

An Ecological, Relationship-Based Model of Children's Subjective Well-Being in 11 Countries



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Children's Subjective Well-Being

- Children's self-assessment of their own lives
- Important indicator of developmental health and well-being (Ben-Arieh, 2010; Casas et al., 2013)
- Individual and contextual factors with geographic and cultural variation contribute to children's subjective well-being (Broberg, 2012; Dinisman & Rees, 2014; Legace-Suguin & Case, 2010)



Ecological, Relationship Based Model of Children's Subjective Well-Being

An ecological, relationship-based model of children's subjective well-being recognizes the bidirectional influences between children, their contexts (including home and family, life and neighborhood, school, and peers), and their well-being (indicated by life satisfaction, mental health and self-image, Bronfenbrenner, 1989; Lawler et al., 2015a, 2015b; Newland et al., 2014; Newland et al., 2015)



Children's Worlds: International Survey of Children's Well-Being

- Children's Worlds collects representative data from numerous countries on 8, 10, and 12 year old children's perceptions of their own lives as measures of their subjective well-being, $N = 34,500$ (Dinisman & Rees, 2014) <http://www.isciweb.org/>
- Validity and reliability of the measures are well-established (e.g. Casas & Rees, 2015)
- The US Principal Investigators for Children's Worlds are at the University of South Dakota
- US sample of children, $n = 1,800$



Variables Tested as Predictors of Children's SWB

- Age, gender, number of residences, residential status
- Home environment, family relationships, parent involvement
- Family financial resources, life stress, neighborhood quality
- Teacher relationships, school climate, school satisfaction
- Peer relationships



Variables Included as Indicators of Children's SWB

- Life Satisfaction
- Mental Health
- Self-Image



Model Development, Step 1: 12 Year Olds in Rural US Communities

Subjective well-being for children in a rural US community (7th graders/12 year olds, $n = 149$, pilot data). Regression and bootstrap analyses found that **male gender, number of residences, school satisfaction, and family, teacher, and peer relationships** predicted 1 or more of the subjective well-being indicators: life satisfaction, mental health, and self-image (Newland et al., 2014).



Model Development, Step 2: 10 and 12 Year Olds in Rural US Communities

Predictors of subjective well-being for children in rural US communities (10 and 12 year olds, $N = 1,286$). Regression and bootstrap analyses showed that **all variables significantly predicted** 1 or more SWB indicator(s), but the strongest and most consistent predictors were **family, teacher and peer relationships**, as well as **gender (male), school climate, and school satisfaction**. There were some differences in prediction across age groups (Newland et al., 2015).

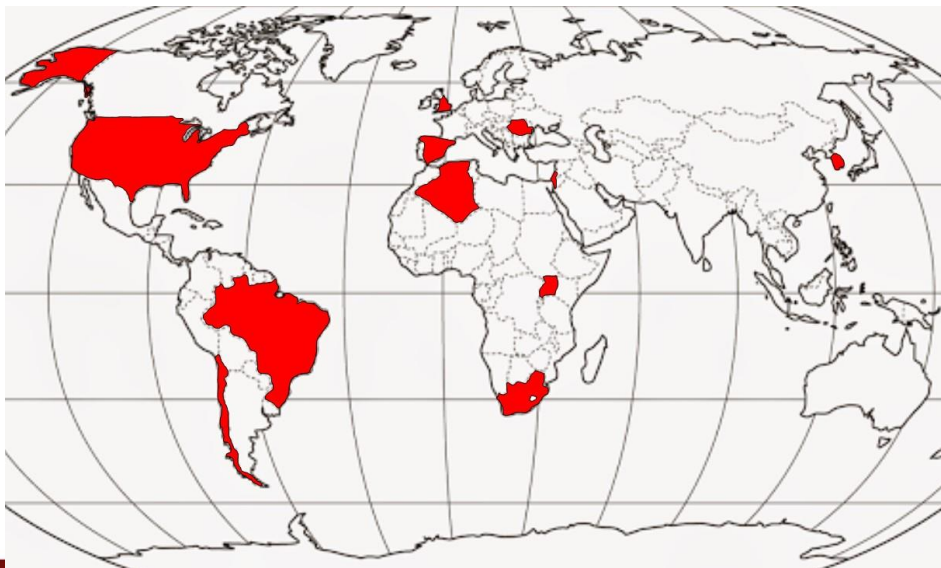


Model Development, Step 3: 12 Year Olds: US & 10 Other Countries

Predictors of subjective well-being for 12 year old children in the US ($n = 784$) and 10 other countries: Algeria, Brazil, Chile, England, Israel, Romania, South Africa, South Korea, Spain, Uganda (randomly selected $n = 784$). Regression analyses found that **all variables significantly predicted** 1 or more SWB indicator(s), but the strongest and most consistent predictors were **family, teacher and peer relationships**, as well as **gender (male), school climate and satisfaction, and neighborhood quality**, with differences between samples (Lawler et al., 2015a)



Children's Worlds: 12 Year Olds in 11 Countries



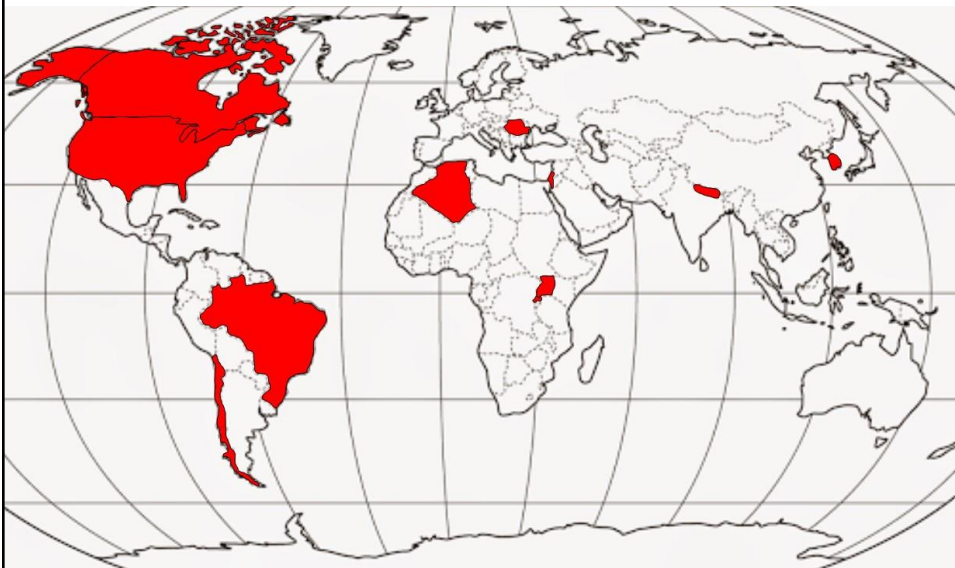


Model Development, Step 4: 10 Year Olds: US & 10 Other Countries

Predictors of subjective well-being for 10 year old children in the US ($n = 502$) and 10 other countries: Algeria, Brazil, Canada, Chile, Israel, Nepal, Romania, Rwanda, South Korea, and Uganda (randomly selected $n = 502$). Regression analyses found that **all variables except gender significantly predicted** 1 or more SWB indicator(s), but the strongest and most consistent predictors were **family, teacher and peer relationships, as well as school satisfaction and neighborhood quality**, with differences between samples (Lawler et al., 2015b).



Children's Worlds: 10 Year Olds in 11 Countries



International Relevance

- Across 11 countries, relational, school, gender, and neighborhood variables were the strongest predictors of children's well-being at 10 and 12 years old
- Teacher relationships were inversely related to child well-being in both the 10- and 12-year-old US samples and in the 10-year-old international sample, suggesting that children who are struggling in school may seek out teachers for support.
- Findings strongly suggest the relevance of an ecological, relationship-based model of children's subjective well-being in examining international samples of children.

Limitations

1. Cross-sectional design
2. Representativeness of samples
3. Samples may not be compatible
4. Self-report data
5. Lower levels of internal reliability on Home Environment and School Climate scales
6. Possible selection bias and underrepresentation of some groups, e.g. as at-risk children not purposively sampled
7. Differences between countries not fully explored (see Casas & Rees, 2015; Rees & Dinisman, 2015)

Implications

- An ecological, relationship-based model of children's subjective well-being provides a framework for assessing children's well-being in various cultural and environmental contexts
- Additional research using the ecological, relationship-based model within and between countries is warranted (and is in progress)
- Qualitative research is needed to triangulate the findings and add "voices" to these data (also in progress)

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