were available made the task even more foreboding. The challenges, nonetheless, were met and resulted in the development of an entirely new set of analytical tools that were applied at the national, regional, and global levels (Estes & Morgan, 1976). These tools also proved to be effective in assessing the changing social status of vulnerable population groups and, over time, to be valuable for unraveling a series of conceptual issues that, at the time, had limited the area of international and comparative well-being research (Estes, 1984, 1988, 2010, 2018).

## Organization

This book is divided into eight parts. *Part I* introduces the reader to some of the major challenges and accomplishments that humanity has confronted over an extended time. *Part II* lays out the methodology used to carry out the analysis summarized in this book. *Part III* begins the discussion of global social progress focusing on various units of analysis<sup>1</sup> starting with the world and gradually summarizing major findings for individual nations over the entire 50-year period, 1970–2020. *Part IV* uses the same approach as that adopted for Part III to perform an analysis at the regional and subregional levels, and *Part V* focuses on advances in quality of life and well-being at the country-specific level. *Part VI* focuses on the social needs and accomplishments that have occurred among the vulnerable population groups that are found in all societies, i.e., children and youth, the aged, persons with severe disabilities, the poor, disadvantaged minority groups, and others. Separate chapters focus on the changing status of women since 1970 (Chap. 8) and on poverty and its declining distribution around the world (Chap. 9). The data reported in these chapters are highly positive and provide a forward-looking analysis of the improved status of the large population groups that traditionally have functioned on the margins of male-dominated and economically advanced societies. *Part VII* comprises an overview and general discussion of some of the major findings reported in the book and puts forward a working agenda for advancing selected aspects of quality of life and well-being over the near term. *Part Backmatter* includes Appendix A, which explains the computational methods in more detail, and Appendix B, which reports country-specific scores and percent changes in the *Index of Social Progress* by major index (ISP, WISP) and for each of the ISP's 10 subindexes within the

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<sup>1</sup>The **unit of analysis** is the major entity that is being analyzed in a study. It is the “what” or “who” that is being studied. In social science **research**, typical **units of analysis** include individuals (most common), groups, social organizations, and social artifacts (Wikipedia, 2018).



major sociopolitical-economic development groupings to which each country has been assigned. The data reported in Appendix B are for each 10-year period beginning 1970.

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Richard J. Estes

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I would also like to acknowledge Joe’s wife and the treasurer of the Management Institute for Quality-of-Life Studies, Pamela Jackson, of the Psychology Department of Radford University of Virginia, for her contributions to this volume.

I also appreciated the many and varied contributions made to this research effort by my colleagues at the United Nations, the United Nations Development Programme, the World Bank, the International Monetary Fund, and a long list of stellar colleagues employed by international governmental and nongovernmental organizations located in various regions of the world. The contributions made by these people to the current work have been substantial and reflect a richness of analysis that a single scholar could not have accomplished working alone.

Amy Hillier, Associate Professor of Social Policy and Director of the Master of Science Program in Social Policy at the University of Pennsylvania, also is acknowledged for her contribution to some of the data presentations made in this book, especially the geographic information system time-series maps that visually present the state of global development and human well-being at different time intervals.

Pamela Fried of Protex Editorial Services is acknowledged with a special thank you for her continuing efforts to help the author present his ideas more clearly and accurately. Her editorial skills have been without limits in this writing project. Thank you, Pam.

I also acknowledge the enormous contribution made by my wife and life partner, Gail Buchanan Estes, who endured long hours of my absence and distraction while I worked on this book. Gail contributed to the book in a variety of ways and, at difficult moments, provided support that sustained my continued work. Thank you, Gail.

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**Abstract** Social progress and well-being throughout the world have arrived at a critical turning point. Following decades of social losses among the world's poorest developing countries of Africa, Asia, and Latin America, the majority of these and other nations now are experiencing significant social gains. Using the author's well-established *Weighted Index of Social Progress* from 1970 to 2018 (WISP2018), the author traces the net social gains and social losses experienced by the vast majority of the world's nations over a 50-year time period, ranging from 1970 to the present. The data reported draw on the author's extensive database of historical and contemporary social indicators and link the current study to his and other reports of social progress and well-being that have been published during this time period. Data are reported at four levels of analysis, i.e., that of the world as a whole, that of the regions (continents) of the world, the world's 19 subregions using the preceding, and, finally, that of selected countries for which the changes have been most remarkable. The net social gains on the WISP18 and earlier versions of the WISP portray very positive outcomes for the 162 countries included in the study (representing 95 percent of the world's total population) for both the near and long terms.

**Keywords** International · Comparative · Social indicators · Quality of life · Well-being · Happiness · Development · Social development

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**Richard J. Estes** is Professor of Social Work and Social Policy at the *University of Pennsylvania* in Philadelphia. He holds an A.B. degree from *La Salle University* in Philadelphia and graduate degrees in Social Work from the University of Pennsylvania (Master of Social Work) and the *University of California* at Berkeley (Doctor of Social Welfare). He also holds a postmaster’s Certificate in Psychiatric Social Work from the *Menninger Foundation* in Topeka, Kansas.

Dr. Estes’ international activities have been extensive. Among other assignments, he has held visiting professorships in Iran, Norway, the People’s Republic of China, Morocco, South Korea, Hawaii, Japan, Mongolia, the Russian Federation, Belgium, Sweden, Mexico, Hong Kong, and elsewhere. In the United States, he is Founding

President of the Philadelphia Area Chapter of the *Society for International Development* (SID). He is a former president of the Group for the Advancement of Doctoral Education (GADE) and is a former chair of the Council on *External Relations of the Global Commission of the Council on Social Work Education* (CSWE). In 2004, he was elected president of the *International Society for Quality-of-Life Studies* (ISQOLS).

Until 2010, Dr. Estes served as chair of the graduate concentration in *Social and Economic Development* (SED) where he also directed the school's international programs until his retirement from Penn in July 2010.

Dr. Estes has been the recipient of many awards and grants for his research on international social work and comparative social development including two *Fulbright-Hays Senior Research Awards* (Iran, 1978 and Norway, 1979) and a *Fulbright Scholar Award* to Yonsei University in Seoul, Korea (1994). In 1992, he was elected Social Worker of the Year by the Pennsylvania Chapter of the National Association of Social Workers for his international activities. In 1996, he received the Alumni Recognition Award from the University of *Pennsylvania School of Social Work*. In 1997, he was awarded the *Distinguished Recent Contribution to Social Work Education Award* by the Council on Social Work Education (CSWE), the *International Rhoda G. Sarnat Award* of the National Association of Social Workers (NASW), and the Best Article in *Social Indicators Research Award* of ISQOLS. In 2002, he was appointed *Distinguished Visiting Scholar of the United College of the Chinese University of Hong Kong* where he served as an external examiner for the university's Department of Social Work until 2008. In 2005, the Global Commission of the Council on Social Work Education awarded Dr. Estes its *Partner in International Education Award*. In 2007, Dr. Estes received the *Distinguished Quality of Life Research Award* of ISQOLS and served as University Distinguished Professor at the Chinese University of Hong Kong.

In January 2014, Dr. Estes was inducted into the American Academy of Social Work and Social Welfare (AASWSW), the leading professional honorific organization for social welfare specialist in the United States. Also in 2014, the ISQOLS honored Dr. Estes in Florence, Italy, by establishing a permanently endowed lecture series in his name on international and comparative studies in quality-of-life research. In the same year, the International Consortium for Social Development honored him in Singapore for his pioneering work in international and comparative social development research.

In recent years, Prof. Estes has become interested in development patterns occurring in Islamic nations, including in factors that contribute to Islamic terrorism both internally and that directed against other nations. He has since written extensively on developing trends occurring in these nations including problems associated with Islamic militancy and terrorism.



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### ***YouTube and Related Live Interviews with Professor Estes***

2014. Live interview with Michael Frisch relating to professional career in all aspects of my research. YouTube: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ZLi9xESMWgY>. Posted January 2012, San Diego, CA.
2015. Live interview with Michael Frisch in Philadelphia focusing on career in quality of life and social development research: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4qQOMokxG70>. Posted July 9, 2015, Philadelphia.



# List of Acronyms and Abbreviations

CIS	Commonwealth of Independent States
DC	Developing Country
DME	Developed Market Economies
FDI	Foreign Direct Investment
IMF	International Monetary Fund
ISP	Index of Social Progress
LDC	Least Developed Countries
MENA	Middle East and North African region
MDC	Millennium Development Campaign (Goals)
OECD	Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development
SIPRI	Stockholm International Peace Research Institute
SDG	Sustainable Development Goals
UNDESA	United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
WHO	World Health Organization
WISP	Weighted Index of Social Progress

## List of Artwork

All of the artwork included in this book was painted by **Lylia Forero Carr** of Fresno, California. She was born in Bogotá, Colombia, traveled to the United States in 1966, and moved to Fresno, California, in 1982. She holds a Master of Arts degree in art from California State University at Fresno. She also has studied with Millard Sheets, Mario Cooper, Charles Reid, Gerald Brommer, Jane Burnham, Joseph Zirker, Glen Brill, Sandro Martini, Keiji Shinohara, and C. Dillbohner.

She has worked in painting, drawing, sculpting, and printmaking. Her recent works have been in mixed media. She starts either with monotypes, collages, or *collographs* (a printmaking process in which materials are applied to a rigid substrate such as paperboard or wood) and finishes by painting or drawing. She first researches and gathers the information necessary to develop her theme. These initial ideas or images are then combined with an intuitive sense of placement, color, texture, and line, allowing the work to develop freely. She works in series, developing a theme but also giving her attention to each piece individually. She enjoys experimenting with and exploring new visual avenues in order to grow and change. All of the artwork in the volume is original. Lylia describes the eight-part series as follows:

These are images of eight small (8 × 8) encaustic<sup>1</sup> works on individual wood panels, from the series titled “The Muysca Numbers.” The Muysca civilization lived in the area of the Colombian Andes where the cities of Bogotá and Tunja are located today. They are not numbers as such but representations of constellations in the sky that they followed for their rituals and the planting of their crops.

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<sup>1</sup>Encaustic painting, also known as hot wax painting, involves using heated beeswax to which colored pigments are added. The liquid or paste is then applied to a surface—usually prepared wood—though canvas and other materials are often used.

Each of the eight pieces of artwork included in the volume is discretely numbered and titled.

Image 1: Muysca, *Ata*

Image 2: Muysca, *Bosa*

Image 3: Muysca, *Miqa*

Image 4: Muysca, *Muyhica*

Image 5: Muysca, *Hisqa*

Image 6: Muysca, *Ta*

Image 7: Muysca, *Cuhupcua*

Image 8: Muysca, *Suhuza*

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