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Children's Rights, School Psychology, and Well-Being Assessments

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Abstract This paper addresses interrelationships among the notions of children's rights, school psychological services, and child well-being assessments. Increasing attention has been paid in recent years to the notions of children's rights, as best expressed in the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC). In the current paper, we discuss the relevance of the emerging conceptions of children's rights to the school context. We argue that given the centrality of schooling to children's lives, school psychologists, who are serving in the role of child advocates, are in a unique position to contribute to integrating the children's rights movement and educational progress. Situated within the context of the CRC and the practice of school psychology, we further discuss how advances in child well-being assessment can inform the implementation and evaluation of CRC principles and related policies. We propose that the use of evidence-based, developmentally appropriate objective and subjective measures of well-being should contribute a key component to meaningful assessments of the status of children's rights and well-being.

Keywords Children's rights · School psychology · Well-being assessment · Convention on the Rights of the Child

Children's rights are a relatively new idea. During most of human history, children did not enjoy any rights. Only during the past century have children moved from the status of property (and being considered a non-entity) to the status of human beings. However, the first recognition of children's rights in the nineteenth century and during most of the twentieth century was based on the view of children as passive, weak, and vulnerable creatures, and therefore in need of protection; or unruly and threatening and therefore in need of control (Hallett and Prout 2003). During this period, children were perceived as

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"human becomings" and were not recognized as full human beings with freedoms and rights (Alaimo and Klug 2002). This concept of children led to the denial of self-determination and autonomy rights, which was justified by arguing that children are basically incompetent in regard to the adult characteristics, and inclined towards sin or highly vulnerable to such inclinations and distortions of development (Henriksen 1982; Zelizer 1985). Choice rights of children were ignored until the middle of the twentieth century (Hart and Pavlovic 1991).

It was not until the second half of the twentieth century that the focus of children's rights shifted from nurturance rights to rights of participation and self-determination, based on the assertion that children are legal persons who are entitled to many of the same rights as adults (Peterson-Badali and Ruck 2008). Increasing awareness of children's self-determination rights has led to a global move toward giving children and adolescents a greater degree of autonomy in the decisions affecting their own lives and development (Cherney and Shing 2008). Today children are more frequently seen as having the right to participate in decisions about their own lives, as opposed to the view that children's rights only involve the need to be taken care of or the need to be protected (for a good historical review see: Hart 1991; Takanishi 1978; Ruck and Horn 2008).

1 The CRC

The increased awareness of children's rights is reflected in the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC), which was adopted by the U.N. General Assembly in 1989. The CRC has been ratified by all signatories with the exception of the United States and Somalia, and to date is the most comprehensive and most widely ratified human rights treaty. It addresses a full range of rights for children, including 54 articles addressing issues ranging from the basic right to survival and development, freedom of thought, expression of opinion, and the right to participate in decision-making. The CRC offers a normative framework for understanding children's well-being, as it promotes a holistic view of child development and well-being, giving equal weight to children's civic, political, social, economic, and cultural rights (Ben-Arieh 2008). As for today, it can be claimed that the CRC has had a remarkable impact on how children and youth are viewed and treated around the world (Hart 1997).

A critical and important aspect of the CRC is its emphasis on children's and adolescents' right to actively participate in society. The CRC affirms not only the child's right to protection from harm and abuse, but also the right to develop into an autonomous adult, and to have a voice in matters that affect and concern the individual child (Alaimo and Klug 2002; Freeman 1998; Partridge 2005). The Convention prescribes that direction and guidance of the child's exercise of participation rights should be applied "in a manner consistent with the evolving capacities of the child" (Article 5), meaning that the right to participate must be suitable to the developmental capacities of the child as well as to the specific mission or activity the child takes part in (Flekkoy and Kaufman 1997; Melton 2006).

The notion of children's rights refers to a continuum of rights: legal rights (law and regulations) that already have been recognized by law within a particular jurisdiction at one extreme, and philosophical rights which would likely be legally recognized if brought before a court in the middle or statements of what the law ought to be at the other extreme (Rogers and Wrightsman 1978). The CRC includes rights from all the spectrum, so it is common today to refer to children's rights as those rights based on moral, ethical, and

natural reasoning; which extend beyond the legal rights adopted in each country (Flekkoy and Kaufman 1997; Peterson-Badali and Ruck 2008).

Since the adoption of the CRC, the commitment to young people's rights to both nurturance and self-determination is evident within the legal, medical, and mental health professions, as well as institutions that serve children and adolescents, such as social service agencies, hospitals, health clinics, and schools (Ruck and Horn 2008). The current paper will discuss the relevance and importance of children's rights in one of the most significant contexts in children's lives, the education sphere—the school, with a special emphasis on the function of school psychologists.

2 Education, Schooling and Children's Rights

Education is considered to be one of the most important aspects of society. Great thinkers, including those from old Greece through the twentieth Century, have identified education as a primary way to build a humanistic society, which is also one of the major goals of the CRC (Scherer and Hart 1999).

Education (and schooling) was one of the first rights granted to children, already in the eighteenth and nineteenth century, as school became the major "work setting" for children, even if schooling and education emerged on the basis of saving society, rather than as a human right of children. The goals of schools and education included the preservation of the past and the status quo of society, assurance of a desired future for society, preparation of a citizenry capable of determining and directing its own future and preparation for work and responsible citizenship. These themes express the intention of society to produce individuals who will be useful to society, and the attempt to control the population and the future (Hart and Pavlovic 1991).

As a result, educational systems have historically treated children as incompetents, property and not yet persons, to be firmly directed by authority toward common, general goals. The education culture has traditionally included harsh discipline, including a variety of corporal and psychological punishments. The school setting has been oppressive in its use of fear and intimidation as control measures, and it has denied children opportunities for self-determination (Hart 1987, 1991; Henriksen 1982; Plumb 1972; Takanishi 1978). Schooling and education somewhat parallels, in time and purpose, the development of prisons and mental health institutions, as collectively, these institutions have attempted to civilize, normalize, and discipline people (Hemelsoet 2012).

Children's status in school and the education system as well as the attitude of the educational system towards children has shifted coincident with the increased acceptance of children's rights and the acknowledgment of the child as a full human being. As a result of the shift in children status during the twentieth century, education has become a right of the child rather than an instrument of the society to shape and design the child according to its desire. As the notion of children's rights has emerged, education no longer primarily served a particular societal order, but aimed at individual well-being (Hemelsoet 2012).

The "new" schooling is expressed in the CRC, which places a high value on education. The CRC stresses that young people should be encouraged to reach their *highest* levels of educational attainment. More specifically, the CRC dedicates two articles to the right to education: article 28 refers to the right to education and article 29 to objectives and goals of education.

Article 28 states that all children have the right to a primary education, which should be free. "States Parties recognize the right of the child to education, and with a view to

achieving this right progressively and on the basis of equal opportunity". This article also states that discipline in schools should respect children's dignity, without the use of violence.

Article 29 set the goals of education. According to this article, children's education should develop each child's personality, talents and abilities to the fullest. It should encourage children to respect others' human rights, and their own and other cultures. It should also help them learn to live peacefully, protect the environment, and respect other people.

In addition to these two articles, one must remember that the full development of the child according to articles 28 and 29 could not be achieved if any of the prescriptions, protections, and supports embodied in the other articles of the CRC are not assured (Scherer and Hart 1999). In actual fact, most of the articles, although they are not specifically directed toward education, are clearly relevant to the right to education. School as an out-of-home placement required by the society must uphold high standards to assure that all the standards of the CRC are met (Melton 1991).

Thus, children's rights to schooling and education must follow the three principles of the CRC: (a) Provision—schools and education should be easily and readily accessible to all children and provide them with opportunities for development. (b) Protection—schools and education should be a protected haven for children, free of physical, mental or any other danger. (c) Participation—schools and the education system needs to assure a variety of participation and self-determination rights, such as freedom of association, protection of privacy, freedom to express opinions, and freedom of thought, conscience, and religion.

Recent years have shown a shift toward a focus on children's self-determination rights. This shift requires special attention in the education context, as it is characterized by a societal context where adult authority and power is almost absolute (Smith 2007). A new context of children's rights calls schools to respect the perspectives and the decision-making capabilities of young people. Children should participate in selection of education goals, policies, and practices. They should be involved, according to their capacities and interests, at all stages in the formulation and pursuit of their rights and education (Melton 1987). Implementing the right to participate in the school context mean that regulations and behavior codes are articulated with input from the children, classroom teaching is democratic, and children, from a young age, are provided numerous meaningful opportunities to participate in all aspects of school functioning (Covell 2010).

The right to participation is important not just for moral reasons, it is also has direct impact on the well-being of children. Early opportunities for democratic participation nourish a sense of collective ownership and responsibility as well as skills in solving problems in collaborative ways. Perhaps most importantly, children develop a belief in themselves as actors who have the power to impact the adverse conditions that shape their lives. They develop confidence and learn attitudes and practical lessons about how they can improve the quality of their lives. Being respected and included as responsible participants in and not just recipients of education, enhances children's confidence and well-being, and empowers them to be active agents in their lives and learning (see Coyne 2006; Fletcher et al. 2000; Glanville 1999; Smith 2007; Weithorn 1998; Youniss et al. 1997).

Rights-respecting school are schools in which children's rights discussions and practices are taking place in the formal curriculum, in addition to the modeling of rights in school policies and culture (Covell 2010). Thus, children are educated about their rights and how to understand them. In recent years, there has been growing international interest in programs for children's rights education in schools that aim to educate children about their rights and responsibilities under the CRC (Howe and Covell 2007; Johnny 2005; Osler and Starkey

1998). To begin with, when children learn about their human rights, countries are fulfilling their obligation—upon ratifying the Convention—to educate children about their rights (Howe and Covell 2005; Johnny 2005; Lundy 2007; Krappmann 2010; Osler and Starkey 1998, 2005). Under article 29, countries are obligated to direct children's education to the "development of respect for human rights." And under article 42, countries are "to make the principles and provisions of the Convention widely known, by appropriate and active means, to adults and children alike." Schools are the obvious means to do this. Second, apart from these legal obligations, children's rights education is important as it has the potential for increasing favorable human rights attitudes and behaviors (Covell and Howe 1999, 2001; Covell et al. 2008; Decoene and DeCock 1996; Howe and Covell 2005; Murray 2002).

Benefits of right education programs have been observed. First, children who participate in a children's rights education program show higher self-esteem and higher levels of perceived peer and teacher support and indicate more support for the rights of others (for example see, Covell et al. 2002; Decoene and DeCock 1996). A second benefit involves the significant contribution to engaging children in school (Covell 2010). Rights-based schooling increases children's enjoyment of school, self-esteem, academic motivation, respect for the rights of others, pro-social behaviors, and levels of participation (Covell and Howe 1999, 2001, 2005; Covell et al. 2008; Decoene and DeCock 1996; Murray 2002). Moreover, teachers in rights-respecting schools report lower levels of burnout when they perceive their students to be more engaged in school (Covell et al. 2009).

In sum, a children's rights agenda has an important and essential relevance for the school context. The CRC not only prescribes children's right to education but also articulates standards for the well-being of children to be fulfilled in the school context. Those standards include both nurturance rights and self-determination rights of the child. School professional staff has the primary responsibility to promote children's well-being and the realization of children's rights. School psychologists are in a unique position to do so, as described in the following section.

3 School Psychologists as Child Advocates

How does the profession of school psychology intersect with the CRC? In the early years, the role of many school psychologists in many nations was limited to that of "gatekeepers" for special education services (Merrell et al. 2006). In recent decades, the function of special education assessments has broadened in scope, with more consideration of additional personal and environmental factors that contribute to the children's unique strengths and needs and associated interventions (Fagan and Wise 2007). The roles of school psychologists in many nations have expanded to incorporate other services including counseling, consultation, and systems interventions (Christenson and Conoley 1992; Farrell et al. 2007). Most recently, a more preventative approach has been a consistent theme in the delivery of school psychological services to children in special education *and* regular education (Sheridan and Gutkin 2000).

Although the nature of school psychology has evolved over time, a stable, but implicit core component of its identity has been child advocacy (e.g., Catterall and Hinds 1972; Hart 1991; Hyman and Schreiber 1974, 1975, 1977; Mearig 1974). From its inception, school psychology has held the implicit assumption that a core value of the profession involves serving as advocates to promote the best interests of children through effective educational and mental health services. The CRC supports school psychologists in their efforts to better serve as child advocates.

A definition of "child advocacy" can be found in the work of Kahn et al. (1973). They studied the child welfare system during the early 1970s and defined it as "intervention on behalf of children in relation to those services and institutions that impinge upon their lives [italics by original author]" (p. 63). According to this formulation, the function of child advocates is to (a) examine the presence/absence of various factors that influence the lives of children, and (b) provide interventions based on children's needs and rights.

The ecological framework (Bronfenbrenner 1979) has provided a solid conceptual foundation for school psychologists' advocacy for child rights with respect to the role of *ecosystems* in promoting children's development, learning, and optimal well-being. Specifically, children's growth and development occurs within specific ecological contexts, which mainly include family, school, peers, and community as well as the broader culture. These contexts are influential in children's development and well-being, through complex social, physical, economic, and psychological factors, as well as the interaction between these factors and a child's individual characteristics. However, children's environments are not always beneficial; on the contrary, sometimes they are harmful (e.g., child maltreatment). Unlike adults who usually have the power to protect their rights, children often lack the power and democratic rights to protect themselves in adverse situations. Therefore, children need adults who have the willingness and ability to advocate for them and who can collaborate with different contextual systems. School psychologists are in an ideal position to carry out this mission, because school psychologists' work in "mesosystems" and potentially serve as liaisons to all the ecosystems that influence the child's well-being, learning, and development (International School Psychology Association and Child Rights Education for Professionals 2010). For instance, school psychologists provide a continuum of services at different levels of the child's ecosystem, including individual students (assessment, intervention, counseling), individual caregivers or service providers (consultation and collaboration with parents and teachers), microsystems (home-school collaboration, school-community interactions), and macrosystems (consultation services at school, local community or national levels; legal activities; media contributions).

To serve as a child advocate, another key principle is that the child is specifically identified as the client in the service delivery system (Kahn et al. 1973). For school psychologists who work within organizations (e.g., schools), this means viewing the child as the client whose welfare must be advanced through the delivery of professional services (APA 2002, 2010; NASP 2010). Understanding and adhering to this principle is crucial, especially when conflicts of interest arise in the organization. School psychologists should keep in mind the ethical guideline (APA 2002, 2010; NASP 2010) that as professional service providers, they must recognize the rights of all parties involved in the education of children, but always define the child as the client so that it is the interests of the child that are foremost (McMahon 1993).

4 Implication of Children's Rights Approach in School Psychologists' Practice

In serving in the role of child advocate, school psychologists have the opportunity to contribute to integrate the children's rights movement and educational progress. The CRC has provided relevant guidelines to develop and apply a child rights approach to professional work in education (Hart and Pavlovic 1991). School psychologists (as represented by professional organizations) particularly have made commitments to the Convention. For example, the National Association of School Psychologists (NASP) reaffirms that school

psychologists are responsible and well positioned to advance child rights in individual practice as well as through system-level and public policy advocacy (NASP, no date).

The application of a child rights-based approach provides a conceptual framework as well as tangible strategies and opportunities for child rights knowledge and skills that can be applied in school psychologists' work (International School Psychology Association and Child Rights Education for Professionals 2010). In concert with the aforementioned definition of child advocacy, the practice of child advocacy was also suggested by Kahn et al. (1973) as a process of intervention, typically with "a search for devices, targets, methods, rationales, and sanctions to make programs and services more responsive and more available to children" (p. 65). Moreover, a child advocacy approach should also involve activities "to change or bend institutional networks so that they serve children better" (p. 64) (Kahn et al. 1973). Thus, to better serve as child advocates, school psychologists should take a more active role in promoting systems level change, aiming to improve the structure or function of relevant organizations, such as schools and other community and national service agencies.

In summary, school psychologists must respect and protect child rights at all levels of their work, from individual practice to working with broader systems in children's lives to influence public policy. School psychologists and professional organizations also need to work together, as well as collaborate with other child-serving agents, in an effort to protect and advance children's rights and promote optimal children development, learning, and well-being (International School Psychology Association and Child Rights Education for Professionals 2010).

With the renaissance of the children's rights movement and the emergence of positive psychology in school psychology (Huebner and Gilman 2003; Jimerson et al. 2004), the focus of school psychologists' professional practice is shifting from a child pathology-based orientation (simply working reactively to ameliorate the consequences of deficits in development, learning and well-being), to a more strengths-based, well-being focused orientation (working proactively to foster optimal outcomes in development, learning and well-being). One promising change is that both practitioners and scholars have begun to increasingly recognize the importance and value of listening to "children's voices", how they feel, and how they think about their lives—which is a fundamental right of personhood that should be met for all children (Ben-Arieh et al. 2009). Furthermore, "inclusion of their perspective and active participation of children in negotiating and asserting their rights will increase the validity of standards promoted and will indicate that children are valued as persons at each point in the development process" (Hart 1991, p. 57). Consequently, children's subjective well-being has become a new important indicator (in contrast to objective indicators such as health and academic and behavioral performance) in measuring the quality of children's development, learning and well-being. No doubt, school psychologists can play a pivotal advocacy role in promoting respect for and realization of children's objective and subjective well-being, taking advantage of their uniquely important position within children's environment, as well as their professional expertise, insight, and experience.

5 Well-Being Assessments, School Psychology, and Children's Rights Implementation

How can research on SWB assessments of children's well-being in the context of the practice of school psychology inform CRC accountability? Melton (2005) noted that the overarching principle of the CRC involves promoting the dignity of children. The

implication of this central principle is that adherence to the CRC implies that nations must do more than simply comply with each of the CRC requirements. Such a notion involves accountability practices in which adherence to the CRC is measured by more than "simple check-offs of whether particular practices are followed" (Melton 2005, p. 918). In contrast, Melton argues that the most useful assessments of CRC practices would involve thoughtful evaluations related to the greater question of "Is my country learning from the CRC?" This question should be addressed in light of the effectiveness of the political and legal structures created to promote CRC requirements for children. We argue that such evaluations must *directly* take into account the evaluations of the impact of those structures and policies on the well-being of the intended recipients, that is, the children themselves. Such evaluations should include children's *subjective* perceptions of their well-being as well as information related to the objective conditions of their lives. As noted above, school psychologists who serve as liaisons among children and their various environments are in a unique position to develop and monitor well-being assessment systems through children's near universal participation in schools.

What is well-being? Well-being has been defined in many ways. Ben-Arieh (2008) has summarized the trends in current conceptualizations of child well-being, including but not limited to: (1) the child is the unit of analysis; (2) children's current subjective experiences must be taken into account; (3) well-being is multidimensional in nature; however, summary indices are useful; and (4) well-being is more than survival or the absence of pathology, but rather includes positive indicators that reflect "thriving" or "optimal functioning" beyond a neutral point. All of these trends in defining and measuring child well-being are consistent with the CRC framework.

Diener's (2000) definition of subjective well-being (SWB) has been widely employed in research and practical discourse. SWB "refers to people's evaluations of their lives-evaluations that are both affective and cognitive" (p. 34). SWB thus includes individuals' cognitive evaluations of the overall quality of their lives and with specific domains [i.e., life satisfaction (LS)] as well as reports of affective well-being, reflecting the frequency of various positive and negative emotions experienced over time. It is important to note that although there can be overlap between LS judgments and affect reports, the two types of indicators are distinguishable. For one example, individuals can report frequent negative emotions over time along with high LS. Furthermore, differential correlates have been revealed in relation to cognitive and affective indicators. Using a large international data set, Diener et al. (2010) demonstrated that income was more strongly related to measures of LS than measures of affect whereas feelings of autonomy were more strongly related to affect than LS.

Objective and subjective indicators of well-being differ in terms of the perspective from which lives are judged. On one hand, objective indicators are independent of an individual's subjective values and norms (Sumner 1996). Examples of objective indicators include community school dropout rates, divorce rates, home ownership, and medical services. On the other hand, subjective indicators reflect individuals' perspectives based on their own needs, interests, and values. Subjective indicators include individuals' evaluations of the quality of their living environments, financial resources, and family relationships. The two types of indicators may or may not show high levels of correspondence. For example, a list of objective indicators of well-being might include "opportunities to participate in structured extracurricular activities." Some youth may be satisfied with limited opportunities to participate in such activities despite others' (e.g., researchers') notions of their importance for youth.

Objective and subjective social indicators can provide useful information, but both demonstrate limitations. Diener et al. (2009) have elaborated on these weaknesses. A major

limitation of objective indicators involves the fact that the development of any list of "objective" indicators must ultimately reflect the values of the developers, thus allowing disagreements about the importance of various indicators. Another limitation of objective indicators relates to measurement problems. Although the data that constitute objective indicators are in principle observable by everyone, examples of difficulties in interpreting seemingly simple data abound. For one example, Diener et al. discuss the difficulties in interpreting an index of number of years of schooling based on differences in content, quality, and time spent in school across schools, regions, and nations. Measures of objective life circumstances thus provide incomplete information about quality of life because the same circumstances can be valued and/or interpreted differently by different individuals.

Subjective indicators are also not without flaws. Because the strengths and limitations are different for each set of indicators, Diener et al. (2009) argue that both approaches provide useful information; subjective indicators should supplement objective indicators (see also Land et al. 2007). Listings of critical indicators can be interpreted taking into account the SWB measures given that any important life condition should be reflected in overall well-being judgments. Furthermore, SWB reports should be able to help determine whether and to what extent a particular objective indicator contributes to a persons' overall well-being (Land et al. 2007).

SWB indicators have been conceptualized in several ways. In line with Diener's (2000) three-factor model, the measures described in this section will be limited to measures of LS and generic measures of positive and negative affect. Self-reported assessments of SWB, developed primarily for children of ages 8–18, have received the most attention to date (see Huebner et al. 2007; Proctor et al. 2009).

LS measures have been based on three distinct theoretical models: general, global, and domain-specific LS. Instruments based on general models of life satisfaction assume that overall or "general" life satisfaction is comprised of bottom-up judgments of satisfaction with specific life domains (e.g., family, peers, and schooling). Thus, a general LS score on such instruments reflects a simple (or weighted) sum of scores on items representing responses across specific domains. Instruments that attempt to assess global or LS "as a whole" assume that LS is most appropriately evaluated by using only items that are domain-free (e.g., my life is going well) versus domain-specific (e.g., my *school* life is going well). Differing from conceptualizations of *general* LS scores, in which the number and nature of the domains are pre-determined by the instrument developer, *global* life satisfaction scales allow individual students to formulate their overall judgments based of their own criteria.

Multidimensional measures have also been developed with the intent of eliciting respondents' judgments across various life domains that are considered to be important to most, if not all, individuals of a particular age group. Such measures therefore yield profiles of individuals' reports of LS, providing more differentiated, contextualized reports. Hence, a student who has average global LS, along with high friend and low family satisfaction can be differentiated from one who has average global LS, along with low friend and high family satisfaction. The resulting context-specific profiles may provide more precise information relevant to designing healthy environments for individual students or groups of students.

Examples of global and domain-specific measures of life satisfaction and general measures of positive and negative affect are discussed in Huebner and Hills (2013). These instruments include the Students' Life Satisfaction Scale (Huebner 1991a, b), Multidimensional Students' Life Satisfaction Scale (Huebner 1994), Brief Multidimensional

Students' Life Satisfaction Scale (Seligson et al. 2003, 2005), and Positive and Negative Affect Schedule-Child Version. Strengths and limitations of each scale are highlighted. Although these and other measures may not be without shortcomings, overall, the literature suggests that SWB measures for children (ages 8–18) demonstrate acceptable reliability and validity for a variety of purposes (Huebner and Hills 2013; Proctor et al. 2009).

Randolph et al. (2009) provide a good example of an integrated model of objective and SWB indicators. Their model includes four levels of indicators of well-being. The highest level refers to a student's overall quality of life. The second level includes the three lower-order components of frequencies of positive emotions, frequencies of negative emotions, and global LS. The third level includes judgments of satisfaction regarding major, specific life domains, such as family, friends, school, self, and living environment, all of which have been shown to be statistically distinguishable among children (see Huebner 1994). The fourth level incorporates key, empirically-validated conditions associated with each domain. For example, several research-based variables could be included that contribute to satisfaction with school experiences, such as classroom organization variables, school safety conditions, teacher behaviors, peer relationships, family involvement in schooling, family socioeconomic status). An empirically-supported array of variables could also be developed for satisfaction with family, friends, and other key life domains. This last level includes, but is not limited to objective indicators.

The Randolph et al. (2009) model reflects the complexities of comprehensive assessments of well-being. Well-being assessments could thus include children's subjective global cognitive and affective reports along with relevant, domain-specific, subjective reports. Furthermore, the global and/or context-specific measures could then be complemented by key objective conditions. Unique assessment plans could be constructed to meet various evaluation goals. For instance, the evaluation of the implementation of policies and/or programs to address children's right to appropriate educational experiences might target school-related conditions (e.g., student–teacher interactions) more than community-level conditions, depending upon the evidence base and the particular criterion variables selected to reflect beneficial outcomes.

Like the approach of Bradshaw et al. (2007), this proposed assessment model is consistent with general principles of the normative framework of the CRC. First, this method is consistent with the need to assess and promote the well-being of *all* children, without reference to gender, caste, creed, race, economic or family background, or physical and mental ability. That is, generic SWB assessment instruments have been developed that are appropriate for general populations of children. Second, the method is consistent with the need to consider the best interests of the child. A major component of the integrated model includes self-report data, utilizing the child's viewpoint as the basic unit of analysis. Third, the method is consistent with the need for survival and development, which implies multidimensional and systemic conceptual models and associated assessment procedures, such as those identified above. Finally, the model is in accord with the need to respect the unique views of the children, acknowledging their rights to have their views listened to and considered in decision-making concerning their lives. Furthermore, the proposed method incorporates an emphasis on *positive* conditions and experiences as well as negative ones, given that the SWB indicators allow for differentiated responses above a neutral point of well-being.

As noted previously, many school psychologists provide services at three levels of service delivery, all of which can be informed by well-being data. Services at Tier 1 involve universal assessments and instructional/intervention activities for all students in a given context (e.g., grade level instruction in a school). An example of the use of SWB data

at this level can be found in studies of mental health screening using the Dual-Factor Model of Mental Health (Greenspoon and Saklofske 2001), in which researchers have identified the incremental utility of incorporating positive subjective indicators along with traditional negative ones (e.g., internalizing and externalizing behavior) to identify meaningful groups of children that would not be identified using negative indicators alone. For example, Suldo and Shaffer (2008) and Antaramian et al. (2010) identified a group of students who reported non-significant levels of behavior problems and low SWB who showed significantly lower academic, interpersonal, and physical functioning in school compared to students who reported non-significant levels of problem behaviors and high SWB.

Tier 2 services involve more intensive, sometimes group level services, delivered as part of *regular* education programs, for students experiencing difficulties. Huebner and Hills (2013) provide a case study of the use of SWB measures to identify student assets and environmental resources for intervention planning in this context. Tier 3 services involve assessments and programming for students with disabilities. Brantley et al. (2002) provide an example of the utility of SWB data at this level. In their study, secondary school students' reports of SWB were measured by multidimensional LS reports. Not only were differences revealed between students with and without mental disabilities, but complex differences were also revealed across domains within special education student group as a function of amount of time they spent in special education classrooms. Such use of SWB data, in conjunction with objective data, is consistent with recommendations of some researchers (e.g., Frisch 2006; Gilman and Huebner 2003) that SWB data should be collected routinely to monitor the effects of academic, behavioral, and medical interventions applied to individuals and/or groups of children. Their recommendations assume that assessments of the impact of interventions should include students' perceptions of their quality of life as well as targeted behaviors and academic outcomes. In this fashion, an intervention that both improves functioning (e.g., reduces symptoms of an anxiety disorder or chronic health condition) and also improves subjective quality of life would be distinguishable and preferable to an intervention that improves functioning but is perceived to reduce SWB of a student or students.

The incorporation of objective and SWB information within the context of multi-trait, multi-method, multi-occasion assessment systems is thus advocated to evaluate the success of societies in implementing policies and procedures to promote children's rights and overall well-being. The multi-method component would include collection of objective well-being data using objective sources (e.g., parent and teacher judgments) and indices (e.g., student dropout rates, teen pregnancies) as well as SWB data. The multi-trait component would require multidimensional indexes, such as domain-based LS and positive and negative affect reports. The multi-occasion component would necessitate the collection of systematic, longitudinal data across meaningful time periods. The incorporation of subjective data is critical to assess the goodness of fit between child-focused policies and interventions and children's cognitive and emotional well-being. Although efforts to improve the lives of children are likely to be based on "good" motivations and "good" expected outcomes, the results of such efforts should be carefully monitored to determine their actual (vs intended) effects on the subjective and objective lives of children. A central principle of the CRC has been that children's rights monitoring efforts should include the voices of the children themselves, especially their judgments of SWB. Children's perceptions of the nature and impact of life conditions can differ from those of adults (e.g., parents, teachers), suggesting that multiple perspectives need to be taken into account (Ben-Arieh et al. 2009). In sum, the use of evidence-based, developmentally appropriate

objective and subjective measures of well-being, assessed over multiple time periods, would ensure a key component of meaningful assessments of the status of children's rights in given contexts (e.g., ages, genders, cultures, nations).

6 Conclusion

The CRC poses great challenges and sets standards for the well-being of children in the education context. The CRC rights constitute a relevant framework for the safeguarding and promoting of child well-being in schools, including (a) Provision rights—schools and education should be easily and readily accessible to all children and provide them with opportunities for development. (b) Protection rights—schools and education should protected children from physical, mental or any other danger. (c) Participation rights—schools and the education system need to assure a variety of participation and self-determination rights.

The CRC also necessitates the development of valid assessments systems for accountability purposes. The integrated model described herein should be useful with respect to Casas' (1997) description of good children's rights research, which seeks to (1) understand the situation or status of individuals or groups of children, (2) monitor progress with respect to the implementation of policies and procedures to ensure children's rights, and (3) evaluate the effects of interventions or political policies. Also, as suggested by Schalock and Alonso (2002), well-being/quality of life research provides a (1) sensitizing notion, providing a frame of reference highlighting the individual's perspective of the "good life", (2) psychosocial construct that yields a model for assessing the core domains, and (3) unifying theme that affords a systematic framework to apply well-being oriented policies and practices. In short, an integrated objective and subjective model of well-being, such as the one described herein, should provide a solid foundation for supporting systematic research and policy agendas with respect to understanding, monitoring, and enhancing efforts to promote the rights and well-being of children.

To reiterate, according to Melton (2005), the key assessment question underlying the treaty is—Is my country learning from the CRC? (Melton 2005). Only when nations have in place systematic, integrated assessment systems, such as the one described herein, to monitor children's objective *and* subjective well-being will they begin have the ability to begin to address such a question with data derived from children themselves as well as other data. Given their interface with the multiple converging systems in children's lives, school psychologists should be well-positioned to contribute to large- and small-scale assessments of children's well-being and to advocate for their well-being and rights.

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