

CITATION CLASSICS FROM SOCIAL INDICATORS RESEARCH

# Social Indicators Research Series

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Volume 26

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This new series aims to provide a public forum for single treatises and collections of papers on social indicators research that are too long to be published in our journal *Social Indicators Research*. Like the journal, the book series deals with statistical assessments of the quality of life from a broad perspective. It welcomes the research on a wide variety of substantive areas, including health, crime, housing, education, family life, leisure activities, transportation, mobility, economics, work, religion and environmental issues. These areas of research will focus on the impact of key issues such as health on the overall quality of life and vice versa. An international review board, consisting of Ruut Veenhoven, Joachim Vogel, Ed Diener, Torbjorn Moum, Mirjam A.G. Sprangers and Wolfgang Glatzer, will ensure the high quality of the series as a whole.

*The titles published in this series are listed at the end of this volume.*

# CITATION CLASSICS FROM SOCIAL INDICATORS RESEARCH

*The Most Cited Articles Edited and Introduced  
by Alex C. Michalos*

*Edited by*

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## PREFACE

The idea of publishing some sort of a volume celebrating the first thirty years of publishing *Social Indicators Research* came to me some time early in the twenty-ninth year. When I shared the idea with the publisher's representative, Welmoed Spahr, she was very enthusiastic about it. We both thought we should try to produce a volume in 2004, preferably in time for the November meeting of the International Society for Quality of Life Studies. That implied that the publisher would need the complete manuscript by May 2004. So, we had a clear time frame for getting the job done.

As I reflected on the variety of volumes we might produce, I thought it would be particularly helpful for contemporary and future social indicators researchers to assemble a set of papers that would represent the best that had come out of our journal. The question was: How should we define 'best'? A few fairly elaborate decision procedures based on different criteria were constructed, and each seemed to require more time and other resources than we could spare. I rapidly settled on the idea of using article citation counts as a measure of article quality. I knew it was problematic, but so was everything else I could think of, and citation counts had four distinct advantages. First, such counts were relatively easy to obtain and objectively observable by other researchers. Second, there were about 40 years' of constructive and critical research on the strengths and weaknesses of the use of citation counts as indicators of the quality of research publications. Third, it was possible to provide an overview of that research which would be sufficient to allow readers to make their own judgments about my decision to use this approach. Finally, it would be wonderful if anyone unhappy with this approach would undertake an alternative analysis that would provide some confirmation or disconfirmation of the results reported here.

All the papers reprinted here appear as they were originally published, except for minor corrections of typos. In 1978, at the ninth World Congress of Sociology in Uppsala, I presented a short paper describing the origins of the journal. Because most of the people interested in the papers in this collection will have some interest in knowing how it all started and that paper has never been published, I have included it immediately following my introductory essay. Since it was written over 25 years ago, both its author and the publisher (D. Reidel) have changed quite a bit. I must say that it gives me considerable pleasure to be able to report that I have enjoyed our long relationship immensely, and I look forward to many more years of collaboration. When I read that John Maynard Keynes took over the *Economic Journal* from F.Y. Edgeworth in 1912 and edited it for the next 33 years, it occurred to me that 30 years is not too long a time to edit a journal.

Besides, for me, next to writing up my own research, editing other people's research is the most enjoyable academic activity I do.

I would like to thank Welmoed Spahr and Kluwer Academic Publishers for helping me produce this volume. Also, I would like to thank Bob Cummins and Ruut Veenhoven for providing me with electronic versions of their papers, which helped reduce our production costs.