

The China Model

Appendix 1

Harmony in the World 2013: The Ideal and the Reality

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Abstract Many global indicators rank countries according to valued goods such as freedom, wealth, or happiness, but they all share the same flaw: they neglect the importance of rich and diverse social relations for human well-being. The Harmony Index (HI) is an effort to remedy this flaw. It measures four types of relations that matter for human well-being. The HI attempts to measure the extent of peaceful order and respect for diversity—what Confucian thinkers call harmony—within each relation, and ranks countries according to the score for overall harmony. This inaugural HI made use of comprehensive and reliable comparative data for 27 countries. Our findings show that small and relatively wealthy countries tend to be more harmonious countries. Compared to other leading global indices, however, the Harmony Index is less influenced by GDP per capita and by the extent of democracy in a country. Population has a greater impact on harmony than either wealth or political system. We constructed another HI with fewer measurements for family well-being but covering a broader range of countries. A chart with 43 countries demonstrates that it is possible to achieve a high score on the HI without a high level of wealth or democracy. A detailed breakdown of the findings allows us to draw some tentative policy implications at the end of the report. Establishing and nourishing harmonious social relations and a nondestructive approach to the environment is a goal shared by most of the world’s cultures, ethical systems, and religions, and a harmony index can and should be used as a key indicator of social progress and regress.

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1. Introduction: Why a Harmony Index?

Over the past two decades or so, there has been a proliferation of social indicators that rank countries according to different measures of human well-being. So why is there a need for yet another index? Whatever their differences, the most influential indicators share a common flaw: they neglect the importance of rich and diverse social relations for human flourishing. Human beings, like other social animals (such as lions, and unlike tigers), thrive in a communal setting. How many of us can flourish without supportive family members, a peaceful society, and a healthy ecosystem?¹ But we are not simply social animals. Unlike lions, our social lives have an important moral dimension: we care about, and ought to care about, the interests of other people. If most people in a society feel free and happy but do not care about the well-being of others, surely that society is problematic from a moral point of view. In short, an indicator of human well-being should account for both the social and the moral dimensions of what it means to be human. Yet most indicators tend to value individual freedom and happiness above all else, as though we can flourish in a society that values individual freedom and happiness, whatever the cost to our social relations, future generations, or the natural environment. Let us call this an “individualist” bias.

1.1. Is Freedom the Mother of All Values?

The bias is most glaring in the annual “Freedom in the World” survey put out by the U.S.-based group Freedom House since 1972. The survey ranks countries according to their commitment to political rights and civil liberties, and countries are praised or criticized on the apparent assumption that freedom is the most important value for human well-being. But what is the point of being free if, say, we have poisonous relations with family members, our society is in chaos, our country is in a constant state of war with neighboring countries, and our way of life is founded on an unsustainable exploitation of nature? Freedom may be important as a means to rich and diverse social relations, but indicators of human well-being should not neglect the fact that social relations are key to human flourishing.

Moreover, freedom itself cannot be realized in a social vacuum. It is not just Marxists who say that meaningful freedom is most likely to flourish in a peaceful and materially well-off social context. Yet Freedom House neglects the social context necessary for the exercise of freedoms. Freedom House claims that it “does not maintain a culture-bound view of freedom” on the grounds that its standards are enshrined in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR),² but it excludes the social and economic rights in the UDHR. It would be more precise to say that Freedom House uses the rights protected and highlighted in the U.S. Constitution as the moral framework to select relevant rights from the UDHR. Not surprisingly the United States has been consistently ranked as a “Free” country and the latest report openly calls for American

¹ One consistent transcultural research finding is that people generally experience greater life satisfaction if they have strong and frequent social ties, live in healthy ecosystems, and experience good governance. Ed Diener, Marissa Diener, and Carol Miller Diener, “Factors Predicting the Subjective Well-being of Nations,” *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology* 69, no. 5 (1995): 851–864.

² “Freedom in the World 2013: Democratic Breakthroughs in the Balance,” Freedom House, 2013, p. 32. <http://www.freedomhouse.org/sites/default/files/FIW%202013%20Booklet.pdf>.

global leadership to spread freedom and democracy to the rest of the world, by force if necessary.³ Israel is ranked as the only “Free” country in the Middle East, without mentioning the lack of freedom for poor and oppressed Palestinians. China and North Korea are lumped together in the “Not Free” camp, as though there are no qualitative differences in the extent of freedom in the two countries. No doubt China constrains many liberties, but it has also lifted hundreds of millions of people out of poverty over the past three decades. As a result, the vast majority of Chinese enjoy personal freedoms almost unimaginable in the past. Yet China’s status has not changed even to “Partly Free” in Freedom House’s annual surveys.

This is not to deny that civil and political rights are important, but most freedoms are not meaningful without material foundations. A rich person in a “Not Free” country such as China is more likely to flourish than a poor person in a “Free” country such as the United States. Poverty is the main constraint on freedom. Clearly an approach more sensitive to the social context for freedom would entail different policy recommendations, such as support for poverty-reduction programs.

So why not simply rank countries according to an index of material wealth, such as gross domestic product (GDP) per capita? From the 1950s to the 1970s, GDP growth was the standard way of measuring national well-being, and today governments are still praised or condemned on that basis. But GDP is a misleading indicator of human well-being in a country. GDP measures the amount of commerce in a country, but counts remedial and defensive expenditures such as the costs of security and police as positive contributions to commerce. Hence, GDP growth can mask a host of social ills, such as the violence in Mexico over the past decade or the fact that California now spends more on prisons than on education. Critics in Singapore argue that promoting GDP by means of mass immigration (hence adding to the labor force) has made the city-state overcrowded and unbearable.⁴ Jeffrey Sachs argues that America’s economic system has corrupted the soul of the country by engineering excess: overeating, excessive television watching, and material consumption now dominate the lives of millions of Americans.⁵ In China, rapid GDP growth has taken a terrible toll on the environment, a way of life that is just as unsustainable as U.S.-style overconsumption. Quite clearly, there is no direct relationship between GDP per capita and human welfare.

In response to such criticisms of conventional development models that stress economic growth as the ultimate objective, the United Nations Development Program developed a Human Development Index (HDI) that explicitly aims to take into account human well-being. Since 1990, the UNDP has released an annual HDI that assesses development levels based on life expectancy, level of education, and purchasing-power-adjusted GDP per capita. However, the early version of the HDI was criticized for ranking intercountry development level in a way similar to the rankings for GDP per capita.⁶ The HDI has since been

³ The United States is praised for helping to overthrow the Qaddafi regime in Libya but scolded for its ambivalent commitment to democratic change: “Yet the United States seems uncomfortable with acknowledging its contribution to this important step forward for democratic values and the transformation of politics in the Middle East” (“Freedom in the World 2013,” pp. 11–12).

⁴ K. Jeyaretnam, “Singapore’s Economic and Immigration Policies Are Insane,” 26 Aug. 2013. <http://sonofadud.com/2013/08/26/singapores-economic-and-immigration-policies-are-insane/>.

⁵ Katrin Bennhold, “Of Wealth and (Un) Happiness,” *New York Times*, 29 Jan. 2011. http://dealbook.nytimes.com/2011/01/29/of-wealth-and-unhappiness/?_r=0.

⁶ Mark McGillivray, “The Human Development Index: Yet Another Redundant Composite Development

revised by taking into account distribution and gender, but the problem of redundancy with GDP per capita remains.

Perhaps the key problem is the HDI's individualist bias. Unlike the Freedom House index, the HDI does account for the fact that poverty constrains choice, but it still defines human development as "the process of enlarging people's choices ... in principle, [the] choices [available to people] can be infinite and change over time. But at all levels of development, the three essential ones are for people to lead a long and healthy life, to acquire knowledge and have access to resources for a decent standard of living."⁷ But is the expansion of human capabilities all that matters, or all that really matters? An individual might lead a long and healthy life, with access to knowledge and resources, but if that life is characterized by hostility to family members and indifference to citizens, oppression of other nations, and an ecologically unsustainable and wasteful way of life, what is the point of having freedom and more choices? As Ambuj D. Sagar and Adil Najam put it, "development is not just about expanding people's options, but about expanding them in a just manner, nationally and internationally and about exercising them wisely."⁸ Moreover, the importance of family relations for well-being is entirely absent from the HDI.⁹ The 2013 HDI report does note the importance of environmental pressures and social cohesion for human development, but the index itself still measures only current well-being and freedom,¹⁰ and thus hardly improves on the Freedom House index in the sense of taking into account social and moral concerns.

1.2. Is Happiness the Mother of All Values?

Another influential alternative to GDP measurements of social development has been the use of various "happiness" indicators. The idea is to measure well-being more directly; freedom and wealth may be important conditions for happiness, but if the end is happiness, why not ask people more directly how happy they are and compare nations along a happiness scale? But such efforts do not overcome the individualist bias of other indicators. Gallup World Poll asks subjects to reflect on their overall satisfaction by asking about their "daily experiences"—whether they felt well-rested, respected, free of pain, and intellectually engaged¹¹—but social and ethical components are entirely lacking. Once again, Israel scores high (in 8th place) and one wonders whether people should feel morally justified in having positive daily experiences if their country oppresses another group that experiences daily unhappiness. South Korea scores low (in 56th place) but one important reason is that most Koreans work hard and sacrifice their own well-being for the sake of family members (Hong Kong and Singapore score even lower—tied at 81st—and the reason is

Indicator?" *World Development* 19, no. 10 (1991): 1461–1468.

⁷ Cited in Ambuj D. Sagar and Adil Najam, "The Human Development Index: A Critical Review," *Ecological Economics* 25 (1998): 250.

⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 264.

⁹ Family relations are mentioned only once in the summary of the 2013 HDI report, in the negative sense of a constraint on human freedom: "Policies that change social norms that limit human potential, such as strictures against early marriages or dowry requirements, can open up additional opportunities for individuals to reach their full potential" (United Nations Development Program, *United Nations Development Report 2013: The Rise of the South: Human Progress in a Diverse World*, p. 13, http://hdr.undp.org/en/media/HDR2013_EN_Summary.pdf).

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 4.

¹¹ F. Levy, "Table: The World's Happiest Countries," *Forbes*, 14 July 2010.

<http://www.forbes.com/2010/07/14/world-happiest-countries-lifestyle-realestate-gallup-table.html>.

similar).¹² Should Koreans be penalized compared to countries characterized by more easygoing, happy-go-lucky (i.e., selfish) lifestyles? Canada and the United States score high (8th and 14th), but what if North Americans feel happy by means of environmentally unsustainable lifestyles? How many Americans or Canadians worry about the fact that the natural world would be in deep trouble if, say, Chinese and Indians scored as high on per capita carbon emissions? The Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development's (OECD) Better Life Index, which measures subjective well-being, has exactly the same problems:¹³ social and ethical considerations are entirely absent. Again, the individualistic bias matters because the policy recommendations might lead to immoral conclusions.

In response, there has been a search for more comprehensive happiness indicators. One influential idea has been the Gross National Happiness (GNH) Index inspired by the predominantly Buddhist country of Bhutan. In collaboration with the International Development Research Center of Canada, the Centre for Bhutan Studies has developed a GNH Index and applied it to Bhutan: "In the GNH Index, unlike certain concepts of happiness in current western literature, happiness is itself multi-dimensional—not measured only by subjective well-being, and not focused narrowly on happiness that begins and ends with oneself and is concerned for and with oneself. The pursuit of happiness is collective, though it can be experienced deeply personally."¹⁴ Hence, the GNH Index measures performance across nine domains: psychological well-being, time use, community vitality, cultural diversity, ecological resilience, living standard, health, education, and good governance.

Though obviously better at taking into account the social and ethical dimensions of human well-being, the GNH Index is not without flaws. For one thing, it is too comprehensive, which would make it hard to carry out such measurements in other countries. As Ian Morris puts it, an index of human development should abide by "the basic principle of identifying a manageably small number of quantifiable traits."¹⁵ The GNH is also too closely tied to Bhutan's Buddhist heritage to be of more general utility: it measures traits such as "a person's self-reported spirituality level, the frequency with which they consider karma, engage in prayer recitation, and meditation."¹⁶

On the other hand, the GNH Index does not take into account all the key social relations for human well-being. It does not measure relations with other countries. Arguably, it is both impossible and undesirable for a country to strive for complete self-sufficiency in the world today. Bhutan itself has been criticized for

¹² In the case of Singapore, another reason for low scores is that Singaporeans generally have high expectations of their government, and they easily become "unhappy" if it doesn't perform exceptionally well. See Yan Mengda, "Xingfu lenggan" [Cool Feelings toward Happiness], *Lianhe Zaobao*, 2 Nov. 2013. Hence, countries with relatively incompetent governments (i.e., most of the world) can score higher on the happiness index because citizens do not have as high expectations of their governments.

¹³ OECD, "OECD Better Life Index: Life Satisfaction," 2013.

<http://www.oecdbetterlifeindex.org/topics/life-satisfaction/>.

¹⁴ Karma Ura, Sabina Alkire, Tshoki Zangmo, and Karma Wangdi, "A Short Guide to Gross National Happiness Index," Centre for Bhutan Studies, 2012.

<http://www.grossnationalhappiness.com/wp-content/uploads/2012/04/Short-GNH-Index-edited.pdf>. The title, incidentally, is somewhat misleading: the "short" guide runs to ninety-six pages.

¹⁵ Ian Morris, *The Measure of Civilization: How Social Development Decides the Fate of Nations* (London: Profile Books, 2013).

¹⁶ Ura et al., "A Short Guide to Gross National Happiness Index," pp. 16.

expelling about one hundred thousand people and stripping them of their Bhutanese citizenship on the grounds that the deportees were ethnic Nepalese who had settled in the country illegally.¹⁷ Also lacking is concern for family members. In most if not all cultures, the family is a source of both happiness and moral obligation, and an index of human flourishing should strive to measure family relations as well. The GNH does measure “the fundamental right to vote,” but is the right to vote more fundamental than a decent family life?

The Happy Planet Index (HPI) is another effort to measure happiness in a way that is sensitive to social and moral concerns and it is explicitly designed to be of more transcultural utility by using only three indicators. It “uses global data on experienced well-being, life expectancy, and Ecological Footprint to generate an index revealing which countries are most efficient at producing long, happy lives for its inhabitants, whilst maintaining the conditions for future generations to do the same.”¹⁸ The HPI is useful in the sense that it penalizes high-income countries with large Ecological Footprints: the United States is in 105th position out of 151 countries in the 2012 report. The HPI suffers from problems similar to those of other happiness indicators, however. By relying on a subjective assessment of experienced well-being, it penalizes societies composed of ambitious people (i.e., people who are dissatisfied with the status quo) who are working hard at least partly for the sake of family members: again, Koreans rank a lowly 63rd. In contrast, Thailand, the land of happy smiles, ranks 20th, at least partly because it scores higher on experienced well-being.¹⁹ The results would be different if experienced well-being took into account family relations. Moreover, the index does not measure relations between countries. It is easy to be critical of U.S. militarism, but what if U.S. military spending provides a security umbrella for welfare-spending Europeans to lead relatively happy lives?²⁰ Any index of well-being should measure the society’s ability to provide peaceful conditions for its people.

1.3. Taking Social Relations More Seriously

The Global Peace Index (GPI), developed by the Australia-based Institute for Economics and Peace, explicitly aims to measure the necessary social context for human well-being lacking in other indicators: the absence of war and conflict.²¹ The GPI gauges ongoing domestic and international conflict, safety and security in society, and militarization in 158 countries by taking into account 23 separate indicators. On the basis of yearly results and trends since the GPI was first launched in 2007, the authors of the GPI draw some useful implications and policy recommendations for the pursuit of peace. By focusing narrowly on peace

¹⁷ V. Mishra, “Bhutan Is No Shangri-La,” *New York Times*, 28 Jun. 2013; Sushil Sharma, “Bhutan Refugees on Hunger Strike,” BBC, 2003. http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/world/south_asia/2774803.stm.

¹⁸ New Economics Foundation, *The Happy Planet Index: 2012 Report: A Global Index of Sustainable Well-being*, 2012, p. 3. <http://www.neweconomics.org/publications/entry/happy-planet-index-2012-report>.

¹⁹ Experienced well-being is measured by the “ladder of life question in the Gallup World Poll,” which asks people to say where they stand on a ladder that goes from worst to best possible life (Ibid., p. 7). Ambitious people are bound to place themselves lower on this ladder compared to pleasure-seeking types who are satisfied with the status quo.

²⁰ For discussion of a more controversial (and original) argument that cutthroat capitalism in the United States allows for more innovation than welfare spending in relatively egalitarian countries such as Sweden (with the implication that “cuddly capitalists” free-ride on the United States, since innovation increases the growth rate of the entire world economy), see T. B. Edsall, “Why Can’t America Be Sweden?” *New York Times*, 29 May 2013.

²¹ See Vision of Humanity, *Global Peace Index 2012* (Sydney: Institute for Economics and Peace, 2012). <http://www.visionofhumanity.org/gpi-data/>.

within and between countries, however, it still suffers from a lack of social context. In its 2012 GPI report, the Institute for Economics and Peace discusses the idea of “positive peace,” proposing the factors that it believes underlie a “culture of peace.” Not surprisingly, wealthier countries come out on top. The Economist Intelligence Unit’s Democracy Index is used as an indicator of “positive peace” and therefore democracies do well, with “exceptions” such as Egypt. More pertinent, the GPI still suffers from an individualist bias by downplaying key social relations. For one thing, there is no discussion of the kinds of family structures conducive to social peace. And there is no systematic discussion of the environmental challenges that will threaten peace within and between countries, such as competition over water resources between India and China.

The newest and most comprehensive attempt to measure human well-being is the Social Progress Index (SPI), launched in 2013 by the Harvard Business School professor Michael Porter.²² It aims to provide an alternative to GDP as an indicator of human welfare, and it goes further than the Human Development Index and the Happiness Index by specifically tracking social and environmental outcomes. The SPI includes 52 indicators in three dimensions: basic human needs (nutrition, air, water and sanitation, shelter, personal safety), foundations of well-being (access to basic knowledge, health and wellness, ecosystem sustainability) and opportunity (personal rights, access to higher education, equity, and inclusion). The initial SPI ranks 50 countries, and the results are relatively predictable, with wealthier and peaceful countries coming out on top (Sweden comes in first), and seven African countries on the bottom. More surprising for an index that aims to measure the extent to which countries provide for the social needs of its citizens, the SPI still suffers from an individualist bias. The family is not mentioned as a basic human need. And there is nothing about how relations between countries might affect them, as though countries are self-sufficient actors that do not affect one another in positive and negative ways (Israel is ranked 16th, ahead of many peaceful countries that do not oppress other peoples).

No index is perfect, of course. But the main global indicators all suffer from the same basic flaw: they ignore or downplay the significance of social relations for human well-being, as well as the moral dimension of social life. We do not deny that freedom, wealth, and subjective happiness are important for human well-being, but social relations are, arguably, even more important.²³ More recent indicators do try to account for some dimensions of our social lives, but none is sufficient. The most glaring gap, perhaps, is that not a single index of human well-being tries to measure family well-being and rank countries along this dimension.²⁴ Hence, there is a need for another index—let us call it the Harmony Index—that more

²² “Social Progress Imperative,” *Social Progress Index*, 2013. <http://www.socialprogressimperative.org/data/spi>.

²³ The case for a social harmony index does not need to be supported by the argument that social harmony is more important than other values systematically measured in previous global indices; what matters is that we agree that social relations are important for human well-being. Still, the case for a social harmony index can be further strengthened by an argument that social harmony is more important than values measured in previous indices. The stronger argument on behalf of social harmony may require a whole book, but here is a brief sketch: Freedom and wealth are means for human well-being, whereas the pursuit of rich and diverse social relations is both a constituent element of human well-being and a moral obligation. Subjective happiness is mainly a by-product of rich and diverse social relations and may also be the product of immoral behavior. Thus, social harmony is more fundamental than the pursuit of freedom, wealth, or subjective happiness.

²⁴ See Jing Jun, “Jiating xingfu zhishu guoji duibiao yanjiu” [Comparing Global Measures of Family Happiness], report presented at the conference “Guanzhu jiating jianshe, cujin jiating xingfu—‘Guoji jiating ri’ zhongguo xingdong”

systematically aims to overcome the individualist bias of other indicators.

2. Constructing the Harmony Index

The term *harmony* can be misleading in English. When the authors of the HI report mentioned the plan to construct a “harmony” index, an Anglophone friend replied, only half-jokingly, “Oh, North Korea will do well.”²⁵ But North Korea would do well only if harmony were equated with consensus, conformity, and uniformity, and we did not ask any questions about how a country reaches that kind of “harmony” (not to mention the fact that the North Korean government does not allow any independent organizations to carry out surveys in that country). In Chinese, the term *harmony* (*he*) does not connote consensus or uniformity of thought, and our idea of harmony is closer to the Chinese meaning. One of the most famous lines in the *Analects of Confucius*—known to most educated Chinese—is that exemplary persons should pursue harmony but not consensus (or uniformity).²⁶ The Confucian idea of harmony, in other words, values diversity in different kinds of social relationships. Our idea of harmony is inspired by the Confucian idea, and we believe this idea resonates with similar notions in other ethical traditions. Let us first explain what we mean by harmony in greater detail,²⁷ and then we will explain how we measured harmony.

2.1. The Concept of Harmony

The concept of harmony is central to traditional Chinese political culture and it has been revived of late by the Chinese Communist Party.²⁸ The opening ceremony (vetted by the Politburo) of the 2008 Olympics in Beijing highlighted the character 和 (harmony), as though it is the central value in Chinese culture and the best that China has to offer to the rest of the world (in contrast, there was no mention of China’s experiment with socialism at the opening ceremony). The Hu/Wen administration frequently invoked the idea of a “harmonious society.” Of course, there is also widespread recognition that contemporary Chinese society is not very harmonious (mentioning the term *harmonious society* to Chinese intellectuals or university students often leads to skeptical reactions). The government itself may be using this idea as a recognition that there is much conflict in society, but with the implication that the conflict should be dealt with peacefully (as opposed to the emphasis on violent class conflict in Maoist days). The new report *China 2030* published by the World Bank and the (official) Development Research Center of the State Council of the People’s Republic of China

[Valuing Family Building and Improving Family Happiness—China’s Action on the “International Family Day”], 15 May 2013. It is worth asking why the main global indicators all suffer from the same basic problem. One reason is that the indicators tend to be created and funded in Western capitalist democracies that have a more individualist culture. Another reason might be that the creators tend to be males, who may be less sensitive than females to the importance of family and social relations for human well-being.

²⁵ The association (in English) of the word *harmony* with uniformity or consensus helps to explain why only 7% of Americans appreciated harmony, whereas 58% of East Asians viewed harmony as essential to the good life (see Krzysztof Gawlikowski, “A New Period of the Mutual Rapprochement of Western and Chinese Civilizations: Towards a Common Appreciation of Harmony and Cooperation,” *Dialogue and Universalism*, no. 2, 2011).

²⁶ *The Analects of Confucius*, 13.23 [unless otherwise indicated, we do our own translations from the Chinese]. <http://ctext.org/analects>.

²⁷ For more systematic discussions of the Confucian idea of harmony, see Chenyang Li, *The Confucian Philosophy of Harmony* (New York: Routledge, 2013), and Stephen C. Angle, *Sagehood: The Contemporary Significance of Neo-Confucian Philosophy* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009).

²⁸ Guo Sujian and Guo Baogang, eds., *China in Search of a Harmonious Society* (Lanham, Md.: Lexington Books, 2008).

also invokes the idea of a “harmonious society” but here it is more clearly portrayed as an ideal that should inspire reform rather than a description of social fact. The harmonious society has three goals—an inclusive and just society, a country that lives in balance with nature, and a country that works peacefully and constructively with other countries to achieve common global goals—that are meant to inspire reform in China.²⁹ Our idea—more precisely, our ideal—of harmony is similar, but we add that harmony should be established not just in society, among countries, and between humans and nature, but also in families. We would also add that this ideal is not just a good standard to inspire reform in China till the year 2030, but also a good standard to inspire reform in other countries. The ideal of harmony is inspired by Confucian ethics,³⁰ so let us say a bit more about the Confucian ideal of harmony.

Confucians emphasize that a good life is characterized, first and foremost, by rich and diverse social relations. This is not just a descriptive banality about how our identities are shaped by our communities, but is rather a normative claim that human flourishing is constituted by social relations of certain kinds, so that we have an obligation to nourish those relations. Confucianism prizes social ways of life in the physical world above all else. The *Analects of Confucius*—the key text in the (diverse) Confucian tradition—is mainly about how we should relate to other people. On the one hand, people are the main sources of our pleasure: as Confucius famously put it in the opening passage of the *Analects*, “When friends come from afar, is this not a great pleasure?” On the other hand, the constraints on our pleasure are mainly a function of responsibilities we owe to other people, not to anything otherworldly (such as God) or to animals. We owe most to the people who did things for us.

Other-regarding morality begins via interaction with family members, and those moral duties are extended to other human beings by way of other communal forms of life. The *Great Learning*, canonized by the Song Dynasty scholar Zhu Xi (1130–1200) as one of the four Confucian classics, opens with a passage about the need to regulate the family, the state, and the whole world: “When the personal life is cultivated, the family will be regulated; when the family is regulated, the state will be in order; and when the state is in order, there is peace throughout the world.” Confucianism does not have much to say about our obligations to the natural world (compared to ethical traditions such as Daoism), but Mencius (perhaps the second most influential Confucian thinker after Confucius himself) did point to the dangers of an ecologically unsustainable way of life.³¹ In any case, any reasonable interpretation (or extension) of Confucianism today would recognize that humans can flourish only in the context of an ecologically sustainable way of life. In other words, the key relations for human well-being are those within the family, the society (or country), and the international world (meaning, today, among countries), and between humans and the natural world.³²

²⁹ The World Bank and the Development Research Center of the State Council, People’s Republic of China, *China 2030: Building a Modern, Harmonious, and Creative Society*, 2013.

<http://www.worldbank.org/content/dam/Worldbank/document/China-2030-complete.pdf>.

³⁰ It is worth noting that the ideal of harmony is widely shared in Chinese culture, including by (the majority of?) Chinese who do not self-identify as Confucians: in October 2013, a group of prominent Chinese liberals, socialists, Christians, and Confucians endorsed a set of values meant to guide China’s future development, including the line from the *Analects of Confucius* that exemplary persons should value harmony but not uniformity (Oxford Consensus, 2013, http://article.wn.com/view/2013/10/18/Full_Text_of_the_Oxford_Consensus_2013/).

³¹ *The Works of Mencius*, <http://ctext.org/mengzi>.

³² Arguably, Chinese culture (like Plato) also values “harmony within the person.” We do not discuss this topic both because it may owe more to non-Confucian traditions such as Daoism and for the practical reason that it is difficult

But which social relations matter most? In a Confucian ethical framework, the key social relations do not matter equally. That is, Confucianism defends the value of partiality: our ethical obligations are strongest to those with whom we have personal relationships, and they diminish in intensity the farther we go from those relationships. We do have an obligation to extend love beyond intimates, but it is not expected that the same degree of emotions and responsibilities will extend to strangers. The web of caring obligations that binds family members is more demanding than that binding citizens, the web of obligations that bind citizens is more demanding than that binding foreigners, and the web binding humans is more demanding than that binding us to nonhuman forms of life. Let us term this idea “graded love.”³³

Finally, the question is how to characterize the normative nature of those social relations: that is, how should we strive to maintain and nourish those relations? Here is where the idea of harmony becomes most relevant: we should strive for harmonious social relations, whether in the family, the society, the world, or with nature. Harmony, at minimum, means peaceful order (or the absence of violence). Conflict is of course unavoidable, but it should be dealt with in a nonviolent way to establish a peaceful order. Let us term this idea “weak harmony.” But peaceful order is not sufficient for a relationship to be characterized as “harmonious.” The Confucian idea of harmony also values diversity. Partly, there are aesthetic reasons to value diversity: an ingredient, such as salt, that tastes bland on its own becomes flavorful when mixed in a soup with other ingredients, just as a musical instrument can sound more beautiful when it is combined with the sound of other instruments. There are also moral reasons to value diversity. The contrast between harmony and conformity owes its origin to the *Zuozhuan*, where it clearly referred to the idea that the ruler should be open to different political views among his political advisers. It is important to tolerate and respect different views so that mistakes can be exposed and corrected; hence, a relatively free and open society is a precondition for the diversity of political views to be exposed and expressed. Another key moral justification for diversity in harmony is that the ideal can generate a sense of community that has the effect of protecting the interests of the weakest and most vulnerable (and different) members of the society. According to the *Record of Music*, a text allegedly compiled by Confucius himself and edited and reworked by scholars of the Han Dynasty (202 BCE–220 CE), music embodies the ideal of diversity in harmony: “When the notes are varied and elegant, with frequent changes, the people are satisfied and happy.” Such music elicits joy and the moral point of promoting harmonious music is to protect the weak and vulnerable members of the community: if people’s desires are not regulated by harmonious music, “the strong will prey upon the weak, the many will oppress the few, the smart people will take advantage of the dull, the courageous will make it bitter for the timid, and the old, young, orphans, and solitaries [those without the protection of social relations] will be neglected.”³⁴ Diversity in harmony, in other words, should be valued both because it is aesthetically pleasing and because it has morally desirable consequences. Let us term this ideal “strong harmony.”

measure (for example, Jia Wenshan argues that “the first dimension of harmony is intrapersonal harmony, which is characterized by the flow of *qi* or the energy,” but the idea of *qi* is notoriously difficult to measure. See Jia, “Communication and the Chinese Perspective on Harmony: Evaluating the Eastern Harmony and the Western Peace Paradigms,” *China Media Research* 4, no. 4 [2008]).

³³ Other cultures or traditions may place different emphasis on other social relations: for example, Daoists may value harmony with nature over harmony between humans.

³⁴ We have modified the translation of the *Record of Music* from <http://chinese.dsturgeon.net/text.pl?node=10113&if=en>.

In short, the Confucian-inspired ideal of harmony is that relations between family members, citizens, countries, as well as between humans and nature are key to human flourishing, both in the sense that they matter for well-being and in the moral sense that they generate social obligations. The family matters most, then relations within society, then relations between countries, then relations between humans and nature. Those relations should all be characterized by peaceful order and respect for diversity.³⁵ Before we move on to the question of measurement, however, it is important to ask to what extent the ideal of harmony is universally shared. After all, a global index of human well-being should not be too closely tied to a particular culture or society: like freedom or happiness, most if not all societies should aspire to the ideal. And there may be a worry that Confucianism is too closely tied to Chinese culture.

In terms of Confucianism's self-understanding, there is no problem. Like Christianity or liberalism, Confucianism is meant to be a universal ethic. It is not tied to any race or ethnicity: the test of being a Confucian is whether one is committed to, and lives by (to the extent possible), Confucian values. In historical practice, Confucianism spread beyond China to East Asian societies such as Japan, South Korea, and Vietnam, helping to explain why all East Asian societies tend to prioritize the value of harmony. Beyond East Asia, many other societies and cultures also value harmony, even if they have not been influenced by Confucianism in historical practice. *Ubuntu*, the main ethical tradition in sub-Saharan Africa, is strongly committed to harmony, including the idea of graded love.³⁶ *Buen Vivir* ("Good Living"), an idea rooted in the worldview of the Quechua peoples of the Andes that has gained popularity throughout Latin America, emphasizes living in harmony with other people and nature.³⁷ The ethical systems and political culture of North European countries value social harmony in ways similar to East Asian cultures.³⁸ Canadian political culture was influenced by Loyalists who fled the American Revolution because they valued order and harmony over the aggressive assertion of individual freedom (though economic interests were also at stake).³⁹ American communitarians argue that the "Habits of the Heart" of American people show commitment to families and social relations, though such commitments tend to be buried beneath individualistic self-understandings.⁴⁰ In fact, it could be argued that the value of harmony is more widely shared and prioritized in the world's cultures, ethical systems, and religions than supposedly universal values such as freedom.

Another possible objection to the idea that harmony is important to human life is simply to deny that social

³⁵ We want to emphasize that harmony is a Confucian ideal, not necessarily the reality; in historical practice, Confucian scholars often acted in ways that contravened the ideal of harmony (of course, adherents of most ethical traditions often fail to live up the ideals they espouse, especially when they are in positions of power).

³⁶ See Daniel A. Bell and Thaddeus Metz, "Confucianism and Ubuntu: Reflections on a Dialogue between Chinese and African Traditions," *Journal of Chinese Philosophy* 38, supp. s1 (2011): 78–95.

³⁷ O. Balch, "Buen Vivir: The Social Philosophy Inspiring Movements in South America," *The Guardian*, 4 Feb. 2013. <http://www.guardian.co.uk/sustainable-business/blog/buen-vivir-philosophy-south-america-eduardo-gudynas>.

³⁸ Geir Helgesen and Soren Risbjerg Thomsen, eds., *Politics, Culture and Self: East Asian and North European Attitudes* (Copenhagen: Nordic Institute of Asian Studies, 2006); Peter Abrahamson, "Harmony and Welfare State Development: The Road to Universal Family Policy in Denmark," paper presented to the Third EurAsia Network Symposium, University of Iceland, Reykjavik, 2011.

³⁹ No Canadian province has a license plate motto similar to that of New Hampshire: "Live Free or Die."

⁴⁰ Robert Bellah, Richard Madsen, William Sullivan, and Ann Swidler, *Habits of the Heart* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1985).

harmony is possible. Underpinning harmony is the idea that we should care more about other people (and nature) and critics may say it goes against the grain of human nature. But recent findings in social science show that the ability to feel and respond with sympathy and imaginative perspective is a deep part of our evolutionary heritage.⁴¹ Of course, people can become ruthlessly competitive and egoistic if they are placed in a social context that inhibits or punishes the realization of other-regarding behavior. But the point is that the government can and should seek to provide the social context that allows for the realization of innate human goodness that underpins the ideal of social harmony. It is unrealistic to expect that any government can provide the context for a fully harmonious way of life, but it is not unrealistic to expect that governments should do their best to provide the conditions that allow for the maximum possible realization of social harmony. When it comes to the promotion of government officials, the formulation of laws, and the distribution of resources, the impact on social harmony should be a key priority.

In any case, only a moment's reflection is sufficient to make us realize the importance of harmony: how many of us can thrive without families and societies characterized by peaceful order and respect for diversity, not to mention a peaceful international order and a nondestructive approach to the natural environment? A tiny minority of eccentric geniuses or artists may deliberately opt to shut themselves off from family and society if such attachments interfere with the pursuit of truth or freedom (Spinoza is a famous case),⁴² but for most people, the key question for human flourishing is how to benefit from and nourish different social commitments.

The main reason why freedom appears to be more universal is sociological rather than philosophical: the United States has exercised political and economic hegemony in the post-World War II era to such an extent that the dominant value of its political culture—individual freedom—has come to be seen as a universal value, and other values have come to be seen as particular and tied to “backwards” social contexts. To paraphrase Karl Marx: the ruling country's ideas are the ruling ideas. Hence, human development has come to be seen (and measured) as progress toward greater freedom rather than progress toward harmony, even though most of the world's peoples are committed to ethical traditions that prioritize harmony. But as the United States loses its sole position as the world's ideological hegemon, the “natural” role of harmony as a universal moral ideal may reassert itself in the global discourse about what constitutes human well-being.

Still, it must be recognized that the construction of any normative index cannot avoid controversy. In the case of Christianity or Islam, the key attachment is the relationship between an individual and God, with relationships among humans being apt only insofar as they contribute to the fulfillment of His will. Ubuntu places special emphasis on the relationship with dead ancestors. Buddhists believe that particularist social attachments are the causes of suffering and we must strive to break off those attachments to free ourselves of suffering and to pursue eternal bliss or nirvana (even if the everyday practices in predominantly Buddhist countries such as Thailand show special commitment to intimates). Civic republicans who value self-mastery and argue that individuals need to “achieve the walk-tall, look-in-the-eye status that we

⁴¹ See chapter 1, section 4.

⁴² Spinoza's dilemma is vividly portrayed in Irvin D. Yalom's novel, *The Spinoza Problem* (New York: Basic Books, 2012).

associate with enjoying nondomination”⁴³ may object to the bowing and deference to age in cultures that prize harmonious relations. In the case of Kantian liberalism, it is morally acceptable for an individual to lead a lifestyle without substantial human interaction so long as one respects other people’s rights; there is no moral difference, so to speak, between somebody who has rich (harmonious) social ties and somebody who seeks the good life in, say, technology (e.g., the latest iPhone). Kantians (along with utilitarians and Buddhists) will also object to the “Confucian” value of graded love on the grounds that we should defend moral impartiality, the idea that we owe the same obligations to (aid) people whether they are familiar to us or not. In practice, of course, most people value intimates more than strangers or abstract beings such as God, but many of the world’s great philosophers and religious leaders have argued otherwise.

So yes, the idea of constructing a harmony index is controversial. What can be said in its favor is that it is less controversial than global indices that prioritize freedom and happiness. And part of the normative point of developing a harmony index is to promote the ideal of harmony in a world with different (and competing) ethical systems. Just as the Freedom Index is meant (at least partly) to persuade the world’s peoples that they should judge countries by the standard of whether or not they adhere to the ideal of freedom (more precisely, the standards of the U.S. Constitution), so the Harmony Index is meant (at least partly) to persuade the world’s peoples that they should judge countries by the standard of whether or not they adhere to the ideal of harmony. But unlike Freedom House, we do not pretend that our standard is free of moral controversy, and we will certainly not urge a large and powerful country to use force to promote this ideal abroad. Let us now turn to the question of measurement.

2.2. Measuring Harmony

The HI attempts to measure the extent of harmony—peaceful order and respect for diversity—in four different types of relations: among family members, among members of a society (or country), among countries, and between humans and nature. Rather than collect our own data, we used the latest publicly available measurements of reliable indicators that shed light on the extent of harmony in each relation. The relations were broken down into a small number of indicators with corresponding measurements (shown in Table 1).

Table 1. Four Types of Relations

Relation	Indicator	Measurement
Harmony in the family	Parent(s)–child(ren) relationship	Suicide rate of the elderly (age 75+) [World Health Organization, 1999–2010 data]
		Suicide rate of children (age 15–) [World Health Organization, 1999–2010 data]
		Whether one of main goals in life has been to make my parents proud [World Value Survey, 2005–2008 data]
	Relationship with spouse	Rate of domestic violence [UN Women, 1999–2010 data]

⁴³ Jose Luis Marti and Philip Pettit, *A Political Philosophy in Public Life: Civic Republicanism in Zapatero’s Spain* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 2010), p. 149.

	Trust in family	How much do you trust your family [World Value Survey, 2005–2008 data]
	Diverse family relations	Whether adoption is allowed [United Nations, 2009 data]
Harmony in the country	Peace in society	Internal Peace Index [Global Peace Index by Institute for Economics and Peace, 2012 data]
	Trust in society	Whether most people can be trusted [World Value Survey, 2005–2008 data]
	Equality in society	Gini Index [Central Intelligence Agency, 2000–2011 data]
	Relationship with government	Good Governance Index [World Bank, 2011 data]
		Public trust in politicians [Global Competitiveness Index by World Economic Forum, 2011–2012 data]
	Diversity in society	Club and Associations Index [Indices of Social Development by International Institute of Social Studies, 1990–2010 data]
Inclusion of Minorities Index [Indices of Social Development by International Institute of Social Studies, 1990–2010 data]		
Harmony in the world	Peace in the world	External Peace Index [Global Peace Index by Institute for Economics and Peace, 2012 data]
	Integration into global organizations	Number of international organizations participated in [Central Intelligence Agency, 2012 data]
	Economic interaction	Trade to GDP ratio [World Bank, 2010 data]
Harmony with nature	General relationship with nature	Ecological Footprint [Global Footprint Network, 2008 data]
	Local relationship with nature	Environmental Performance Index [Yale Center for Environmental Law and Policy et al., 2012 data]

Our choice of indicators was guided by the following criteria:

- i. The indicator must be relevant: that is, it must tell us something about the extent of harmony in the social relation being measured.
- ii. The indicator must be culture independent to the extent possible.
- iii. The indicator must be adequately documented; that is, there is cross-national data for the indicator being measured.
- iv. The indicator must be reliable, meaning that experts more or less agree on what the evidence says.
- v. The indicators must be independent of one another.⁴⁴

The raw data for each individual measurement was normalized in computing the index in order to enable comparison of data across various indicators that would otherwise be incomparable. We adopt a min-max method that converts raw data to a figure within the range of 0 to 1. The formula is given in *Handbook on*

⁴⁴ We draw on (in modified form) the discussion “The Criteria for a Useful Trait” in Morris, *The Measure of Civilization*, pp. 28–29. We do not discuss Morris’s effort to quantify social development because his aim is more to measure civilizational power (which includes amoral, if not immoral, traits such as war-making capacity) rather than human well-being, but his methodological discussion provides helpful guidance for construction of a transcultural index.

Constructing Composite Indicators: Methodology and User Guide published by the OECD:⁴⁵

$$I_{qc}^t = \frac{x_{qc}^t - \min_c(x_q^{t_0})}{\max_c(x_q^{t_0}) - \min_c(x_q^{t_0})}$$

After normalizing the data, we checked the correlation structure of the values, and found that the correlation is weak. We then assigned equal weighting to each relation (and equal weighting to each indicator within each relation), and produced a total score of harmony for each country by linear aggregation. In light of the idea of graded love, we also produced a different chart that gives extra weight to harmony in the family, then harmony in the country, then harmony in the world, and then harmony with nature. These scores are multiplied by 40%, 30%, 20%, and 10%, respectively, and the total Harmony Index score is a linear aggregation of the four weighted scores. We term the HI that accounts for graded love the “Graded HI.”⁴⁶

We aimed to get reliable data for as wide a range of countries as possible, but we were limited by lack of data for suicide rates and rates of domestic violence; hence our initial HI report covers only 27 countries. By eliminating those measurements (i.e., reducing the measurements for “harmony in the family”), however, we increased our number of countries to 43, including countries from Africa. We term the HI with more measurements (but fewer countries) the “Comprehensive HI.”

Again, no index is perfect and it is best to be explicit about the limitations of our index. Quite clearly, the HI is limited by the extent of noncontroversial data available: for example, reporting on the rates of domestic violence is not always reliable across space and time (some countries are more transparent about statistics than others, and police and hospital routines for collecting and reporting data may vary a lot). More global surveys on indicators related to harmony in the family in particular would allow more countries to be included in future HI reports. A measure of the importance of music in society might be a good indicator of harmony in a country, but we lack relevant measurements (perhaps the proportion of students who learn to play a musical instrument in school?). There is a lack of data on strong harmony (respect for diversity), especially in measuring harmony in the world. It would be better to have noncontroversial indicators for political interaction and cultural interaction among countries. In terms of choosing indicators that are independent of one another, we had most difficulty with choosing indicators for “harmony with nature.” The Environmental Performance Index is not sufficient because it measures per capita carbon emissions without taking into account that things are produced for consumption abroad (hence overly penalizing countries like China that manufacture things for rich countries), but the Ecological Footprint does not take into account the local pollution caused by making things that are sold abroad (hence overly benefiting countries like China that pay a severe price in terms of local pollution for making things sold abroad). Hence, we chose to take half of each measurement, though there is some overlap between the measurements. We also had to make some

⁴⁵ OECD, *Handbook on Constructing Composite Indicators: Methodology and User Guide*, 2008. <http://www.oecd.org/std/clits/42495745.pdf>.

⁴⁶ Again, the graded index is more closely tied to Confucian ethics than the more non-graded index, since different ethical traditions might grade different relations differently.

judgment calls that may be controversial. We considered “rate of divorce” as a measurement of relation between spouses, but such a measurement would have the effect of rewarding countries that prohibit or make divorce more difficult, hence masking substantial disharmony. The downside of our decision not to consider “rate of divorce” is that we do not penalize countries that have high rates of divorce, other things being equal.⁴⁷ We consider suicide rates as measurements indicating lack of “weak harmony” in the family rather than in society, which may have influenced the findings.⁴⁸ The measurement of strong diversity is also more controversial than the measurement of weak harmony. For instance, to measure respect for diverse relations within the family, we considered rewarding countries that allow same-sex marriage and polygamy. However, these two kinds of relationships are morally controversial in many countries and we decided not to use these measurements in order to avoid controversy.⁴⁹

3. Analysis of the Results

An index is useful not just because it confirms preexisting intuitions, but also—especially—if it can challenge those intuitions, leading to moral improvement and feasible and desirable policy implications. In other words, we need to ask if the index led to surprising results, but not so surprising that they seem totally counter-intuitive (one would rightly reject out of hand an index that ranked Syria as the world’s most harmonious society). Ideally, the findings would seem both surprising and plausible.

Table 2. Comparison among Non-Graded HI, Graded HI, HDI, and GDP Per Capita (Comprehensive HI, 27 countries)

Country	Non-Graded HI	Graded HI	HDI	GDP Per Capita
Norway	1	2	1	1
Sweden	2	1	7	4
Switzerland	3	4	8	2
Finland	4	3	10	6
Germany	5	7	5	8
Italy	6	5	11	11

⁴⁷ We made a similar judgment call regarding “workplace harmony.” On the surface, the lack of strikes may suggest workplace harmony, but the use of this measure would reward countries that make it illegal to go on strike, hence masking substantial disharmony. We decided not to use this measure, but at the cost that countries that nourish genuinely harmonious relations in the workplace are not rewarded as much as they should be.

⁴⁸ We deliberately chose suicide rates among the old (over 75) and the young (under 15) as indicators of lack of “weak harmony” in the family because they are more likely to be caused by family problems (loneliness in the case of the old, especially in Confucian-influenced societies such as South Korea, where the old expect to be cared for by family members) and to negatively affect other family members (especially in the case of the suicide of children). That said, there is reason to question the data for suicide rates among the old: the recording of suicide rates on death certificates is dodgy because autopsies are not routinely carried out, especially when the very old are involved.

⁴⁹ One intriguing finding is that countries that allow same-sex marriage tend not to allow polygamy, and vice versa, so including these measurements may not have had much effect on the harmony rankings. One country—South Africa—does allow both same-sex marriage and polygamy, and it would have ranked higher on the HI had we included these measurements for strong harmony in family relations.

New Zealand	7	8	6	10
United Kingdom	8	6	12	9
Netherlands	9	9	4	5
Poland	10	13	13	14
Republic of Korea	11	11	9	12
Chile	12	12	14	13
China	13	14	23	21
Australia	14	10	2	3
Georgia	15	15	18	24
Ukraine	16	16	20	23
Romania	17	18	16	17
Jordan	18	17	22	22
Egypt	19	23	24	25
Republic of Moldova	20	20	25	26
Serbia	21	19	17	19
Peru	22	24	19	20
Brazil	23	26	21	16
United States of America	24	21	3	7
South Africa	25	22	26	18
India	26	27	27	27
Russia	27	25	15	15

Compared to the HDI, the Comprehensive HI does not track GDP per capita so closely (see Table 2). The most harmonious countries on the HI tend to be small, relatively wealthy countries (top four: Norway, Switzerland, Sweden, and Finland). This result should not be too surprising because it is easier to establish a harmonious society in a small community with abundant natural resources. The surprises are more at the bottom of the index: the five least harmonious countries are Brazil, the United States, South Africa, India, and Russia. Clearly population size is a key factor limiting the possibility of a harmonious society. In fact, the impact of population is not so evident in the HDI and GDP per capita, as the United States is highly ranked on those indices (3rd and 7th, respectively). The differences are not so stark in the case of less populous countries, but two countries—Australia and the Netherlands—that score high on the HDI and GDP per capita score lower on the HI. In other words, wealth does not necessarily translate into a harmonious society, especially in a country with a large population.

Another interesting finding is that democracy, in the sense of a political system with a free and fair competitive electoral system to choose top leaders, does not seem to be particularly helpful for promoting a harmonious society. Both the top and the bottom countries on the comprehensive index are democracies, and

nondemocratic China scores higher than both India and the United States.

Table 3. Comparison between Non-Graded HI, Graded HI, HDI, and GDP Per Capita (43 Countries)

Country	Non-Graded HI	Graded HI	HDI	GDP Per Capita
Vietnam	1	1	38	42
Norway	2	2	1	1
Sweden	3	3	7	4
Switzerland	4	8	8	2
New Zealand	5	4	6	12
Germany	6	10	5	9
United Kingdom	7	7	16	11
Italy	8	9	15	13
Spain	9	6	14	14
France	10	15	11	10
Indonesia	11	14	36	34
Canada	12	5	9	5
Ethiopia	13	11	43	43
Slovenia	14	12	13	16
Republic of Korea	15	13	10	17
Netherlands	16	24	4	6
Poland	17	25	18	20
Bulgaria	18	18	24	28
Chile	19	19	19	18
Argentina	20	21	20	23
Finland	21	16	12	7
Egypt	22	29	34	37
China	23	23	33	31
Zambia	24	40	42	41
Ghana	25	32	40	39
Australia	26	17	2	3
Republic of Moldova	27	31	35	38
Georgia	28	30	27	35
Uruguay	29	22	21	19
Jordan	30	26	32	32

Serbia	31	27	26	29
Turkey	32	20	31	24
Morocco	33	35	39	36
Peru	34	37	28	30
Ukraine	35	34	29	33
Cyprus	36	28	17	15
Romania	37	38	23	26
Brazil	38	43	30	22
Mexico	39	36	25	25
India	40	33	41	40
South Africa	41	41	37	27
United States of America	42	39	3	8
Russia	43	42	22	21

This less comprehensive HI chart—that is, without suicide rates for children and the elderly and without rates of domestic violence, because such data were lacking for the 16 additional countries—reveals interesting results (see Table 3). The big surprise is that Vietnam comes out on top. Again, there are clear differences between the HI and the HDI and GDP per capita. Three countries with low HDI and GDP per capita score high on the HI: Vietnam, Indonesia, and Ethiopia. Democracy does not seem particularly helpful for promoting harmony among this group of three not-so-wealthy countries: nondemocratic Vietnam ranks substantially higher than the other two countries.

A comparison of the Non-Graded HI and the Graded HI also reveals interesting results (again, the point of the Graded HI is to give more weight to social relations with intimates). Countries with a low Non-Graded HI but a substantially higher Graded HI include Canada, Australia, Uruguay, Turkey, and India. Given that relations with nature carry the least weight in the Graded HI, one can surmise that these countries place much more weight on relations with humans than relations with nature. Countries with a high Non-Graded HI but a low Graded HI include Germany, France, Netherlands, Poland, Egypt, Zambia, and Ghana. These countries are more likely to have problematic social relations and to place more weight upon relations with nature.

Table 4. Detailed Breakdown (27 Countries)

Country	Family	Society	World	Nature	Non-Graded HI	Graded HI
Norway	4	2	12	6	1	2
Sweden	6	1	5	14	2	1
Switzerland	12	4	6	2	3	4
Finland	8	3	4	23	4	3
Germany	21	8	2	11	5	7
Italy	3	12	3	5	6	5

New Zealand	19	5	16	8	7	8
United Kingdom	5	9	9	7	8	6
Netherlands	26	6	1	22	9	9
Poland	17	13	13	9	10	13
Republic of Korea	14	11	10	20	11	11
Chile	7	15	14	12	12	12
China	11	14	15	18	13	14
Australia	18	7	22	26	14	10
Georgia	1	21	27	1	15	15
Ukraine	15	17	7	21	16	16
Romania	16	16	19	16	17	18
Jordan	10	19	18	19	18	17
Egypt	22	22	20	3	19	23
Republic of Moldova	20	20	11	13	20	20
Serbia	9	18	23	17	21	19
Peru	24	24	17	10	22	24
Brazil	27	26	8	4	23	26
United States of America	23	10	24	27	24	21
South Africa	2	27	21	24	25	22
India	25	23	25	15	26	27
Russia	13	25	26	25	27	25

Table 5. Detailed Breakdown (43 Countries)

Country	Family	Society	World	Nature	Non-Graded HI	Graded HI
Vietnam	4	14	5	8	1	1
Norway	33	2	19	11	2	2
Sweden	36	1	8	23	3	3
Switzerland	41	4	9	5	4	8
New Zealand	29	5	24	13	5	4
Germany	42	9	2	17	6	10
United Kingdom	19	10	17	12	7	7
Italy	21	17	4	9	8	9
Spain	5	16	15	27	9	6
France	30	15	7	18	10	15
Indonesia	12	21	32	4	11	14
Canada	25	7	6	41	12	5
Ethiopia	2	25	37	3	13	11
Slovenia	28	12	3	32	14	12
Republic of Korea	22	13	16	34	15	13
Netherlands	43	6	1	36	16	24
Poland	32	18	20	14	17	25

Bulgaria	10	28	11	21	18	18
Chile	16	24	18	20	19	19
Argentina	8	32	22	10	20	21
Finland	40	3	36	38	21	16
Egypt	15	34	30	6	22	29
China	20	22	21	28	23	23
Zambia	38	37	23	1	24	40
Ghana	26	29	25	19	25	32
Australia	31	8	34	42	26	17
Republic of Moldova	23	31	13	22	27	31
Georgia	3	33	43	2	28	30
Uruguay	17	20	33	37	29	22
Jordan	14	30	27	29	30	26
Serbia	13	27	35	26	31	27
Turkey	1	38	38	30	32	20
Morocco	27	35	29	15	33	35
Peru	24	39	26	16	34	37
Ukraine	34	26	10	35	35	34
Cyprus	11	19	42	31	36	28
Romania	35	23	28	25	37	38
Brazil	37	41	14	7	38	43
Mexico	18	42	12	33	39	36
India	9	36	40	24	40	33
South Africa	7	43	31	39	41	41
United States of America	39	11	39	43	42	39
Russia	6	40	41	40	43	42

It is premature to draw policy implications on the basis of the first year’s experiment with the Harmony Index, but one can still point to some preliminary insights. Given that it seems more difficult to establish a harmonious society in a large, populous country, the most obvious implication would be to allow for substantial decentralization and local-level decision-making so that most of the “pro-harmony” benefits of smallness can be realized within the context of a large country. But more detailed policy recommendations depend on the particulars of the context. In China, for example, increased internal migration that separates family members and rural/urban inequality contribute to “unharmonious” outcomes, and policy recommendations designed to promote harmony may require more rather than less intervention by the central government.

A more detailed breakdown of data can help to explain why countries scored where they did (see Tables 4 and 5).⁵⁰ For example, Ethiopia and Georgia scored high on family and nature, suggesting the need to focus on

⁵⁰ For more information on the raw and coded data that gives more sense of the relative scores and distances, see <http://www.harmonyindex.org>.

harmony in society and with the world. Brazil is penalized by low scores on family and society, and the country can focus its energies on improving family and social relations in order to improve its HI score. The Netherlands scores low on relations with family and nature; hence the country needs to focus on repairing those relations. The United States, perhaps surprisingly, scores low on family, relations with other countries, and nature, but not so low on society. It is a relatively harmonious society internally (at least partly owing to its stable constitutional system), but it needs to improve in other respects.

Three countries with low HDI and GDP per capita but high HI—Vietnam, Indonesia, and Ethiopia—rate thus because they score high in family and nature (Vietnam also does well on relations with the world). Perhaps it is easier to nourish harmonious relations with family and nature in a not-so-wealthy society. It is widely recognized today that developing countries need to develop in an ecologically sustainable way (and need to do better than Western countries in this respect), but our index suggests that economic development should (also) not carry the cost of undermining harmonious family relations. That said, an argument for the need for an ecologically sustainable form of development may be less controversial than an argument for a form of economic development that does not undermine harmonious family relations. From a moral point of view, it is hard to justify exploitation of nature, especially if it affects other countries (global warming does not respect national boundaries). But perhaps some “developed” societies have settled on a relatively individualistic form of life that does not value family harmony as much as in poorer societies. For example, people in wealthier countries do not seem to place as much value on making their parents proud (Nordic countries rank lowest on this measurement, helping to explain why Finland drops in the 43-country ranking that gives more relative weight to that measurement).⁵¹ Still, wealthier countries are also characterized by relatively high rates of depression,⁵² an uncontroversial “bad” that may be a by-product of not-so-harmonious family relations. In any case, more social scientific research is needed to disentangle the effects of economic development on family harmony, and more normative reflections are needed to think about the desirable and not-so-desirable aspects of family relations in economically developed societies.

It is worth saying something about China, given that it is home to the Confucian tradition that inspired this index and also because the ideal of harmony is part of its official political discourse. The good news is that it did better on the HI than other large populous countries: no matter what kind of index (comprehensive, noncomprehensive, non-graded, graded), it ranked in the middle. For China to improve on the HI, it should compare itself with countries at the top, not less harmonious societies such as the United States. The most

⁵¹ Perhaps parents in Nordic countries do not educate their children with the idea that the children should make their parents proud, but parental pride might still emerge as a by-product of some other parental values, such as the idea that children should grow up to lead happy and fulfilling lives, and parents will be proud if their children realize this aim. Still, there may be a key cultural difference: in countries with a Confucian background, adult children are typically expected to “repay” their parents for their care, and part of that “repayment” includes the idea that adult children should strive to make parents proud; in Nordic countries, the main point of upbringing may still be individualistic in its essence (as a European friend once said about his child, “my task as a parent is to take a completely dependent being and make him completely independent”).

⁵² See Matt McMillen, “Richer Countries Have Higher Depression Rates,” WebMD, 2011. <http://www.webmd.com/depression/news/20110726/richer-countries-have-higher-depression-rates>. We did not use data on depression in our report because the cross-national data covers only eighteen countries. In principle, more comprehensive and reliable cross-national data on depression might be a good indicator of (lack of) harmony in a country.

obvious point of contrast is Vietnam, which does much better on all four types of harmonious relations. Vietnam outperforms China most strongly in terms of harmony with nature; for China to embark on a less environmentally destructive form of economic development, Vietnam may have lessons to offer.⁵³ Harmony within society is Vietnam's weak point and China should look to other countries to improve in that respect.

Let us end with a reminder that this global Harmony Index is the first of its kind. It is an experiment, with much room for improvement. On the plus side, it has shed light on the importance of social relations neglected by other indices. It was produced at very little cost and without any institutional constraints.⁵⁴ On the minus side, we could not cover many countries due to insufficient data. With a bigger budget, we could carry out our own measurements that would allow us to cover more countries. We could also ask questions that focus more directly on harmony, such as asking people how they would rate themselves according to the four types of harmonious relations.⁵⁵ A more comprehensive index could include other social relations often regarded as important for human well-being, such as ties between friends and relations between people living in cities.⁵⁶ Also, it seems easier to measure the extent of peaceful order (weak harmony) than the extent of respect for diversity (strong harmony), with the consequence that countries like India and Ghana may be unduly penalized,⁵⁷ and countries like Norway may be unduly rewarded. We need more refined measurements for diversity. Finally, an inaugural HI cannot measure changes in the extent of harmony over time, a drawback that can be remedied with more and better-refined HIs in the future.

Acknowledgments

An earlier version of this article was published in *Social Indicators Research* 118, no. 2 (2014): 797–818 (© 2013 Springer). We are grateful to the editors and to two anonymous referees for helpful comments. A

⁵³ At the very least, it means less emphasis on economic growth and more emphasis on environmental sustainability when it comes to evaluating the performance of public officials being considered for promotion. China is moving in this direction (see chapter 1, section 3, and chapter 2, section 3), but Vietnam may have valuable lessons to offer for further improvements (in practice, Vietnam tends to look to China for lessons rather than the other way around).

⁵⁴ Total cost: 749 RMB (122.01 USD), including 220 RMB (35.84 USD) for web page, 500 RMB (81.45 USD) for cover design, and 29 RMB (4.72 USD) for photocopying charges. We did not (try to) get support from the United Nations, the World Economic Forum, the Chinese Communist Party, Goldman Sachs, the Ford Foundation, or any other large organization that typically supports such global indexes.

⁵⁵ For a study that aims at ascertaining how Hong Kong people perceive Hong Kong as a harmonious society, see Simon S. M. Lo and Raymond S. Y. Chan, "Social Harmony in Hong Kong: Level, Determinants, and Policy Implications," *Social Indicators Research* 91, no. 1 (2009): 37–58. For our purposes, such studies would need to be carried out globally.

⁵⁶ But how to measure harmony between friends: the number of Facebook friends? On the increasing importance of ties between "city-zens," see Daniel A. Bell and Avner de-Shalit, *The Spirit of Cities: Why the Identity of a City Matters in a Global Age* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 2013), esp. new preface. For an intriguing effort to measure harmony in cities, see UN-HABITAT, *State of the World's Cities 2008/2009: Harmonious Cities*, 2008. http://www.unhabitat.org/en/inp/Upload/105056_Cover%20page.pdf. The main drawback of this report is that it focuses only on equity and sustainability within cities; we would try to measure respect for diversity as well.

⁵⁷ An example of strong harmony would be the extent of people who speak more than one language in a country (a country with, say, two main language groups that lead separate linguistic lives, like Canada before the 1980s, would not count as strongly harmonious in our sense because the interaction has to be mutually beneficial). Hence, a country like Ghana—where nearly everybody speaks at least three languages—would do better on a harmony index that measures the extent of people who speak more than one language. Unfortunately, we could not find such global measurements.

short version was published in the *Financial Times* (Daniel Bell, “Why We Must Measure National Harmony,” *Financial Times*, 19 Nov. 2013) and we are grateful to the editors of the FT. We are also grateful for discussions with Chenyang Li, Jing Jun, and Tamarshi Jamieson that helped conceptualize this project, as well as to Joseph Carens, Stein Kuhnle, Chenyang Li, Peter Katzenstein, Parag Khanna, Peimin Ni, Paik Wooyeal, Qian Jiang, and Brook Ziporyn for helpful comments on an earlier draft of this article. We would also like to thank conference participants for comments on earlier drafts of this report presented at the Goethe Institute in Hong Kong, 26 February 2013; the Chinese/African Philosophy Colloquium, Shanghai Jiaotong University, 11 May 2013; the conference “Guanzhu jiating jianshe, cujin jiating xingfu—‘Guoji jiating ri’ de Zhongguo xingdong” [Valuing Family Building and Improving Family Happiness—China’s Action on the “International Family Day”], Friendship Hotel, Beijing, 15 May 2013; and the American Philosophical Association (Pacific Division) annual conference in Chicago, 28 February 2014. We are thankful for materials sent by Stephen Angle, Joseph Chan, Krzysztof Gawlikowski, Benedict Kingsbury, Jia Wenshan, Parag Khanna, Hagop Sarkissian, Qian Jiwei, Tan Sek-loong, and Sebastian Woitsch.