**International Society for Child Indicators Conference 2011 Paper Proposal**

**Title:**  
Beyond Indices? The potential of fuzzy set ideal type analysis for comparative analysis of children’s well being  
  
**Abstract**

UNICEF’s 2007 *Overview of Child Well-Being in Rich Countries* offered a comprehensive and widely cited comparative analysis of children’s well being in 21 of the richest countries of the world. Utilising an additive index the authors distilled a large amount of quantitative data relating to children’s well being and were able to provide the most comprehensive snapshot to date. Whilst an advantage of the method - and certainly a key factor in generating media coverage - was the way it allowed for a ranking of nations, recent debates in the comparative social policy and policy evaluation literatures have pointed to the advantages of methods that aim to classify nations into qualitatively distinct types rather than ranking them in league tables. These debates have particular force when components of analysis are antithetical or cases have widely varying contexts. In comparative social policy analysis, fuzzy set ideal type analysis (FSITA) has become an increasingly popular alternative approach to the additive index, precisely because it addresses these concerns. In this paper we explore the potential for using FSITA for the comparative analysis of children’s well being. Drawing on the same data and conceptual foundations as the 2007 UNICEF study we explore the potential advantages of utilising a diversity oriented method such as FISTA as tool for both academic analysis and policy evaluation.

**Suggested stream**: constructing indices OR international comparisons of child well-being  
  
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