Assessment of Life Satisfaction in Children as a Means of Prevention and Identification of Risks

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Assessment of Life Satisfaction in Children as a Means of Prevention and Identification of Risks

Abstract
Children today are faced with risks which can adversely affect their short- and long-term functioning across important areas of their lives. There is a need for school-based assessment which focuses on prevention and early identification of potential risks. For children, high levels of Life Satisfaction have been correlated with optimal mental health including academic success, attachment with parents and peers, and positive self-concept. In contrast, low levels of Life Satisfaction have been associated with adverse outcomes for children including internalizing and externalizing behaviors, peer alienation, familial discord, difficulties at school, and low self-appraisal. The Multidimensional Students' Life Satisfaction Scale (MSLSS: Huebner, 1994) is an ideal tool for school-based assessment of risks because it explores satisfaction in life domains in children which parallel areas where risk may occur (i.e., School, Family, Self, Living Environment, and Friends domains). The current study examined the relationship between 3rd and 4th grader's judgments of their Life Satisfaction, as measured by MSLSS, and parent and guardian report of potential risks in their child's life. The results indicated a significant positive correlation between children's motivation for school and levels of satisfaction in the School domain. Gender differences were illuminated with girls endorsing higher total satisfaction and higher satisfaction with school compared to boys. Strengths and limitations of the project are addressed and implications of the findings including future directions for research are discussed.

Degree Type
Dissertation

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ASSESSMENT OF LIFE SATISFACTION IN CHILDREN AS A MEANS OF
PREVENTION AND IDENTIFICATION OF RISKS

A DISSERTATION
SUBMITTED TO THE FACULTY
OF
SCHOOL OF PROFESSIONAL PSYCHOLOGY
PACIFIC UNIVERSITY
HILLSBORO, OREGON

BY
JENNIFER E. KELLY, M.S.

IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE
REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE
OF
DOCTOR OF PSYCHOLOGY
JUNE 27, 2011

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Abstract

Children today are faced with risks which can adversely affect their short- and long-term functioning across important areas of their lives. There is a need for school-based assessment which focuses on prevention and early identification of potential risks. For children, high levels of Life Satisfaction have been correlated with optimal mental health including academic success, attachment with parents and peers, and positive self-concept. In contrast, low levels of Life Satisfaction have been associated with adverse outcomes for children including internalizing and externalizing behaviors, peer alienation, familial discord, difficulties at school, and low self-appraisal. The Multidimensional Students’ Life Satisfaction Scale (MSLSS: Huebner, 1994) is an ideal tool for school-based assessment of risks because it explores satisfaction in life domains in children which parallel areas where risk may occur (i.e., School, Family, Self, Living Environment, and Friends domains). The current study examined the relationship between 3rd and 4th grader’s judgments of their Life Satisfaction, as measured by MSLSS, and parent and guardian report of potential risks in their child’s life. The results indicated a significant positive correlation between children’s motivation for school and levels of satisfaction in the School domain. Gender differences were illuminated with girls endorsing higher total satisfaction and higher satisfaction with school compared to boys. Strengths and limitations of the project are addressed and implications of the findings including future directions for research are discussed.

Keywords: Life Satisfaction, children, prevention, elementary school, assessment, Multidimensional Students’ Life Satisfaction Scale (MSLSS)
Acknowledgments

I consider myself immensely fortunate to have wonderful people in my life who have made this endeavor possible. I would first like to thank my dissertation chair, Alyson Williams, for her unwavering support and guidance throughout this project. She is a strong mentor who embodies the perfect balance of professionalism, meticulousness, and graciousness. I would also like to thank my reader, Holly Hetrick Weger, for her valued assistance. I want to express my gratitude to my research partner, Ainara Echanove, for her prompt translations and reliable enthusiasm. In addition, I extend my appreciation to everyone at the Fern Hill Elementary School for their willingness to participate in this research. Lastly and importantly, I would like to give a big thank you to my husband Josh for his steady encouragement and faith in me, as well as my baby Quinn for inspiring me every day.
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Assessment of Life Satisfaction in Children as a Means of
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Research has underscored the importance of early intervention for childhood
difficulties (Hirshfeld-Becker & Biederman, 2002). However, many problems such as
behavioral concerns and mental illness in children and adolescents go unrecognized and
untreated (Friedman, 2006), often resulting in serious adult psychiatric illnesses (Barkley,
1997). Children today are faced with a myriad of risks which adversely affect their short-
and long-term functioning. These risks include academic problems, social difficulties,
familial discord, and problems related to the self and their living environment (Elicker,
Englund, & Sroufe, 1992; Homel & Burns, 1989; Huebner & Gilman, 2006; Martin &
Huebner, 2007; Nickerson & Nagle, 2004). There is a need to prevent these risks before
they result in wide-ranging negative outcomes. Specifically, there would be considerable
benefit to children and society of early assessment which can identify potential risks in
children and better inform targeted interventions. Too often children’s problems are
addressed after their tenacity has compromised the quality of the child’s life and the
community (Cowen, 1994).

Naturalistic settings such as schools are ideal forums for assessment and
identification of risks as students present at school with more challenges than ever
before- particularly in the area of mental health needs (Waller, Bresson, & Waller, 2006).
It is estimated that 10-20% of elementary school children will show signs of mental
health problems which will have significant adverse impacts on their social and academic
functioning (Gowers, Thomas, & Deely, 2004). Very few studies have been conducted at
the elementary school level using systematic screening tools for assessment of risk with
children (Lane, Kalberg, Bruhn, Mahoney, & Driscoll, 2008) and most children are not being assessed for risk or treated in any other setting (Gowers et al., 2004). In addition, research surveying teachers about the prevalence of children with mental health problems in their classrooms indicates low rates of detection from teachers (Gowers et al., 2004). As a result, children whose problems are less overt in nature may be overlooked within the busy school environment (Gowers et al., 2004). By screening all elementary school children we may identify children with both overt and less noticeable behavioral or emotional problems, avoiding children “falling through the cracks” or their difficulties being missed. In the United States, school-based intervention and assessment geared toward preventing illness and promoting health is gaining support across educational, political, and social arenas (Hall, 2009).

The primary purpose of the current study is to enhance the literature with regard to assessing and identifying childhood risks that can lead to long-term decreases in functioning. In order to accomplish this, we utilize assessment of Life Satisfaction in children in an innovative way. Assessment will take place in an academic setting as a means of prevention by identifying potential risks which may inform targeted interventions. The study is designed this way for reasons mentioned above regarding important settings for assessment (i.e., school) and because, in children, high Life Satisfaction has been associated with good adjustment and optimal mental health, whereas low Life Satisfaction has been related to academic, psychological, social, and behavior problems (Greenspoon & Saklosfske, 1997; Park, 2004).

The Multidimensional Students’ Life Satisfaction Scale (MSLSS: Huebner, 1994) is used in this research to assess Life Satisfaction in five specific domains that are
relevant in the lives of children: Family, School, Friends, Self, and Living Environment domains. Thus, information regarding high or low satisfaction in these domains may assist mental health providers and school administrators to identify potential risks in students and will help inform targeted interventions.

The current project is aimed at exploring the utility of the MSLSS to measure Life Satisfaction in children in order to facilitate prevention by highlighting areas of potential problems. In this way, it is hoped that Life Satisfaction assessment will lead to early intervention and curb risks prior to mental health, academic, and other problems becoming debilitating and chronic for children as they age. Correlations between potential risks that children may face and children’s endorsements on domain specific items on the MSLSS will be explored. Consequently, the overarching goal of the current research is to contribute to the greater understanding of how children think and feel about important areas in their lives, which could provide insight into prevention, early identification of risks, timely interventions, and improve the trajectory for children.

To orient the reader, a review of the literature on Life Satisfaction of children is first presented. Risks that children may face are reviewed and examined in context of specific life domains. Protective factors and their relationship to Life Satisfaction are discussed. Next, the MSLSS is presented and a review of the research using the measure is provided. A rationale for using the MSLSS as a means of prevention is presented as well as the value of early intervention for children. The current study will then be presented including an explanation of the methods used to carry out the project and the statistical analyses of data. Finally, the findings of the study are discussed as well and
strengths and limitations of the project. Implications of the study are presented including directions for future research.

**Literature Review**

**Life Satisfaction**

Life Satisfaction has been broadly described as reflecting a cognitive judgment of one’s life as a whole (Diener, 1994). Furthermore, it is considered “more than simply a desirable attribute in and of itself, but also a prerequisite for positive psychological health” (Suldo & Huebner, 2004, p. 189). Psychologists have long incorporated the construct of Life Satisfaction as a means of studying adults (Suldo & Huebner, 2004). Recently, in the field of psychology there has been a call to expand the usefulness of studying Life Satisfaction as a means to better understand and benefit children as well (Huebner & Gilman, 2002).

As noted above, Life Satisfaction in adults is often conceptualized as a global reflection of one’s satisfaction with life in general (Diener, 1994). However, with the more recent development of the MSLSS, the conceptualization of children’s Life Satisfaction has been broken down to reflect one’s satisfaction in life domains that are specifically important in the lives of children and adolescents (School, Self, Family, Friends, and Living Environment).

Although factors that comprise each of these domains may be intuitive, the following is a brief description of specific aspects measured by each domain. First, the School domain assesses the degree to which children enjoy and want to go to school, feel that they learn at school and engage in interesting activities. The Self domain captures how children feel about their ability to accomplish things, the degree to which they think
they are fun and good looking, and their judgments about whether they like themselves and are liked by others. Within the Family domain, children respond to if they feel they are treated fairly by family members, how much they like being with their families, and the degree to which their family gets along with each other. The Friends domain assesses whether children like their friends, are treated well by them, and feel that they have enough friends. In addition, the Friends domain captures children’s judgments regarding whether they feel they do fun things with their friends and if they wished they had different friends. Finally, the objective of the Living Environment domain is to assess if children like their neighborhood, their house and their neighbors, as well as if they wished they lived somewhere else. In this way, the MSLSS aims to glean a holistic assessment of how children and adolescents feel about these important areas in their lives.

Assessing Life Satisfaction has been useful for understanding general well-being and areas of distress in adults and children (Diener, 1994; Huebner, 2004). As such, greater familiarity with the construct and assessment of Life Satisfaction among school mental health providers can be useful in multiple ways with child populations. For example, educators can use the assessment of Life Satisfaction of their students to “foster resilience and social-emotional competence in children and adolescence” (Copeland, Nelson, & Traughber, 2010, p.26). Indicators of psychological health, such as assessment of Life Satisfaction, along with the creation of prevention and intervention programs in academics settings “is expected to improve the quality of life for all individuals, not just individuals who are already at risk or who already demonstrate psychopathological conditions” (Huebner, 2004, p. 3). Specifically, the National Association of School
Psychologists (2005) placed emphasis on the need for evidence-based prevention and intervention practices that promote the learning and social-emotional development of students in schools. As demonstrated in the following section, assessing Life Satisfaction in school-age children would begin to fulfill this need.

**Correlates of Protective Factors and Life Satisfaction**

Research indicated that attainment of Life Satisfaction for children is strongly associated with positive relationships with parents (Suldo & Huebner, 2004) and that children’s perceptions of their family relationships have also been shown to be a strong correlate of their global Life Satisfaction (Huebner, Gilman, & Laughlin, 1999). In fact, research with adolescents found perceived quality of relationship with parents was the strongest predictor of Life Satisfaction (Dew & Huebner, 1994). Further, adolescents endorsed that their relationship with their parents was more strongly associated to Life Satisfaction than their perceived physical appearance, general self-concept, and peer relationships. In addition, Suldo and Huebner (2004) stated positive environmental factors such as safety of residence in terms of location, and healthy family functioning also correlate with high Life Satisfaction in children.

There is evidence suggesting early school success leads to later academic achievement and future educational attainment (Bates, Luster, & Vandenbelt, 2003). Furthermore, research has found children who experience competence in school in early elementary grades are more likely to be on a trajectory of success that persists throughout school, while children who do not experience good adjustment to school are more likely to be on a trajectory of future academic failure (Luster & McAdoo, 1996). Thus, if the
child endorsed current dissatisfaction in the School domain of a Life Satisfaction scale, these results would serve as a means to better inform intervention efforts.

Children’s global self-esteem is often considered a “component of overall Life Satisfaction, which may be derived from evaluations of one’s family life, school experiences, peer relations, living environment, as well as oneself” (Huebner et al., 1999, p. 2). Similarly, self-efficacy in children, defined as their personal beliefs regarding having the capability of accomplishing goals and having control over what happens in their lives (Maddux, 2002), is a protective factor that contributes to high Life Satisfaction, optimism, and academic success (Pinquart, Silbereisen, & Juang, 2004). In children of ethnic diversity, a “positive ethnic identity” was found to predict higher levels of school satisfaction (Shin, Morgan, Buhin, Truitt, & Vera, 2010). Assessment of Life Satisfaction is a way of tapping into personal strengths, such as a positive self-concept, as well as the presence or absence of psychopathological symptoms (Huebner, 2004).

Some investigators propose a link between low subjective Life Satisfaction with internalizing and externalizing disorders (Martin, Huebner, & Valois, 2008; Suldo & Huebner, 2004). Further, they emphasize the importance of assessing Life Satisfaction as a means of appraising how youth formulate “generalized cognitive and affective interpretations of their life experiences” (Suldo & Huebner, 2004 p. 190). “These experiences often predispose the child to subsequent behavioral ‘outputs’ such as healthy versus psychopathological behavior” (Suldo & Huebner, 2004 p. 190). As such, targeting children’s self-perceptions in the Self domain of Life Satisfaction may be an effective way of assessing potential clinical disorders. In this way, Life Satisfaction assessment encompasses a full range of one’s self-appraisal of satisfaction. For children and
adolescents, assessing Life Satisfaction in the Self domain may be a valuable way of identifying potential clinical symptoms and potential strengths in self-appraisal.

Research has evidenced a connection between child and adolescent peer relationships and adult support systems outside the family with higher Life Satisfaction and resiliency (Doll & Lyon, 1998; Huebner, 1991b). It is intuitive that social developmental issues for children would correspond strongly to the Friends domain of Life Satisfaction. In addition, the literature shows that peer attachment (and parent attachment) also significantly predicted Life Satisfaction in the School, Living Environment, and Self domains (Nickerson & Nagle, 2004). Because social development and peer relationships are such an integral part of a child’s satisfaction among multiple domains, assessing children’s satisfaction with friends is a logical way to better understand a child’s broader functioning. More specifically, assessing the Friends domain of Life Satisfaction is a logical way of identifying whether the child may be at risk in this and other important areas of his or her life.

Taken together, the studies mentioned above indicate high Life Satisfaction in children and adolescents is associated with positive life factors and outcomes. One of the strongest predictors of high Life Satisfaction in children is a positive relationship with family and parents. In academic settings, competence in early elementary school was corresponded with present and future academic success. Self-esteem, self-efficacy, and positive ethnic identity in children are protective factors that contribute to high overall Life Satisfaction. In contrast, low satisfaction in terms of one’s self-appraisal has been implicated in emotional and behavioral concerns in children and adolescents. The degree to which children develop socially with peers and adults relates to higher levels of
satisfaction across multiple areas of their lives. The above examples illustrate the strong correlations between protective factors and high Life Satisfaction in children and adolescents. The following section describes risks associated with low levels of Life Satisfaction in youth.

**Specific Risks Children may Face**

According to the U.S Department of Health and Human Services (2008), children face numerous risks as they develop. Risks are those things that, if experienced, may impact functioning negatively. Below is a description of potential risks the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services report children today may face. Importantly, intercorrelations have been shown among self-concept and academic ability, physical ability, social ability, relationship with parents, and relationship with peers (Zimmerman et al., 2001). Thus an actualized risk in one domain is likely to have additive effects and coincide with risks in other domains.

The U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (2008) reported children are at risk for academic problems such as low academic performance, negative attitude or low motivation towards school, withdrawal from activities, and truancy. Children are at risk for peer rejection, peer victimization and association with aggressive or delinquent peers. In addition, the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (2008) reported children are at risk of poor family attachment, poor parental supervision, patterns of high family conflict, family transitions (e.g., divorce), child victimization or maltreatment, and history of parent criminality, to name just a few. Risks include feeling unsafe in the neighborhood, economic deprivation, youth in trouble in the community, low community attachment, and availability of drugs, alcohol or firearms in the neighborhood. In
addition, the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (2008) stated children are at risk for antisocial behaviors and alienation, early onset of aggressive behaviors, favorable attitudes towards delinquency and substance use, mental health problems, early sexual involvement, intellectual or developmental disabilities, and increased life stressors.

Social difficulties, including peer rejection and aggression towards peers have been shown to have a relationship with early and ongoing behavioral and relational problems and adjustment difficulties (Ladd & Burgess, 2001). For example, aggression in grade school predicted delinquency in adolescence, while both early aggression and peer rejection predicted other externalizing problems, such as psychological and school maladjustment (Kupersmidt & Coie, 1990).

There is a confounding relationship between academic risks and social developmental risks (Zimmerman et al., 2001). For example, children who fall victim to peer aggression or rejection may experience other pervasive psychological distress such as fear and anxiety. Research suggests fear and anxiety at school can lead to academic problems including difficulty concentrating and ultimate withdrawal from others and class activities (Ladd & Burgess, 2001). Consequently, children’s social adjustment with peers is related the child’s current and future academic success or failure (Bates et al., 2003).

If mental health risks in children are not addressed, they have adverse implications for short- and long-term functioning. To illustrate, Attention Deficit/Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD) is the most common psychological disorder affecting children (Julien, 2008). It often persists into adulthood and is associated with higher rates of various negative psychological and behavioral functioning (Barkley,
Untreated ADHD in childhood and adolescence is a common predictor of later developing antisocial personality disorder, problematic drug use, and being institutionalized for delinquency (Julien, 2008). Similarly, depression is another mental health risk faced by children and adolescents which has broad negative implications if not addressed early (Julien, 2008). Depression has been shown to persist into adulthood and increase the likelihood of poor outcomes. It is highly correlated with low educational attainment and poor occupational functioning. Adolescent depression is also associated with early pregnancy, interpersonal difficulties, and an increased risk for substance abuse and suicidal behavior in adulthood (Giaconia et al., 2001).

In sum, we know that children face risks which often lead to negative outcomes. Specifically, we know negative outcomes such as relational, social, psychological, and behavioral problems are more likely if risks are present in childhood and go unaddressed. The Friends, School, Family, Self and Living Environment domains on the MSLSS provide an ideal place for early assessment, as they represent the areas in which problems can exist. Since the current study looks at risks in terms of the five life domains measured by the MSLSS, the following section specifically presents risks as they parallel these areas in children’s lives.

**Potential Risks in Specific Life Domains for Children**

In the academic domain, actualization of risks for children may result in various negative outcomes, including poor academic achievement, problem behavior, as well as low motivation and involvement in school, and dropping out of school early (Ainley, 1991; Jaffee, Caspi, Moffitt, Belsky, & Silva, 2001; Luster, Lekskul, & Oh, 2004). Research has found children who experience competence in early elementary school are
more likely to be on a trajectory of success that persists throughout school, while children who do not experience good adjustment to school are at greater risk of being on a trajectory of future academic failure (Luster & McAdoo, 1996).

As mentioned in the previous section, academic risks and social developmental risks in childhood are intercorrelated (Zimmerman et al., 2001). For example, research has found that children’s social adjustment with peers is also significantly related their academic success or failure (Bates et al., 2003). Some of the risks related to social and peer adjustment include peer victimization and aggression, peer rejection, and social isolation (Ladd & Burgess, 2001; Martin & Huebner, 2007). Such risks in children’s social domain have multiple consequences. To illustrate, aggression in grade school predicted delinquency and other problematic behaviors in adolescence (Kupersmidt & Coie, 1990). Such externalizing behaviors and conduct problems have broad implications for the individual and for society as a whole. For example, externalizing children are often characterized in a negative light in academic environments and are the students most frequently segregated from their peers in special education and alternative programs (Jenson, Olympia, Farley, & Clark, 2004). Public school classrooms are made up of three to five percent of students with externalizing disorders (Jenson et al., 2004). A salient problem faced by these students is elevated school drop out rates. Children with externalizing disorders are three times more likely to drop out than students with visual, auditory, or orthopedic impairments (U. S. Department of Education, 2002). Additionally, children who exhibit externalizing behaviors are at greater risk of later exhibiting antisocial and criminal behaviors (Barkley, 1997).
In the Family domain, the risk of familial problems such as poor attachment in early childhood also has adverse ramifications for the child. Children who are anxiously attached to their parents have demonstrated less competence, less self-confidence, and greater social difficulties than their securely attached peers (Elicker et al., 1992). Another risk children may face in the Family domain is parent alienation, which has been related to peer delinquency and children’s judgments of familial dissatisfaction (Nickerson, & Nagle, 2004). Conversely, children who reported high levels of parent trust and parent communication endorsed higher overall life satisfaction and predicted positive outcomes across multiple life domains, such as School, Family, and Self domains (Nickerson & Nagle, 2004). Similarly, a warm, supportive, and close relationship with at least one parent is a major contributor to childhood resiliency and well-being (Huebner, 1991a). Thus, children deficient in these important familial protective factors are at greater risk for facing challenges with their own self-concept in addition to social, familial, and behavioral difficulties.

Children may also be at risk in the Self and the Living Environment domains. For example, low self-concept in children is a risk which corresponds with difficulties related to academic ability, physical ability, social ability, relationship with parents, and relationship with peers (Zimmerman et al., 2001). The risk of experiencing an adverse living environment is correlated with an external locus of control and lower satisfaction with life (Ash & Huebner, 2001). Similarly, research studying the affects of the living environment on children’s well-being indicate that children living in commercial inner cities also endorse a reduced sense of satisfaction with life in general (Homel & Burns, 1989). Further, ethnic minority youth who reside in low-income neighborhoods may be at
risk to increased exposure to drugs and violence, in adequate housing, and racial
discrimination (Shin et al., 2010).

Given the importance of Life Satisfaction as a construct for measuring children’s
well-being, the following section orients the reader to literature on the measurement of
Life Satisfaction of children and illustrates the value of using assessment of Life
Satisfaction with children as a means of prevention and identification of risks.

**Measuring Life Satisfaction in Children**

The study of Life Satisfaction in children and adolescents began in the late 1980s
with the development of the Perceived Life Satisfaction Scale (PLSS: Adelman, Taylor,
& Nelson, 1989). In the nascent stage of research and still today there is considerable
focus on measurement development, validity, and psychometric strength. It is important
for test developers to create measurement tools that tap into the subjective judgment of
the individual child, rather than simply using pre-existing measures of Life Satisfaction
for adults. Test developers took into account the differences between adults and children
on multiple levels including reading ability, environmental circumstances, intellectual
development, and psychosocial maturity (Huebner, 2004).

Furthermore, it appears that children and adolescents themselves believe it is
important that adults understand what they like and do not like about their lives
(Gadermann, Guhn, & Zumbo, 2010). The most current measure assessing child well-
being, the Satisfaction with Life Scale adapted for Children (SWLS-C; Gadermann,
Schonert-Reichl, & Zumbo, 2009), was examined in terms of cognitive responses of
middle school children who completed the measure. Interviews with participants revealed
the many ways in which children believed the assessment to be valuable. For example,
the children stated: “I think you should know what’s going on in their heads because a lot of kids have problems. And they don’t talk about it, so you need to know this stuff;” “Because if you want to change something…then you could change it;” and “So then people can help us more” (Gaderman et al., 2011, p.54). There is a fruitful opportunity in academic settings to apply the emerging research to design and implement studies of Life Satisfaction to improve upon children’s mental health and services provided in school-based settings (Hoagman, 1993). Logistically, children are easily accessible at school as they spend a considerable amount of their time at school. Also, given the above research, it appears students consider it “important that information on their Life Satisfaction is obtained” (Gaderman et al., 2011, p.37).

Life Satisfaction in children appears to be distinct, yet related to, other subjective psychological well-being constructs, including positive and negative affect and self-esteem (Huebner, 2004). Recently, research with children and adolescents has highlighted relationships between Life Satisfaction and other psychosocial, behavioral, and environmental life factors. For instance, individual judgment of child and adolescent subjective Life Satisfaction shares significant positive relationships with indicators of adaptive functioning and negative relationships with indicators of maladaptive functioning (Huebner, 2004). For example, high levels of Life Satisfaction paralleled with positive life events, environmental resources, and internal locus of control (Ash & Huebner, 2002), with social interest and involvement in extra curricular activities (Gilman, 2001), with global self-concept including physical abilities and appearance, same- and opposite-peer relationships, trustworthiness and emotional stability (Dew & Huebner, 1994), and with school status, supportive parents and supportive friends. In
contrast, high levels of Life Satisfaction were negatively correlated with depression, loneliness, social dissatisfaction, and teacher-rated behavior problems (Huebner & Alderman, 1993), with anxiety, withdrawal, and school problems (Greenspoon & Saklosfske, 1997), with externalizing behaviors and internalizing behaviors (McKnight, Huebner, & Suldo, 2002), with adolescent alcohol and chemical use (Valois, Zullig, Huebner, & Drane, 2001), and with aggressive behavior such as carrying a weapon to school and physical fights (Zullig, Valois, Huebner, & Drane, 2001). For a more detailed description see Huebner (2004).

Because of the relationship between Life Satisfaction and psychosocial, environmental, and academic factors (Huebner, 2004), assessing Life Satisfaction in children will be of great benefit in illuminating potential areas of risk in a variety of domains. As the following section will evidence, the MSLSS is an ideal tool for prevention as it assesses children’s Life Satisfaction and because it contains life domains that correlate naturally with areas of potential problems.

**Overview of the MSLSS**

The five domains of Life Satisfaction, according to the Multidimensional Students’ Life Satisfaction Scale (MSLSS: Huebner, 1994), are Family, School, Friends, Self, and Living Environment and are indicators of positive mental health (Huebner, 1998). MSLSS items corresponding to their respective life domains are shown in Table 1. Huebner constructed the MSLSS to investigate children and adolescents’ perception of their Life Satisfaction in the aforementioned five specific life domains. The MSLSS was constructed, in part, due to the “increased interest in the promotion of positive
Table 1
*Items Comprising the Multidimensional Students’ Life Satisfaction Scale (Huebner, 1994)*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Domain</th>
<th>Items</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Family</strong></td>
<td>I enjoy being at home with my family.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>My family gets along well together.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>I like spending time with my parents.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>My parents and I do fun things together.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>My family is better than most.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Members of my family talk nicely to one another.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>My parents treat me fairly.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Self</strong></td>
<td>I think I am good looking.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>I am fun to be around.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>I am a nice person.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Most people like me.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>There are lots of things I can do well.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>I like to try new things.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>I like myself.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Friends</strong></td>
<td>My friends treat me well.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>My friends are nice to me.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>I wish I had different friends.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>My friends are mean to me.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>My friends are great</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>I have a bad time with my friends.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>I have a lot of fun with my friends.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>I have enough friends.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>My friends will help me if I need it.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>School</strong></td>
<td>I look forward to going to school.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>I like being in school.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>School is interesting.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>I wish I didn’t have to go to school.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>There are many things about school I don’t like.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>I enjoy school activities.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>I learn a lot at school.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>I feel bad at school.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Living Environment</strong></td>
<td>I like where I live.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>I wish there were different people in my neighborhood.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>I wish I lived in a different house.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>I wish I lived somewhere else.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>I like my neighborhood.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>I like my neighbors.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>This town is filled with mean people.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>My family’s house is nice.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>There are a lot of fun things to do where I live.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
psychological well-being in children and adults” (Huebner & Gilman, 2002 p. 115). The MSLSS is a 40-item self-report scale designed to measure five domains of Life Satisfaction in children and adolescents ages 8-18 years old. The MSLSS is a useful tool because it is a measure that inherently contains domains in which children and adolescents are known to face risks. It is suggested that mental health providers, especially those in schools, pay attention to the construct of Life Satisfaction, specifically the utility of the MSLSS, in order to assess general risks for all students and particular risk areas for individual children. By assessing these domains through the MSLSS, potential risks can be illuminated and addressed in their nascent stages, prior to becoming ongoing and pervasive problems. To familiarize the reader with the MSLSS, a brief overview of psychometrics and relevant cross-cultural utility is presented followed by a review of specific research using the MSLSS.

**Cross-Cultural Psychometric Analyses of the MSLSS**

Concerns related to potential racial bias in affective measures, such as the MSLSS, have been raised (Moran, 1990). Therefore, cross-racial reliability and validity is important in general when striving for ethical and culturally responsible research.

In an effort to examine cross-racial comparability of the MSLSS, Huebner (1998) conducted a study aimed at demonstrating the reliability and validity of the MSLSS across racial groups. Huebner drew a sample of third graders, fourth graders, fifth graders, sixth graders, and eighth graders from socioeconomically diverse areas. The participants self-identified as Black (n=156), White (n=529), or other (n=40). In determining reliability and validity, Huebner compared the Black and White students only.
In terms of reliability of the MSLSS, comparisons across race indicated equivalent alpha coefficients for each domain except the School domain, where the reliability estimate significantly favored White students versus Black students (Black students’ alpha=.77, White students’ alpha=.83), (Huebner, 1998). In terms of construct validity, the analysis indicated four of the five domains had an acceptable congruence coefficient alpha of .90 or above. The exception was the Self domain which had a congruence coefficient alpha of .86. In terms of criterion-related validity, the data suggest equivalence of the MSLSS across Black and White students for three of the five life domains, not the Self domain or the Friends domain (Huebner, 1998). As a result, Huebner (1998) indicated it is important to be cautious when interpreting these domains across races. Overall, however, Huebner wrote “for the most part the factor structure of the MSLSS appears to be invariant across race (with respect to Blacks and Whites)” (1998, p. 184). Thus, Huebner concluded that his investigation demonstrated the usefulness of the MSLSS for research purposes cross-racially.

Given all its characteristics, the MSLSS is an ideal tool to facilitate prevention as a means of identification of risks and to help inform targeted interventions. Due to its added domain specificity, studies using the MSLSS to assess Life Satisfaction in children in the general student population as a means of prevention would likely contribute to more focused identification of specific problem areas, as well as more targeted intervention efforts. In addition, the MSLSS may be useful for child populations to identify risks because it was designed specifically for children and adolescents and assesses domains that have been evidenced to be significant and relevant in their lives (Huebner, 1991b). Because the MSLSS can be used with children as young as eight years
of age, it may also be used as a driving force to bring about much needed early intervention.

**Review of Studies Using the MSLSS**

The MSLSS has been used to study children and adolescents in a variety of school settings and for many of purposes. This section reviews the literature on individual studies which assessed Life Satisfaction using the MSLSS. McCullough and Huebner (2003) used the MSLSS with a sample of 80 adolescents diagnosed with a learning disability (LD) and 80 normally achieving (NA) adolescents and compared their levels of Life Satisfaction, as measured by the MSLSS. The results provided preliminary evidence supporting the relevance of the domains of the MSLSS for both the LD and NA groups. Mean levels of Life Satisfaction in the five specific domains did not indicate significant differences between the LD and NA adolescents. The authors concluded that the MSLSS is an appropriate tool for measuring Life Satisfaction in adolescents with learning disabilities.

Another study used the MSLSS to investigate the relationships among peer victimization and pro-social experiences with levels of early adolescent subjective emotional well-being, such as Life Satisfaction (Martin, & Huebner, 2007). Peer victimization included behaviors such as hitting, kicking, pushing, teasing, spreading rumors, exclusion, or making someone do something against their will. The results illuminated that, for these middle school students, lower levels of Life Satisfaction and negative affect were positively correlated with overt peer victimization (e.g., physical or verbal insults). Whereas, there was a relationship between the more adolescents instigated or received pro-social experiences and high levels of Life Satisfaction and
greater positive affect. The authors conclude that the MSLSS was a useful tool in predicting protective factors (e.g., prosocial peer interactions) and risk factors (e.g., peer victimization).

In the following study researchers used the MSLSS to correlate Life Satisfaction with perfectionism, a unique aspect of the self that may serve to be a protective factor for adolescents. To investigate the relationship between perfectionism and Life Satisfaction in adolescents, Gilman and Ashby (2003) conducted a study with 132 middle school students, grades 6 through 8. The authors broadly defined perfectionism as setting especially high personal standards for oneself and defined two specific types of perfectionism; *adaptive perfectionism* (i.e., individuals who set high personal standards and are effective in attaining them) and *maladaptive perfectionism* (i.e., those individuals who set high personal standards, but often do not attain them). In a school setting, students completed the Almost Perfect Scale-Revised (APS-R: Slaney, Mobley, Trippi, Ashby, & Johnson, 1996) and the MSLSS and correlations were evaluated. Results indicated a strong and positive relationship between perfectionism and higher levels of Life Satisfaction. Interestingly, setting high personal standards for oneself was significantly and positively correlated with high Life Satisfaction in both the adaptive and maladaptive perfectionistic participants. The authors suggested that these adolescents with perfectionism maintained “a level of self-worth that transcends any distress” that may have arose from meeting or not meeting one’s goals (Gilman & Ashby, 2003, p. 230).

Griffin and Huebner (2000) conducted a study to evaluate the potential utility of the MSLSS with students identified as seriously emotionally disturbed (SED). Forty-nine
SED students and 49 non-SED students, grade 6 through 8, were asked to complete the MSLSS and their responses were examined psychometrically. The analysis indicated the SED group yielded low internal consistency reliabilities. The authors suggested the SED students may have experienced greater difficulty cognitively deciphering the questions that were negatively phrased (e.g., “There are many things about school I don’t like” (Griffin & Huebner, 2000). In addition, the SED students had higher domain intercorrelations, suggesting they may not have been as effective in distinguishing among specific Life Satisfaction domains compared to the non-SED students. After scale modification omitting five of the MSLSS items, reliability improved to an adequate level for preliminary research purposes with the SED population. Cautious interpretation of the MSLSS is recommended with SED children (Griffin & Huebner, 2000). The MSLSS identified important differences in the way these two different groups approach the concept of Life Satisfaction and the questionnaire itself. As such, use of the MSLSS provided valuable information regarding the limitations of a using this general measure with SED adolescents.

Another population for whom the MSLSS results should be interpreted with caution is adolescents with mild mental disabilities (MMD). Huebner, Brantley, Nagle, and Valois (2002) conducted a study investigating the level of similarity between parent and adolescent ratings of the adolescent’s subjective Life Satisfaction. Eighty high school students with a mild mental disability (i.e., IQs ranging from 55 to 70) and 80 normally achieving high school students completed the MSLSS and scores were compared to parent ratings of their child’s Life Satisfaction. The results revealed substantial similarities between Life Satisfaction ratings between parents and the normally achieving
adolescents, but not for the MDD adolescents. The correspondence between the MDD adolescents and their parents ranged from low to nonsignificant. The authors discussed possible explanations for the lack of correspondence including potential differences in the meaning of Life Satisfaction between parents and the MDD adolescents and/or cognitive difficulties the MDD students may have had conceptualizing the MSLSS items. The results suggested cautious interpretation of the MSLSS with adolescents with MDD (Huebner et al., 2002). In sum, the MSLSS was useful in providing rationale for using the youth self-report measures of Life Satisfaction in connection with parent/guardian judgments of normally achieving adolescents, but not of MDD adolescents.

In an additional study, the MSLSS was shown to be effective in correlating high Life Satisfaction with protective factors (e.g., parent and peer attachment, trust, communication) and low Life Satisfaction with potential risks (e.g., peer delinquency, peer and parent alienation) for adolescents. The MSLSS was used to examine parent and peer attachment relationships in middle childhood and early adolescence (Nickerson & Nagle, 2004). The sample consisted of fourth, sixth, and eight grade students who completed the MSLSS and the People in My Life scale (Cook, Greenburg, & Kusche, 1995) in their school. Results indicated Life Satisfaction in all domains was significantly correlated with both parent attachment and peer attachment. Specifically, trust and communication with parents and peers was significantly correlated with high subjective Life Satisfaction. Similarly, peer trust was found to be closely related to high satisfaction in the Friend domain. In contrast, peer delinquency (e.g., truancy, cheating, alcohol use) was a strong predictor of lower subjective Life Satisfaction, specifically in the Family and School domains.
Another study pertaining to MSLSS use utilized the measure in a unique way. The researchers used only the School Subscale of the MSLSS with adolescents. The researchers examined relationships among students’ satisfaction with school and important psychosocial and academic indicators including grade point average (GPA), participation in extracurricular activities, clinical levels of psychological symptoms, hope, global satisfaction with life, and internal locus of control (Huebner & Gilman, 2006).

Results revealed that the adolescents who endorsed higher satisfaction also reported significantly greater internal locus of control, self-esteem, hope, and global satisfaction with life compared to the low school satisfaction group. Among the group of adolescents who endorsed higher satisfaction with school on the MSLSS, only 4% reported clinical levels of psychological symptoms, compared to 29% from the low school satisfaction group (Huebner & Gilman, 2006). This study illuminates that subjective satisfaction with one’s school experiences is related to important positive and negative indicators of academic and psychosocial functioning.

A cross-national study used the MSLSS to compare endorsement of Life Satisfaction among adolescents in the United States, Ireland, China, and South Korea (Gilman et al., 2008). The study explored differences in Life Satisfaction between adolescents in collectivistic and individualistic countries and discovered similar positive Life Satisfaction scores from all four countries across most domains. One notable finding is that there were significant gender effects across all four countries in which females endorsed higher satisfaction in at least one domain (e.g., Self, Living Environment,
School). As such, the MSLSS was shown to have cross-cultural utility and to identify similarities among adolescents of varying race and ethnicity.

The MSLSS was also shown to be effective in longitudinal research conducted which explored the relationship between Life Satisfaction endorsements and internalizing and externalizing behaviors at three different times among adolescent participants (Haranin, Huebner, & Suldo, 2007). In addition to other measures, participants completed the MSLSS and the Youth Self-Report of the Child Behavior Checklist (Achenbach & Edelbrock, 1991), which assessed multiple areas of problem behavior in adolescence. Results revealed a significant and negative correlation between Life Satisfaction scores and internalizing and externalizing behaviors. The School and Family domains best predicted externalizing behaviors, whereas the Friends and Self domains best predicted internalizing behaviors. The Living Environment best predicted both internalizing and externalizing behaviors (Haranin et al., 2007). The study demonstrates the usefulness of using the MSLSS to draw correlations between internalizing and externalizing behaviors in adolescents.

The MSLSS was also used with the aforementioned longitudinal data to measure stability in Life Satisfaction among adolescents as they progressed from the 8th grade to 9th grade and 10th grade (Antaramian & Huebner, 2009). The participants completed the measure one year apart during each the 8th, 9th, and 10th grades. Results indicated relative stability in Life Satisfaction for these adolescents during this particular stage of development and transition. The only significant difference was found for 10th graders, in which they endorsed lower satisfaction in the Living Environment domain. Overall, the study suggests that Life Satisfaction can be relatively stable for adolescents even during
times of transition (Antaramian & Huebner, 2009). This study suggests the MSLSS is an
effective way of measuring Life Satisfaction over time. This could have significant
implications for use of the MSLSS as a potential outcome measure to track changes pre-
and post-intervention.

Taken together, the above research examining the MSLSS demonstrates it is a
useful tool for assessing Life Satisfaction in children and adolescence in general. In
particular, it is useful in school settings where it can be completed quickly and easily in
groups. In fact, to date, all studies using the MSLSS were conducted exclusively in
school settings (see Huebner, 2004, for a review; Huebner & Gilman, 2006; Martin, &
Huebner, 2007). The broad potential for the MSLSS is only recently emerging. For
example, results from recent studies evidence new ways of using the MSLSS such as
assessing individual domain subscales to obtain specific information about children
(Huebner & Gilman, 2006), modifying the MSLSS to better fit populations of children
with serious emotional disturbances (Griffin & Huebner, 2000), and using it to explore
peer relationships (Martin & Huebner, 2007), and to examine internalizing and
externalizing behaviors (Haranin et al., 2007) as well as utility tracking Life Satisfaction
overtime (Antaramian & Huebner, 2009). A review of the literature reveals most of the
research using the MSLSS focuses on adolescence with scant research looking at early
and middle childhood. The current study fills a gap in the literature by examining Life
Satisfaction using the MSLSS with younger children, in the 3rd and 4th grades. In
addition, the current study examines the potential of using the MSLSS in a new way; as a
means of prevention to identify potential risks.
School- or community-wide efforts to participate in studies of Life Satisfaction in children and adolescents will begin to fill a need to develop programs around the concept of prevention and psychological wellness (Cowen, 1994). It may also result in better long-term outcomes for children and society. The present study proffers that there is great potential for the MSLSS to fill the need of prevention in early elementary students: to assess and identify potential risks in children. Thus far the MSLSS has not yet been used for this purpose, and based on the existing literature described above, rationale for use of the MSLSS to assess risks and identify problems in school-base settings is appropriate and relevant.

**New Utility for the MSLSS**

Many of the studies using the MSLSS were conducted to evaluate its psychometric appropriateness with certain populations. This is an important contribution to the literature, and has allowed very recent research to use the MSLSS in other productive ways (e.g., to investigate peer victimization and Life Satisfaction and to examine perfectionism and Life Satisfaction). Since, the literature suggests appropriateness of the MSLSS with many populations, researchers now have the opportunity to gain a greater understanding of our youth and improve their quality of life using measures of Life Satisfaction. This paper recommends using the MSLSS in an innovative new manner; as a means of prevention, to identify potential risk areas and inform intervention with the ultimate goal of improving the lives of children.

In this capacity, the MSLSS may also be beneficial for longitudinal and on-going assessments of Life Satisfaction. For example, it could be used as an outcome measure; to assess changes in Life Satisfaction.
Value of Early Intervention

There are critical stages in children’s development when interventions should be implemented to maximize effectiveness. One such period is in the preschool or early elementary years (Hirshfeld-Becker & Biederman, 2002). Research has shown these younger children to be more malleable to change and “less entrenched” in maladaptive thoughts and behaviors (Hirshfeld-Becker & Biederman, 2002, p.164). Similarly, in terms of neurodevelopment, early childhood is an optimal time for intervention because during these early years problematic functioning is not as engrained in children’s synaptic structures (Hirshfeld-Becker & Biederman, 2002). As a result, younger children may be more resilient and better able to learn new life skills. A period in which children may be more vulnerable to adversity and may also benefit significantly from intervention is middle childhood, ages six through eleven (Loh & Wragg, 2004). During middle childhood, if a child does not experience efficacy in important areas of his or her life (e.g., school, sports, social relationships), the child may develop feelings of inadequacy which can be pervasive into all life domains and lead to adverse outcomes. Promotion of health, academics, emotional well-being, and psychosocial development are critical in middle childhood and may require targeted interventions (Loh & Wragg, 2004).

To date, much of the research on Life Satisfaction with child and adolescent populations has focused on that of adolescents, almost exclusively in the middle school to high school age range (see Proctor, Linley, & Maltby, 2009; Huebner, 2004 for reviews). Very little research has been conducted exploring the Life Satisfaction of younger children. Because the MSLSS is appropriate for children as young as the third grade, the current study begins to seize a crucial opportunity to gain greater understanding of how
these younger children feel about important domains in their lives. In addition, the current study fills a need within the literature to specifically explore Life Satisfaction correlates of children of ethnic diversity (Shin et al., 2010). Furthermore, the project answers the call to explore effective school-based assessment of children’s mental health needs (Hall, 2009). As such, our use of the MSLSS, which evaluates children’s satisfaction in important domains of their lives, can provide valuable insights in school settings regarding areas in which children endorse low levels of satisfaction and could benefit from targeted interventions. In sum, information gathered through administration of the MSLSS in the current study is hoped to demonstrate the usefulness of assessing children’s Life Satisfaction as a means of prevention, by identifying potential risks.

In accordance with the rationale of this study as outlined above, the current project is geared toward answering the following research questions:

1) What is the practical utility of the MSLSS for identification of risks in children in a school setting?

2) What potential risks are illuminated through assessment of Life Satisfaction using the MSLSS with this particular sample?

3) What is the relationship between demographic risk factors and children’s level of Life Satisfaction as measured on the MSLSS with this particular sample?

The following section describes methods used in order to address each of these questions.
Method

Preparation for Study

Due to the significant representation of Hispanic students in the school district where the study took place, all forms and the MSLSS were translated into Spanish based on Bradley’s (2003) detailed recommendations for translations as described here. To ensure equivalence of meaning in the materials, the procedure involved translation, back-translation, re-translation, and review by potential users of the materials and questionnaire (i.e., the MSLSS and Demographics Questionnaire). The first step in this process was to employ a translator who is a native speaker of the language of the new translation (i.e., Spanish) and who is also fluent in English. The translator, in this case, was also the ongoing research assistant and had an in-depth understanding of the purpose of the materials and an appreciation of the intention of each individual item on the questionnaire. After the original translation was completed from English to Spanish, the second step in the process was to back-translate the materials into their original language. This important step was intended to identify any discrepancies between the meaning of the translation and the original materials. Back-translation was conducted by an individual who is also fluent in both Spanish and English and who had not previously seen the materials or questionnaire in their original language form. The back-translation was then compared with the original materials to ensure linguistic compatibility. Any inaccuracies were investigated, retranslated into Spanish with a concerted effort to retain the intended meaning, and then back-translated again.

In accordance with Bradley’s (2003) recommendations, once the materials were translated, a review of them was elicited and feedback regarding the usability of the
translations were obtained from professionals who may potentially use the questionnaire.

For the purposes of this study, the Spanish version of the MSLSS was sent for review to bilingual student and master’s level clinicians from the Pacific University School of Professional Psychology. Bradley (2003) also recommends subjecting the translated version of any measure to the same psychometric analyses that would be expected of any new instrument. As such, after data collection was completed, the newly translated Spanish version of the MSLSS was subjected to statistical analyses to investigate whether children’s responses to the measure were significantly different based on the whether they completed the English or Spanish version. There were no significant differences, which indicated good translation and retention of intended meaning (See the Results section for details).

**Materials**

**Multidimensional Students’ Life Satisfaction Scale (MSLSS: Huebner, 1994).**

As mentioned above, the MSLSS is a 40-item self-report scale designed to measure Life Satisfaction across five domains relevant to the lives of children and adolescents ages 8 through 18 years of age (i.e., School, Self, Family, Friends, and Living Environment). The instrument was designed at a 1.5 grade reading level and has been shown to be appropriate with children on a wide range of ability levels (McCullough & Huebner, 2003). Participants responded to the MSLSS items using four response options; (1 = Never); (2 = Sometimes); (3 = Often); and (4 = Almost Always). The author of the MSLSS assigned point values for each answer for easy scoring. The measure includes ten negatively-keyed items which were reverse scored so that: (1 = Almost Always), (2 =
Often), and so forth. Higher scores throughout the scale indicate greater levels of life satisfaction in general and within specific life domains.

Total scores are derived for each domain by summing the item responses in a given domain and dividing by the number of total items in that domain. Because the domains consist of unequal number of items, this method makes the domain scores comparable to one another (Huebner, 2004). Again, higher domain specific scores suggest higher levels of Life Satisfaction in each respective domain.

The MSLSS has demonstrated good reliability and validity when administered to children “across a wide range of grades (3-12) and ability levels” (Huebner, 1994, p.2). Overall findings show that the reliabilities range from .70s to .90s; thus making it acceptable for research purposes (Huebner, 2001). Convergent and discriminant validity have demonstrated strong and positive correlations, ranging from .61 to .88, with other subjective measures of well-being for children (Greenspoon & Saklofske, 1997; Huebner, 2004). Demographic variables (with the exception of extreme poverty) are of no particular consequence to the responses of the MSLSS (Huebner, 1998).

**Demographics questionnaire.** Parents and guardians completed a demographics questionnaire including their child’s age, gender, grade, primary language spoken in the home, and ethnicity. The questionnaire was designed by the researcher for this study and also included questions aimed to assess the child’s level of potential risk in each specific life domain as measured by the MSLSS. These intended risk questions inquire about the number of parental figures in the home, neighborhood activities the child engages in, how the child feels about the quantity of his or her friends, the degree of the child’s sense of control over things that happen in his or her life, his or her level motivation for school,
and the amount of time he or she spends engaging in homework. We opted to develop these brief risk questions, rather than utilize a standardized and lengthier risk assessment in an effort to minimize the burden on parents and guardians as they completed the study materials. As previously mentioned, we obtained informed consent before and after parent-teacher conferences and we did not want to risk minimizing the sample size by potentially overburdening parents with a lengthy questionnaire. Therefore, we examined the literature to develop one or two risk questions per domain that were aimed at sufficiently capturing potential risk in each specific domain, as measured by the MSLSS. The risk questions used on the Demographics Questionnaire were not tested for validity or reliability prior to the study. As the risk questions were based on empirical findings, we considered them to satisfactorily assess risk.

The following are rationale for gathering the above demographic information. First, because this is a pilot study, demographics need to be collected to ensure the MSLSS is being used with populations it was normed on. Similarly, knowing the demographics of the participants may provide valuable information regarding limits and generalizability of the MSLSS. For example, in the current study much of the sample identifies as Hispanic and report Spanish as their primary home language. These demographic variables will be specifically examined in an effort to determine limits or generalizability of the MSLSS with this population. In addition, demographical information may serve to inform the elementary school regarding areas of student need and result in effective allocation of resources and funds. Data analysis of the above demographics may illuminate patterns or correlations that may arise in terms of
demographic risk variables and the results from the MSLSS and will inform the utility of using the MSLSS in this way.

The specific risk questions included in the demographic questionnaire were derived based on previously established risk and protective factors for children and adolescence and parallel with the domains measured by the MSLSS. For example, the one question to parents and guardians pertains to the number of parental figures in the participants’ home aligns with the Family domain and was based on literature which suggests that coming from a broken home or having poor parental supervision and/or monitoring is a risk to children (U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, 2008). The study’s Demographics Questionnaire also contains a question about the quantity of neighborhood activities the participant engages in. This question aligns with the Living Environment domain and was based on neighborhood risks children may face including community instability, low community attachment, feeling unsafe in the neighborhood and/or coming from a disadvantaged area (Shin et al., 2010). In contrast, availability of neighborhood resources and prosocial community involvement represent protective factors for children (Fraser, Kirby, & Smokowski, 2004). The question regarding whether parents and guardians opine that their child feels he or she has enough friends aligns with the Friends domain of the MSLSS and was based on literature which demonstrates peer rejection or an inadequate sense of peer interaction are risk factors for children (Martin et al., 2008). Parents and guardians of the children in the study also answered a risk question aimed at assessing the degree to which they believe their child feels a sense of control over things that happen to him or her. This question aligns with the Self domain of the MSLSS and was derived from literature which indicates that an individual sense of
victimization and low self-efficacy are established risk factors for children (U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, 2008). Academic oriented risk questions assessing participants’ motivation for school and the amount of time they spend doing homework parallel with the School domain of the MSLSS and were derived from the literature on established school related risks such as low academic aspirations, low school attachment, and/or low commitment to school (Williams, Ayers, Van Horn, & Arthur, 2004).

**Procedure**

**Recruitment of participants.** Recruitment of participants took place in the Spring of 2011 at a public elementary school in the Northwest region of the United States. Administrative permission and cooperation to conduct the study at the school was granted by the school principal prior to approval by the Pacific University Institutional Review Board. To recruit participants, the principal investigator and bilingual (i.e., English and Spanish speaking) research assistant attended Parent-Teacher Conferences for third and fourth grade students at the elementary school. At a booth near the entry and exit from the conference, parents and guardians of eligible study participants were presented with the opportunity to allow their third and fourth grade children to participate in the study. The voluntary nature of participation was emphasized; parents and guardians were informed that their choice to grant permission, or not, would not affect their child’s standing with the elementary school. After the research opportunity was presented, parents and guardians were offered an opportunity to view the Life Satisfaction survey that their child would be asked to complete and they were encouraged to ask questions. Interested parents and guardians were asked to complete Parental Informed Consent and a
Demographics Questionnaire and return these forms to the researchers at that time. Teachers were informed of the study as well as the presence and purpose of the researchers during recruitment episodes in the event that questions arose during the conference.

During recruitment of participants, parents and guardians were offered the Spanish and English versions of the materials, so that they could complete the forms in their preferred language. Some parents/guardians asked to have the materials read aloud to them by one of the researchers and this accommodation was gladly made.

A total of 57 parents and/or guardians were presented with the research opportunity, of which 54 agreed to grant permission for their third or fourth grader to participate in the study. The potential participants were also present while their parents and guardians completed the informed consent and demographics materials. At this time the researchers also described the study briefly to the children, answered their questions (e.g., “When will the study take place?” and “What is the study about?”), and informed them that their permission (i.e., child assent) would also be obtained the day of data collection, before they would be asked to complete the questionnaire. Researchers asked the children if they preferred to complete the measure in Spanish or English. At the time of recruitment, 13 out of 54 children stated their preference to complete the measure in Spanish.

Participants. Twenty-four girls and 26 boys participated in the study. Twenty-nine were in the third grade and 21 were in the fourth grade. Eleven participants were 8 years old; 25 participants were 9 years old; and fourteen participants were 10 years old. Thirty-four of the students were Hispanic; 14 were Caucasian; one student was Native
American Indian; and one student was Multiracial. Twenty-seven (54%) of the participants came from homes in which Spanish was the primary language, whereas 19 (38%) of the participants came from homes in which English was the primary language and 4 (.08%) of the participants came from bilingual homes. Forty-three of the 50 participants (86%) qualified for reduced fee or free lunches, indicating the sample came from predominantly lower socioeconomic status families.

**Data collection.** With permission of school personnel, data collection took place approximately three weeks after parental informed consent was obtained. The principal investigator worked with the school counselor and teachers to schedule three one-hour time frames, over the course of one week, during approved class time in which groups of 13 to 31 participants gathered in the school cafeteria to provide child assent and complete the MSLSS.

The principal investigator, research assistant, and school counselor assembled participants in the cafeteria. The principal investigator (during the English administration of the MSLSS) or Spanish speaking research assistant (during the administration of the Spanish version) presented students with an age-appropriate child assent form. As such, students were given an introduction to the researchers and the purpose of the study and what they were being asked to do in completing the questionnaire. The students were informed of the voluntary nature of participation and that they could withdraw from the study at any time, for any reason. They were told that their privacy is important and that their responses will remain confidential unless there was great concern about something they were to write on the questionnaire. In an effort to further promote confidentiality, create greater privacy and comfort, and to reduce social desirability effects while
completing the scale, students were asked to sit with at least one seat separating them from another student. They were encouraged to ask questions and were assisted in completion of the child assent form. After child assent forms were completed, students were asked to turn their attention to the MSLSS, at which time instructions were read aloud to the participants, including a practice item. The investigator and/or research assistant again answered questions which included “What does the word ‘Often’ mean?” and “How do we mark the answer we want?” Although the MSLSS is written at a 1.5 grade reading level, the developer (Huebner, 1994) recommends reading the directions aloud with younger children (grades 3-5). In order to minimize the effects of reading ability, Huebner’s (1994) recommendation was extended to all items; the investigator proceeded by reading each item aloud to students. Approximately five to ten seconds were given between questions to allow participants to complete each item. The students were encouraged to ask questions as they came up during the completion of the measure. Some of these questions included “What should I do if I want to change my answer?” and clarification of what specific items meant. For example, item number ten, which asked students to circle the degree to which they agree with the statement “I think I am good looking,” was brought up by students for clarification during each administration. The non-administering researcher perused the room in an effort to confirm that students answered each question they were read and to identify students who may have needed assistance, but may have been apprehensive to raise their hand. Should a student have omitted a question or appeared to need assistance, the researcher quietly prompted a response by restating the question and explaining briefly what it meant as well as asking
the child to confirm whether he or she could explain back what the item was asking to
insure the student understood the item.

In addition to the processes named above for each question’s administration, the
investigator and research assistant noted their availability to provide individual assistance
as needed after the measure was administered on a group level. In addition, the Spanish
speaking research assistant provided assistance to participants who better understood and
could more accurately complete the measure in Spanish and/or with individual assistance
after the group-level administration was complete. These processes were thoughtfully
implemented in an effort to reduce embarrassment for any student not understanding
content as administered orally, as well as to insure the participants were fully aware of
the meaning of each question in their primary language. In previous studies using the
MSLSS, authors did not address these factors as an issue and did not report them as
causing discomfort for child participants. However, in the current study these measures
were taken as preventive strategies to minimize student discomfort and maximize
participation efficiency. Furthermore, the extant literature on the MSLSS did not indicate
the instrument induced distress nor had any other negative effects on any of the child or
adolescent participants. However, as a precautionary measure, students were informed
that the researchers would be available during and after administration of the
questionnaire if any student would like to ask questions or debrief regarding any distress
that may have arisen while completing the MSLSS. The participants were also advised
that their school counselor is available to them on an ongoing basis.

Upon completion of the MSLSS, students were offered a small tangible reward
(e.g. a small toy or a bag of chips) in appreciation for their participation. None of the
participants chose to withdraw from the current study. However, they were informed that in the event that they chose to stop answering the questions they would still received a reward. After all students selected their thank you reward, they were escorted in groups back to their classrooms by the researchers.
Results

Pre-Analyses Data Screening

A total of 50 students completed the MSLSS, however; one child’s data was removed due to unreliable responding (i.e., the participant endorsed “Almost Always” on all items including the negatively keyed questions). As such, the following data analyses are based on the remaining sample of 49 participants. Despite diligence to insure the students answered all items, a total of 30% of the sample omitted at least one item equaling a total of 27 unanswered questions in the data. Six children omitted one item; four children omitted two items; one child omitted three items; and one child left an entire page of the questionnaire blank, omitting 12 items. In an effort to minimize the effects of unanswered questions and to retain the sample size, mean substitution was used to create values for omitted items ($M = 2.5$). Estimating predictive values for unanswered questions, based on the demographic variables of the child who omitted the item(s) was considered. However, previous research using the MSLSS did not report children’s responses varied significantly based on demographic differences (Ash & Huebner, 2001). In addition, the demographic variables of students who omitted items in the current study varied randomly and did not illuminate any patterns of non-responding which might necessitate the calculation of predictive values. Thus, mean substitution was maintained for the missing values. Notably, omitted items were randomly distributed throughout the questionnaire; there were no specific items that went unanswered more than other items.

Descriptive Statistics

On the MSLSS, participants’ overall total Life Satisfaction rating was ($M = 3.16, SD = .45$), where a rating of four indicates the highest satisfaction and a rating of one
indicates the lowest satisfaction. Across life domains, participants endorsed the highest satisfaction in the Friends domain ($M = 3.26, SD = .78$), followed by the Family domain ($M = 3.28, SD = .56$), and the Self domain ($M = 3.09, SD = .56$). Students endorsed the lowest Life Satisfaction, although only moderately lower, in the Living Environment domain ($M = 3.07, SD = .55$) and School domain ($M = 3.02, SD = .63$). The two items in which participants most frequently endorsed low satisfaction are as follows: “I wish there were different people in my neighborhood” ($M = 2.65, SD = 1.22$) from the Living Environment domain; and “I wish I didn’t have to go to school” ($M = 2.72, SD = 1.13$) from the School domain. The two items in which participants most frequently endorsed high satisfaction asked the children to rate how often the following statements are true for them: “I enjoy being at home with my family” ($M = 3.60, SD = .73$) from the Family; and “I learn a lot at school” ($M = 3.47, SD = .87$) from the School domain.

As discussed earlier, the MSLSS was translated into Spanish and this Spanish version was used for the first time in the current study. As such, it was important to assess whether any differences arose in participant responding when English and Spanish versions were compared for analysis. A total of 37 students chose to take the questionnaire in English, whereas 12 students completed the questionnaire in Spanish. The participant’s mean total Life Satisfaction for the English version was ($M = 3.15, SD = .36$) and for the Spanish translation was ($M = 3.11, SD = .47$). A One-Way ANOVA indicated there were no significant differences in how students responded to the Spanish compared to English versions of the measure, suggesting an accurate translation of items. Across life domains, participants also endorsed items similarly on both versions of the measure; Friends domain in Spanish ($M = 3.23, SD = .73$) and in English ($M = 3.27, SD =$
.80); Family domain in Spanish ($M = 3.24, SD = .54$) and in English ($M = 3.29, SD = .57$); Self domain in Spanish ($M = 3.02, SD = .51$) and in English ($M = 3.12, SD = .58$); Living Environment domain in Spanish ($M = 3.16, SD = .46$) and in English ($M = 3.04, SD = .58$); and the School domain in Spanish ($M = 2.90, SD = .75$) and in English ($M = 3.05, SD = .59$).

**Relationship Between Demographics and MSLSS Responses**

Prior to conducting a correlation analysis to examine the relationships between variables, One-Way ANOVAs were conducted to determine if there were significant differences in children’s responses on the MSLSS based on participant demographics (i.e., age, gender, ethnicity, grade, primary language spoken in the home) and survey characteristics (i.e., Spanish compared to English versions of the questionnaire). Results from One-Way ANOVAs indicated there were no significant differences in children’s responses based on: age, grade, primary language spoken in the home, or whether the participant completed the MSLSS in Spanish or English (See Table 2). However, results did indicate there were significant differences in children’s responses in the School domain based on their gender, $F (1, 47) = 9.40, p = .004, \eta^2 = .17, 95\% CI [2.84, 3.20]$. These results indicated that girls endorsed greater overall satisfaction with school ($M = 3.28, SD = .50$) compared to boys ($M = 2.77, SD = .64$). The ANOVA was also significant based on gender for the total Life Satisfaction score, $F (1, 47) = 4.44, p = .041, \eta^2 = .09, 95\% CI [3.02, 3.27]$. Girls endorsed greater total Life Satisfaction ($M = 3.72, SD = .40$) compared to boys ($M = 3.02, SD = .45$).
Table 2
*Means and Standard Deviations of Non-Significant ANOVAs*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Demographic Variable</th>
<th>MSLSS Total Score</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>M</td>
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<tr>
<td>Age</td>
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<td>4th grade</td>
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<tr>
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<td>English</td>
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<tr>
<td>Spanish</td>
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<tr>
<td>Bilingual</td>
<td>2.78</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MSLSS Language</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>English</td>
<td>3.15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Spanish</td>
<td>3.11</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Post-Hoc tests were conducted to explore the effect size of all significant ANOVAs. The effect sizes were calculated to investigate the impact of one variable (e.g., gender, primary home language) on the MSLSS outcomes (i.e., children’s responses to the MSLSS). Interpretation of the strength of effect sizes was taken from Green and Salkind (2008) who suggest that an "$\eta^2$ of .01, .06., and .14 are, by convention, interpreted as small, medium, and large, respectively" (p.185). Regarding the gender demographic variable, the effect size estimates ranged from medium to large ($\eta^2 = .09$ to $\eta^2 = .17$) and indicated that as much as 17% of the variance in total Life Satisfaction scores and responses in the School domain may be explained by gender. A One-Way ANOVA also indicated significant differences in parent/guardian report of their child’s school motivation based on gender $F (1, 46) = 5.31, p = .03, \eta^2 = .10, 95\% CI [3.97, 4.49]$. Parents and guardians of female children endorsed their child to have greater
school motivation ($M = 4.52, SD = .79$) compared to parents and guardians of male children ($M = 3.96, SD = .89$). The effect size estimate for gender was medium ($\eta^2 = .10$) and indicated that approximately 10% of the variance in parent/guardian report of school motivation may be explained by the gender of the participant. Due to the significance of this demographic variable, gender was included as a control variable in the correlation analysis.

**Relationship Between Demographics and Parent Responses to Risk Questions**

Results indicated that there were significant differences in parent responses to risk questions based on ethnicity ($p < .05$). The One-Way ANOVA indicated significant differences in whether or not children qualify for reduced fee or free lunches based on ethnicity $F (3, 45) = 8.52, p = .000, \eta^2 = .36$. Specifically, parents and guardians of the only Native American participant and the only Multiracial participant indicated they do not receive reduced fee or free lunches; whereas the majority of Caucasian parents and guardians indicate their children do receive reduced fee or free lunches ($M = 1.29, SD = .47$) and the majority of Hispanic parents and guardians indicated their children receive reduced fee or free lunches ($M = 1.03, SD = .17$). The effect size estimate for ethnicity was large ($\eta^2 = .36$) and suggested that approximately 36% of the variance in whether or not a child receives reduced fee or free lunches may be explained by ethnicity. However, this finding is likely skewed due to the inconsistencies in the size of ethnic groups (Caucasian, n=34; Hispanic, n=14; Native American Indian, n=1; Multiracial, n=1). The 95% confidence interval for the difference in means is not calculable because the “groups” with just one Native American Indian child and one Multiracial child do not have means and standard deviations. There were also significant differences based on
ethnicity for the number of neighborhood activities that parents and guardians endorsed their child engages in $F (3, 44) = 5.50, p = .003, \eta^2 = .27$. Specifically, the parent or guardian of the Multiracial child indicated their child engages in five neighborhood activities; the parent or guardian of the Native American child indicated their child engages in four neighborhood activities (means and standard deviations are not available for these ethnic groups that have only one member each); followed by the parents and guardians of Caucasian students ($M = 4.90, SD = 1.90$); followed by Hispanic students, whose parents or guardians endorsed the lowest number of neighborhood activities ($M = 2.38, SD = 1.41$). Again, the effect size estimate for ethnicity appeared large and suggested that as much as 27% of the variance in how many neighborhood activities a child engages in may be explained by ethnicity. Although there are significant differences in parent responses to risk questions based on ethnicity ($p = <.05$), there were no significant differences in how children endorsed the MSLSS based on ethnicity (See Table 2); therefore ethnicity will not be included as a control variable in the correlation analysis.

Results from a One-Way ANOVA indicated there were significant differences in the number of neighborhood activities a child engages in based on the primary language spoken in the home $F (3, 44) = 6.35, p = .001, \eta^2 = .32, 95\% \text{ CI} [2.50, 3.54]$. Specifically, students with English as their primary home language endorsed the highest number of activities ($M = 4.11, SD = 1.64$), followed by students with a Bilingual primary home language ($M = 3.67, SD = 1.53$), with students whose primary home language is Spanish engaging in the lowest number of neighborhood activities ($M = 2.31, SD = 1.46$). The effect size estimates for the primary language spoken in the home were large ($\eta^2 = .32$).
and suggested that as much as 32% of the variance in a child’s neighborhood activities may be explained by home language.

There were also significant differences in parent/guardian endorsement of their child’s motivation for school based on home language $F (3, 44) = 3.00, p = .04, \eta^2 = .17, 95\% \text{ CI } [3.97, 4.49]$. Specifically, parents and guardians of Bilingual students endorsed the highest student school motivation ($M = 4.67, SD = .58$); followed by parents and guardians of Spanish speaking students ($M = 4.50, SD = .81$); while parents and guardians of English speaking students endorsed their children as having the lowest school motivation ($M = 3.78, SD = .89$). The effect size was large ($\eta^2 = .17$) and suggested that 17% of the variance of a child’s motivation for school can be explained by the child’s primary home language. Although home language was significant in terms of parent and guardian endorsement of their child’s number of neighborhood activities and motivation for school, the home language of the participant did not have a significant effect on the way in which the child endorsed items on the MSLSS, therefore; it was not entered as a control variable in the correlation analysis.

**Correlation Analysis Results**

A Pearson correlation analysis was used to examine the relationship between all variables in the study. Specifically the zero-order relationships were analyzed; the relationship between two variables (e.g., parent response to a risk question and child responses on the MSLSS) while controlling the influence of all other variables in the analysis. As seen in Table 3, results indicate that there is a significant relationship ($r = .29, p = .043$) between child’s school motivation (as rated by parent or guardian) and participant satisfaction within the School domain (as endorsed by the child on the
Table 3  
Zero Order Correlation Results

<table>
<thead>
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<th>Variable</th>
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<td>3. Parental Figures</td>
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<td>5. Friends</td>
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<td>6. Control</td>
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<td>-.21</td>
<td>.26</td>
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<td>8. Homework Hours</td>
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<td>10. Self Domain</td>
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<td>-.02</td>
<td>.10</td>
<td>-.08</td>
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<td>.09</td>
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<td>13. Living Environment Domain</td>
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<td>.08</td>
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<td>-.14</td>
<td>.02</td>
<td>-.04</td>
<td>.01</td>
<td>.05</td>
<td>.49</td>
<td>.44</td>
<td>.22</td>
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<td>14. Total Life Satisfaction</td>
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<td>.76</td>
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</table>

Note. Bold coefficients significant (p < .05). Cronbach’s Alpha presented along diagonal.
questionnaire). No other relationships between the risk factors assessed on the Demographics Questionnaire and domain satisfaction on the MSLSS were significant. A hierarchical regression analysis was used to further investigate in what ways risk factors predict satisfaction with the School domain of life. As seen in Table 4, results from the regression analysis indicate that, even after controlling for gender and all other risk factors, school motivation remains a significant predictor ($p = .047$) of student satisfaction within the School domain ($B = .35$).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variable</th>
<th>Satisfaction within the School Domain</th>
<th>$\beta$</th>
<th>R2 ($p$)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Step I</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>.16 (.01)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gender</td>
<td>-4.09</td>
<td>-41</td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
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<td>.00</td>
<td>.14 (.43)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<td>-.42</td>
<td>-.10</td>
<td>.14 (.43)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number of Activities</td>
<td>-.32</td>
<td>-.11</td>
<td>.14 (.43)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Friends</td>
<td>.18</td>
<td>.04</td>
<td>.14 (.43)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Control</td>
<td>-.96</td>
<td>-.17</td>
<td>.14 (.43)</td>
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<tr>
<td>School Motivation</td>
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<td>.35</td>
<td>.14 (.43)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Homework Hours</td>
<td>-.91</td>
<td>-.15</td>
<td>.14 (.43)</td>
</tr>
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</table>

Note: Bold coefficients significant ($p < .05$).
Discussion

The following section addresses findings regarding the three goals of the current study: Goal 1) to explore the practical utility of using the MSLSS with school children as a means of identification of risks; Goal 2) to learn potential risks which may be illuminated through assessment of the MSLSS; and Goal 3) to investigate relationships between potential risk factors and children’s level of Life Satisfaction as measured by the MSLSS. Furthermore, additional significant findings are discussed as well as limitations and strengths of the study. Implications of the study including directions for future research are addressed and conclusions are stated.

Findings of the Study

Goal one: What was the practical utility of using the MSLSS in a school setting as means of prevention? Results from the current study suggest the naturalistic setting of children’s academic environment is a convenient, accessible, and feasible setting for assessment using the MSLSS. School administrators, teachers, and the school counselor where the study took place were accommodating and contributed greatly to a smooth data collection process. In addition, approximately 95% of the parents and guardians (54 out of 57) who were presented with the research opportunity agreed to sign consent for their child to participate in the study. It is important to note that the school climate where the study took place was friendly and cooperative. As such, the positive response from parents and guardians may not be generalizable to all school environments. None-the-less, this large percentage of parent/guardian cooperation was encouraging. Similarly, all children who were asked to participate in the study agreed and signed assent. Children appeared eager to participate and thoughtful in their responses.
They also appeared to appreciate the confidential nature of the assessment as evidenced by many participants guarding their answers from their neighbors view.

In addition, administering the MSLSS in a group format was effective. The groups varied in size from 10 to 27 students with the smaller group representing the smoothest process, in terms of administering the measure. In the smaller group children asked more questions prior to completing the questionnaire, there was less social interacting among the students, and greater ability for the researchers to monitor participants to ensure they were following along accurately and answering all items. However, it is important to note that although administering the measure was relatively easier with the smaller group, the larger groups also resulted in successful data collection.

In sum, the current study suggests good practical utility and relative ease of administration of the MSLSS in a naturalistic school setting. Parent, student, and school administrative cooperation was strong, and researchers’ behavioral observations and usable data evidence the good practical utility.

**Goal two: What potential risks did the MSLSS illuminate?** The second goal of the study was to explore what potential risks are illuminated through student completion of the MSLSS. Overall, children in this sample endorsed high total levels of Life Satisfaction as well as high satisfaction across all domains. However, some children endorsed considerably lower satisfaction in one domain compared to other domains. For example, one participant consistently endorsed low satisfaction in the Friends domain by answering “Never” to statements such as “My friends are nice to me” and “My friends will help me if I need it,” whereas the same student endorsed high satisfaction in the Family domain and consistently answered “Almost Always” to statements including “I
like spending time with my family.” For another child, the MSLSS illuminated potential risks in the Self domain compared to other domains. This participant endorsed “Never” to the statement “I like myself” and endorsed “Sometimes” to the statement “There are lots of things I can do well,” whereas the participant’s responses for all other domains indicated high levels of satisfaction. Consequently, the MSLSS identified specific risk areas that would be ideal for targeting interventions with these children.

These two examples illustrate a common occurrence among the data and suggest it is logical that some students may face potential risks in specific life domains, but not others. Therefore, using the MSLSS to identify potential risks in this way can provide school teachers, counselors, and mental health professionals with relevant information about students which they can use to target interventions.

Overall, the study illuminated that the greatest area of potential risk among the sample was in the School domain, with students endorsing relatively lower satisfaction in this area of their lives. It is important to note that although the School domain was found to represent the area of lowest overall satisfaction for the participants, their responses to questions in the School domain still demonstrated they experience high satisfaction at school. Within the broad School domain, there were mixed findings in terms of how children endorsed specific items. For example, the School domain contained the item that received the lowest satisfaction (i.e., “I wish I didn’t have to go to school”) among all MSLSS items, as well as two items that received the second highest satisfaction (i.e., “I learn a lot at school”; “I enjoy school activities”) among all total items. One possible explanation for the variable endorsements in the School domain is that this setting likely
represents for children an environment where they are required to work hard, in terms of learning, and they also engage and play with their friends.

As mentioned above, the participants in this study endorsed high overall levels of satisfaction across domains and in their total Life Satisfaction scores. The average total score was a 3.16, where a score of four represents the most satisfaction possible on the MSLSS. Although there was variability among individual students’ satisfaction ratings from one domain to the next, in the overall sample the variability between satisfaction across domains was minimal.

Goal three: What were the relationships between potential risks and endorsed child satisfaction? The third goal of the study was to explore the relationship between risk factors on the Demographics Questionnaire (as measured by parent/guardian report) and children’s level of Life Satisfaction in corresponding areas in their lives (as measured by self-report on the MSLSS). The main finding indicates a strong correlation between the way in which children endorsed questions within the School domain and the degree to which their parents answered a potential academic risk question. To illustrate, when parents and guardians endorsed their child as “Never” motivated for school, their child was significantly more likely to endorse he or she “Never” learns a lot at school and that school is “Never” interesting. Whereas, students of parents who endorsed their child as “Almost Always” being motivated for school, were significantly more likely to report themselves as “Almost Always” looking forward to going to school and as “Never” feeling bad at school.

As such, these results indicated there is a strong positive correlation between children’s responses on the MSLSS regarding their personal judgments of satisfaction in
the School domain and how parents and guardians respond to an item on the Demographics Questionnaire asking them to report of the degree to which they believe their child feels motivated for school. The greater the motivation for school, the greater the satisfaction in school. Of interest is the finding that while parent and guardian report of their child’s motivation for school correlated with their child’s level of satisfaction in the School domain, the amount of time the child spends on daily homework had no correlation with his or her satisfaction in the School domain.

The risk questions that we intended to align with all other domains measured by the MSLSS (i.e., Self, Living Environment, Family, and Friends) did not have significant relationships with how children endorsed MSLSS items in these domains. For example, the degree to which parents and guardians endorsed their child feels like he or she has control over things that happen to him or her did not correlate with the child’s level of satisfaction in the Self domain. Similarly, neither socioeconomic status (as assessed by whether the student qualifies for reduced fee or free lunches) or the number of neighborhood activities parents and guardians report their child engages in correlated with the child’s level of satisfaction in the Living Environment domain. In addition, having one parental figure in the home, compared to two or more, did not correlate with children’s level of satisfaction in the Family domain. Finally, parent and guardian report of the degree to which their child feels he or she has enough friends did not correlate with the child’s endorsement of satisfaction in the Friends domain. It is possible the above questions that were aimed at capturing potential risk which would parallel with each domain, lacked validity in terms of measuring risk as we intended.
One possible explanation for the general lack of significant correlations between risks and life satisfaction in this study is that, overall, the participants endorsed high life satisfaction across domains. As such, there may not have been enough low satisfaction reported by the participants with which potential risks would actually correlate with. It is, however; encouraging that the children endorsed such high levels of satisfaction. Another hypothesis for the minimal significance between risk and satisfaction is that perhaps the questionnaire we developed to assess potential risk was not a valid means of accurately measuring risk. Although all risk questions were derived from previous research regarding established risks that children may face, we asked parents and guardians just one or two risk questions per life domain. It is possible the brief nature of the risk assessment did not sufficiently capture potential risks.

**Additional findings of significance.** Data analyses examining demographic and risk variables illuminated some notable findings with regard to the lives of the participants which may be generalizable to other student populations. These findings provide important information for teachers and mental health professionals in academic settings who wish to foster a holistic approach and responsive environment for their students. In the results, gender was revealed as significantly impacting the degree to which participants endorse overall Life Satisfaction and satisfaction in the School domain. Specifically, girls endorsed they experience significantly higher satisfaction in these areas compared to boys. This finding was also discussed by Danielsen, Samdal, Hetland, and Wold (2009), in which they review literature revealing girls reported significantly higher school satisfaction than did boys. They hypothesized that girls endorse greater school satisfaction because they are indeed attaining greater academic
achievement than boys (Danielsen et al., 2009). The current study did not include data regarding participant grades with which to further explore that hypothesis.

Notable findings in terms of ethnicity and primary language spoken in the home were also illuminated in the current study and are discussed here. Parents and guardians who identified their child as Hispanic reported he or she engages in an average of 2.4 neighborhood activities, whereas parents and guardians who identify their child as Caucasian reported he or she engages in an average of 4.9 neighborhood activities. This is of added interest given that both Hispanic and Caucasian parents endorsed similar socioeconomic status (i.e., qualification for reduced fee or free lunches at 95% for Hispanic participants and 71% for Caucasian participants), which would suggest they may be living in the same or similar neighborhoods. The question arises, “What factors are contributing to the discrepancy in neighborhood involvement of English and Spanish children?” The US Census Bureau (2011) reported that between the years 2000 and 2010 the Hispanic population in the United States has increased 43%, totaling 50.5 million. Given the rapid growth of the Hispanic population, it is important for administrators in community and academic settings to be aware of disparities such as the discrepancy between neighborhood activities for English and Spanish children. With greater awareness they may facilitate allocation of resources which will maximize equality among these children. Although ethnic identity was significant in terms of community involvement for children in the current study, ethnicity did not result in significant differences in children’s endorsed total Life Satisfaction or satisfaction across specific life domains on the MSLSS.
Primary language spoken in the home (e.g., Spanish, English, or Bilingual) was revealed as having a significant impact on children’s motivation for school (as reported by parents and guardians). Children who came from Bilingual homes were reported as having the most motivation for school, followed by children who primarily speak Spanish in the home. Finally, children who primarily speak English in the home were reported by their parents and guardians as having the least motivation for school. One hypothesis for the finding that the bilingual students in the sample had the most motivation for school is that the particular school in which the study was conducted provides their students with bilingual classrooms and teachers. In this way, their academic needs may be well met by school programs which could, in turn, be reflective in the bilingual children’s high motivation. Similarly, for the children whose primary home language is Spanish, the bilingual classrooms and teachers are likely providing for their needs to learn and communicate in both languages. Whereas, the children whose primary home language is English may not have the same high motivation for school as they do not have a strong need to be learning in the Spanish language. As was the case with ethnicity, primary language spoken in the home did not significantly affect the degree to which children endorse satisfaction in the School domain or total Life Satisfaction.

The above findings of significance provide valuable information for educators who want to better understand their students and create programs/curriculum to target students’ individual needs and circumstances.

**Limitations and Strengths**

The current study had several inherent limitations as well as clear strengths. One limitation involves the questionnaire that we designed to assess potential risks. Our desire
not to burden parents and guardians with a lengthy risk assessment led to the inquiry of only one risk question per domain (with the exception of the School and the Living Environment domains, in which parents and guardians answered two risk questions). However, perhaps asking parents and guardians to complete a more comprehensive and standardized risk assessment may have illuminated more significant correlations between potential risks and children’s’ Life Satisfaction. Although, the questions intended to assess risk were derived from the literature and thought to align well with each MSLSS life domain, it is possible the questions posed to parents and guardians may not have been measuring risk sufficiently. The minimal correlation between parent responses to risk questions and student perceptions of satisfaction within corresponding domains may be explained, in part, by a lack of validity of the risk questions themselves.

Furthermore, we attempted to measure risk by asking parents and guardians risk questions, however; there may be other, more effective ways to measure potential risk. For example, looking at student’s grades, number of days absent from school, or their behavioral record at school may provide more valid and tangible ways of assessing risk that could align well with the MSLSS domains.

Another limitation of the current study was the relatively small sample size. Although the participants included predominantly minority students, it is possible that the relatively homogenous sample (e.g., 86% of the sample endorsed low SES, 96% are either Hispanic or Caucasian, and all participants in either the 3rd or 4th grades) and the overall high levels of Life Satisfaction that they endorsed, contributed to few differences in terms of demographic variables and little significance between risks factors and Life Satisfaction. As such, a larger sample size, as well as more heterogeneous participants
may have resulted in more differences in terms of how children responded to the MSLSS. Moreover, a larger sample would make the results more generalizable to other populations. The current results are based on findings from a specific small and friendly school with apparently like-minded parents and guardians. As such the data collection experience and results from data analyses may not be entirely generalizable to other academic settings.

Further, both the MSLSS and the Demographics Questionnaire are self-report measures which present another limitation of the current study. An inherent problem in self-report measures involves the potential of invalid responding (e.g., under- or over-reporting). For example, for the children, although they completed the MSLSS with empty seats to each side of them and were instructed to answer the questions honestly, they may have endorsed some items based on social desirability or what they thought was the best answer. Similarly, the parents and guardians may have inadvertently responded to risk questions in a way that presented their child in a more or less favorable light. Consequently, the face valid nature of the self-report measures in the current study may reflect a limitation that could have skewed the results.

The Spanish translated version of the MSLSS represents both a limitation and strength. The limitation is that, for example, the Spanish version of the MSLSS was not subjected to psychometric analyses prior to use in the current study. Thorough translation procedures were followed, as mentioned in the Method section, however; inter-item reliability, validity, etc were not explored to determine soundness of the translation for research purposes. As such, the translation is presumed to have accurately assessed Life Satisfaction similarly to the English version, and descriptive statistics support this
presumption, however; a limitation is that the measure did not undergo a more thorough psychometric examination.

Translating the MSLSS into Spanish and piloting it in a school with a large Hispanic population also represents a strength of the study and a valuable contribution to the literature. Findings suggested the translation to be strong and did not indicate the measure was biased in terms of children completing the measure in Spanish or English. The data evidenced that mean scores of children who completed the MSLSS in English or Spanish were similar across all life domains and in the total Life Satisfaction score. Consequently, a considerable strength of the current study is that it provided an opportunity to include and increase knowledge about English Language Learners, a growing population. In addition, with permission granted by Scott Huebner (personal communication, June 10, 2011), the developer of the MSLSS, the Spanish translated version of the measure is included in Appendix A and thus, is in the public domain and is free to use for research or other purposes.

A related strength is the involvement of a Spanish/Bilingual speaking research assistant who was present during recruitment of participants and data collection. Her presence was especially valuable when talking with Spanish speaking parents and guardians about informed consent and answering questions regarding the study. Frequently, she provided assistance to parents in completion of the Demographics Questionnaire as well as informed consent. As a result, the sample size was increased and the study was strengthened by being able to include participants who are English Language Learners.
Despite being a possible limitation in terms of generalizability as mentioned above, the setting in which the study was conducted also represents a strength. To begin, teacher and administrative cooperation within the elementary school where the study took place was strong. Similarly, parents, guardians, and students were friendly and appeared enthusiastic to have the opportunity to participate in the research. Students appeared thoughtful in their questions and responses. Consequently, our ability to follow protocol and administer the MSLSS as intended, to groups of students in an academic setting, was a strength. We experienced no complications or barriers during collection of consent, assent, or during administration of the MSLSS.

Another strength is that the study assessed eight to ten year old students, an age group that has not received as much attention in the research as older children and adolescents (Hirshfeld-Becker & Biederman, 2002). The current study led to increased knowledge of risks and satisfaction for this younger elementary population. Furthermore, some interesting findings were discovered regarding the school and living environment experiences based on children’s ethnicity and primary home language that could add to educators and researchers understanding of the complexities of elementary students.

**Implications of the Study**

Given the results, limits, and strengths of the current research, the implications of the current study are addressed here. First, we conclude that the naturalistic setting of an academic environment is a feasible place to assess Life Satisfactions in children. Similarly, administration of the measure in a group format was effective and resulted in typically clean data. An important implication of the study is the finding which indicates that risk questions in the School domain correlate well with children’s endorsement of
Life Satisfaction. Although the majority of MSLSS domains did not align strongly with specific risk questions, the study suggested there is value in looking at how individual students endorse satisfaction across domains to reveal specific potential risks. Consequently, the study suggests that standardized assessment of children’s Life Satisfaction, specifically using the MSLSS, in academic settings would likely be a useful way for teachers and school counselors to identify areas of potential risk for children. As such, there are important implications to teachers and counselors who use a standardized Life Satisfaction assessment and engage children in informed interventions to target potential risks before the risks come to fruition. In this way, children have an opportunity to benefit from early intervention and follow a trajectory that can lead to more positive outcomes. Due to the growing number of Hispanic students, a promising implication of the study is that the Spanish version of the MSLSS appears to have initial usefulness and accuracy in translation. With the added ability to implement assessment measures with English Language Learners, we are generalizing the utility of the MSLSS with a new child population. This helps answer the call to assess psychological health and create programs aimed at prevention and intervention for students (Huebner, 2004).

The implications of the current study also include ways in which the research could be carried forward. Given the success of the Spanish translation of the MSLSS in this study and that it has been placed in the public domain, it is suggested that the translation be used in future research with Spanish-speaking children and adolescents to contribute to the literature on this growing population. In addition, it is recommended that researchers subject the Spanish version of the MSLSS to the same psychometric analyses as any new measure.
Due to the limitation that the current study assessed risk in a brief manner, it is recommended that future research compare Life Satisfaction endorsements with a standardized and more comprehensive risk assessment in an effort to further explore using the MSLSS as a means of prevention and more fully capture potential risks. Further, future research would benefit from exploring means, other than self-report, to assess potential risk that children may face. Researchers and children would benefit from further research regarding the current finding that low satisfaction in the School domain significantly correlated with the risk of having low motivation for school in 3rd and 4th graders.

In addition, previous research has discussed the correlation between low SES and low endorsements of Life Satisfaction in children (Ash & Huebner, 2001). However, in the current study reportedly 86% of the participants have low SES and yet they did not endorse low Life Satisfaction. As such, future research exploring resilience in specific communities, such as the community where the current participants are living, may be beneficial in revealing protective and other factors that could be contributing to high Life Satisfaction despite having low SES. Given the evidence from this study regarding differences in school motivation and the number of neighborhood activities children engage in based on ethnicity and primary home language, it is suggested future research examine these kinds of disparities. This line of research may contribute to valuable community resources being better allocated to address specific needs of children of ethnic diversity. Finally, it is recommended that future research focus on this young elementary population. Given the known values of early intervention (Hirshfeld-Becker & Biederman, 2002) and the gap in the literature with younger children (Proctor, Linley, &
Maltby, 2009), additional focus on Life Satisfaction of younger children is important and may be used to improve their quality of life and short- and long-term trajectories.

Conclusions

Addressing the three goals of the study, the findings indicate that, 1) using the MSLSS in school settings can be practical, logical, and relatively easy; 2) Children might often endorse high satisfaction in one area and low in another (e.g., low satisfaction with friends and high satisfaction with family), or high satisfaction in a general domain but low satisfaction in particular areas pertaining to that domain (e.g., high satisfaction in Living Environment overall, but low satisfaction on any one item in the domain; and 3) The main significant finding from this study indicated children’s level of motivation for school, as reported by their parents and guardians, significantly correlates with children’s endorsed level of satisfaction in the School domain.

The findings, as a whole, indicated demographic differences (i.e., ethnicity and primary home language) significantly correlated with reports of children’s motivation for school and the number of neighborhood activities they engage in. In addition, gender was revealed as resulting in significant differences in children’s endorsements on the MSLSS; girls endorsed significantly greater total Life Satisfaction and greater satisfaction in the School domain compared to boys.

In conclusion, the current study substantiated the author’s research proposal that assessment of Life Satisfaction in children can be used effectively as a means of prevention by identifying potential risks which children may face.
References


Appendix A

Parent/Guardian Permission Form

1. Study title
   Assessment of Life Satisfaction in Children as a Means of Prevention and Identification of Risks
   (IRB# 021-11)

2. Study personnel

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Jennifer E. Kelly, M.S.</th>
<th>Alyson Williams, Ph.D.</th>
<th>Ainara Echanove, M.A.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Role</td>
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<td>Faculty Advisor</td>
<td>Research Assistant</td>
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<td>Pacific University</td>
<td>Pacific University</td>
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<td>School of Professional Psychology</td>
<td>School of Professional Psychology</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Email</td>
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<td><a href="mailto:alysonwilliams@pacificu.edu">alysonwilliams@pacificu.edu</a></td>
<td><a href="mailto:echa1048@pacificu.edu">echa1048@pacificu.edu</a></td>
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<tr>
<td>Telephone</td>
<td>(971)-404-5495</td>
<td>(503)-352-2429</td>
<td>(503)-708-5504</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

3. Study invitation, purpose, location and dates

- Fern Hill Elementary School, Forest Grove, Oregon.
- Spring 2011
- Data analysis will take place in the faculty advisor’s office and/or the main researcher’s office.
- Collected data will be analyzed and results (on a group level, without any identifying information) will be presented in the principal investigator’s doctoral dissertation.

4. Participant characteristics and exclusionary criteria

- Participants will be children enrolled in the regular 3rd or 4th grade school curriculum at Fern Hill Elementary School.
- Children in all other grades, children who do not provide assent, and children whose parents do not provide informed consent will not participate.

5. Study materials and procedures
Your child is invited to complete the Multidimensional Student’s Life Satisfaction Scale (MSLSS) in a group setting with other children at the Fern Hill Elementary School during a regular school day in the Spring of 2011.

Children will mark their answers on their own confidential sheet as the researcher reads the questions aloud. Completion of the MSLSS will take approximately 30-40 minutes and your child will be offered a small toy as a thank you for his/her participation.

A Spanish speaking research assistant will also administer the MSLSS in Spanish for children who prefer to complete the measure in Spanish.

Your child may withdraw from this study at any time for any reason.

6. Risks, risk reduction steps and clinical alternatives

Unknown and Anticipated risks and strategies to minimize/avoid

- There is minimal risk to participating in this research.
- Although unlikely, if your child experiences distress by some of the questionnaire items, a master's level mental health provider will be available the day of data collection to speak with your child.
- The school counselor is available on an ongoing basis to participants.
- Data will be kept in a confidential manner (i.e., informed consent, child assent, and study data will be kept separately stored in a locked file cabinet).

7. Adverse event handling and reporting plan

- If your child has an adverse reaction to the questionnaire items, the researcher will debrief the situation with you and provide you with assistance if needed.
- A report of the incident will also be filed with the Pacific University IRB the next normal business day if minor adverse events occur (e.g., mild distress due to questionnaire).
- The IRB office will be notified within 24 hours if a major adverse event occurs (e.g., significant distress due to questionnaire).
- If, through the course of the study, imminent risk to a child (i.e. suggestions or signs of abuse or harm to the child) is illuminated, the principal investigator will work with the faculty advisor and IRB and may be ethically required to break confidentiality and inform proper authorities of the deemed risk.

8. Direct benefits and/or payment to participants

a. Benefit
   There is no direct benefit to you or your child as a participant.

b. Reward
   Participants will be offered a small toy (e.g., sticker, eraser, or candy) even if they withdraw from the study.

9. Promise of privacy

- All participant information and data will be kept in a confidential manner; informed consent, child assent, and identifying information will be kept separate from data and both will be kept in double locked secure places.
- Each participant will be assigned a unique ID # which will appear on their MSLSS, demographics sheet, and informational sheet. Only the principal investigator would be
able to associate names with data, and would only do so under the rarest of conditions (e.g. if a participant appeared to face imminent risk).
♦ During data collection efforts will be made to protect privacy of participants by asking them to sit with adequate space between participants.

10. Medical care and compensation in the event of accidental injury
♦ During your child’s participation in this project, your child is not a Pacific University clinic patient or client, nor will (s)he be receiving complete mental health care as a result of his/her participation in this study.
♦ In the unlikely case that your child is injured during participation in this study and it is not due to negligence by Pacific University, the researchers, or any organization associated with the research, you and your child should not expect to receive compensation or medical care from Pacific University, the researchers, or any organization associated with the study.

11. Voluntary nature of the study
♦ Participation is completely voluntary.
♦ Your decision whether or not to allow your child to participate will not affect you or your child’s current or future relations with Fern Hill Elementary School or Pacific University.
♦ If you decide to allow your child to participate, your child may withdraw from the study at any time with no adverse consequences.
♦ If your child withdraws early he/she will still be offered a small toy as a thank you.

12. Contacts and questions
♦ The researcher will be happy to answer any questions you may have at any time during or after the course of the study. Complete contact information for the researchers is noted on the first page of this form. If the study in question is a student project, please contact the faculty advisor.
♦ If you are not satisfied with the answers you receive, please call Pacific University’s Institutional Review Board, at (503) 352 – 2112 to discuss your questions or concerns further. All concerns and questions will be kept in confidence.

13. Statement of consent
Yes  No
☐  ☐  I am the legal parent / guardian of ______________________________ (participant name).
☐  ☐  I have read and understand the description of his/her participation duties and all questions have been answered to my satisfaction.
☐  ☐  I grant permission for him/her to participate in this study.
☐  ☐  I understand that the investigators will also obtain his/her independent assent before further activity.
☐  ☐  I understand that I may withdraw this permission and/or that s/he may withdraw assent at any time without consequence.
☐  ☐  I have been offered a copy of this form to keep for my records.
☐  ☐  I give permission for the researcher(s) to administer the Multidimensional Students Life Satisfaction Scale questionnaire to my child.
Participant’s full name (please print) ___________________________ Date of birth ______

Parent/guardian’s name (please print) __________________________________________

Parent/guardian’s signature ___________________________ Date __________

Investigator’s signature ___________________________ Date __________

14. Participant contact information

This contact information is required in case any issues arise with the study and participants’ families need to be notified and/or to provide participants’ families with the results of the study, if they wish.

Would you like to have a summary of the results after the study is completed? ___Yes ____No

Street address: ___________________________

Telephone: ___________________________

Email: ___________________________
1. Study Title:

Assessment of Life Satisfaction in Children as a Means of Prevention and Identification of Risks (IRB# 021-11)

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<td>School of Professional Psychology</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Email</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Telephone</td>
<td>(971)-404-5495</td>
<td>(503)-352-2429</td>
<td>(503)-708-5504</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

3. Study Location

This study will take place on site at Fern Hill Elementary School in Forest Grove, Oregon.

Kids in the 3rd or 4th grade classes at Fern Hill Elementary School are being asked to be in this study. Kids from other grades are not being asked to be in this study. You will only be part of this study if your parent or caregiver gives you permission and only if you say you want to participate.

4. Study Materials and Procedures

If you choose to be in our study, we will ask you to answer a sheet of questions in a schoolroom with other kids from your school. An adult will read the directions and questions to you and you will circle the answers that best fit you and how you feel about your life. This is not like a test. There are no right or wrong answers. If you want to stop answering the questions, you can do that at any time. An adult will be there to answer any questions you might have. We will not show your answers to other kids or to your teachers. If it is easier for you ask questions in Spanish, we will have a Spanish speaking adult to help you. Answering the sheet of questions will take about 30 to 40 minutes and you will be given a small thank you toy after.
You will probably feel fine after being part of this study. If you do not feel good about any of the questions or if you want to talk to somebody, we will have an adult ready to you to talk to. Also, your school counselor is there for you any other time if you want to talk about anything. All information about you will be kept private.

If you have a bad reaction to any of the questions, we will talk to you about it and help you find a good adult to talk with. We will keep track of the fact that you had a bad reaction and let the Pacific University Institutional Review Board know about it to make sure you are okay.

If you are part of the study, you will get a small toy as a reward, even if you decide you want to stop answering the questions.

5. Privacy

All information you give us about you will be kept private. While you fill out answers to the questions, you will be sitting with space between you and the other kids in your school. That way none of the other kids can see your answers.

6. Voluntary Nature of the Study

It is your choice to be a part of this study. Your school will not treat you any differently if you say you do not want to be a part of the study or if you say you will not participate. If you begin answering the questions and then decide to stop, you will still get a small toy as a thank you.

7. Contacts and Questions

We will be happy to answer any questions you have at any time during the study. Our email and phone number is on the top of the first page if you want to ask us a question later. If you do not like the answers we have to your questions, you can call Pacific University’s Institutional Review Board, at (503) 352 – 2112. All of your questions will be kept private.

8. Statement of Assent

Yes ☐ No ☐
My name is ______________________________ (participant name).
I have read and understand the description of how I will participate in this study.
I have asked all the questions that I have and I understand the answers to all of my questions.
I agree to participate in this study.
I understand that I can stop participating in the study any time and nothing bad will happen.
I have been offered a copy of this form to keep for my records.

Your Full Name: Please Print
1. **Titulo del estudio de investigación**

Evaluación de satisfacción en la vida de niños como forma de prevención y identificación de riesgos (IRB# 021-11)

2. **Personal del establecimiento de investigación**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Nombre</th>
<th>Jennifer E. Kelly, M.S.</th>
<th>Alyson Williams, Ph.D.</th>
<th>Aina Echanove, M.A.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Role</td>
<td>Investigadora Principal</td>
<td>Supervisor de Facultad</td>
<td>Asistente de Investigación</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Institución</td>
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<tr>
<td>Programa</td>
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<td>profesional</td>
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<tr>
<td>Correo Electrónico</td>
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<td>(503)-352-2429</td>
<td>(503)-708-5504</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

3. **invitación, propósito, sitio y las fechas del estudio**
   - En la escuela primaria de Fern Hill en Forest Grove, Oregon.
   - Primavera del 2011
   - Análisis de los datos se llevará a cabo en la oficina de la supervisor de facultad o en la oficina del investigador principal.
   - Los datos recogidos serán analizados y los resultados se presentarán en la disertación de la investigadora principal.

4. **Características de los participantes y los criterios de exclusión**
   - Participantes serán niños/a inscritos en tercer o cuarto grado en la escuela primaria de Fern Hill.
   - No participarán niños/a inscritos en otros grados, niños que eligen no participar, ni niños/a cuyos padres no dan su permiso para que participen.

5. **Materiales y el procedimiento del estudio**
   - A su niño/a le invitamos a llenar un cuestionario sobre la satisfacción de vida estudiantil en un grupo con otros niños en la escuela primaria de Fern Hill durante un día regular en la primavera del 2011.
   - Los niños marcarán sus respuestas en su propia hoja confidencial mientras que el investigador lee las preguntas en voz alta. El cuestionario llevara 30 a 40 minutos para
terminar y a su hijo se le ofrecerá un juguete pequeño como agradecimiento por su participación.

- Un asistente que hable Español también administrará el cuestionario en Español para niños quienes prefieren completar el cuestionario en Español.
- Su niño/a puede retirarse del estudio en cualquier momento y por cualquier razón.

### 6. Riesgos previstos, las medidas adoptadas para reducir los riesgos, y alternativas clínicas

**Riesgos desconocidos o previstos y las estrategias para reducir o evitarlos**

- Los riesgos que se suponen en participar en este estudio son mínimos.
- Aunque es poco probable, si su niño/a experimenta angustia por algunas preguntas del cuestionario, un proveedor de salud mental de nivel de maestría estará disponible el mismo día para hablar con su niño/a.
- El consejero/a de la escuela esta disponible regularmente para los participantes.
- Los datos del estudio serán conservados de forma confidencial (por ejemplo, formulario de consentimiento, asentimiento del niño/a, y datos del estudio se mantendrán separados en un lugar seguro bajo llave).

### 7. Tratamiento de eventos adversas y plan de como reportarlos

- Si su niño/a tiene una experiencia adversa relacionada con las preguntas del cuestionario, el investigador hablara con usted y le proporcionará asistencia si es necesario.
- Si se producen efectos adversos mínimos (por ejemplo, angustia mínima debido al cuestionario) un informe del incidente también se presentará ante la Junta Revisora Institucional de la Universidad Pacific el día siguiente.
- Si se producen efectos adversos graves (por ejemplo, angustia significativa debido al cuestionario), la oficina de Junta Revisora Institucional será notificada dentro de 24 horas.
- Si durante el estudio se produce un riesgo iminente, la investigadora principal trabajará con la supervisor de facultad y con la Junta Revisora Institucional. La investigadora principal puede ser éticamente obligada a romper la confidencialidad para informar a las autoridades correspondientes del riesgo.

### 8. Los beneficios directos y/o el pago los participantes

**a. Beneficio(s)**

No hay beneficios directos para usted ni para su niño/a como participante.

**b. Pago(s) or recompensa(s)**

A los participantes se les ofrecerá un pequeño juguete (por ejemplo, pegatina, caramelo, goma de borrar), incluso si se retiran del estudio.

### 9. Promesa de Privacidad

- Todá la información de los participantes se mantendrá estrictamente confidencial; formulario de consentimiento, asentimiento del niño/a, y la identificación de su niño/a permanecerán en lugares seguro bajo llave.
- A cada participante se le asignará un número de identidad que aparecerá en su cuestionario, hoja de datos demográficos, y hoja informativa. Sólo el investigador principal sabrá que un participante se asocia con un número específico y solo bajo condiciones raros (por ejemplo, si un participante esta en riesgo).
Durante la administración del cuestionario se harán esfuerzos para proteger la privacidad de los participantes pidiéndoles que se sienten con un espacio adecuado entre los otros participantes.

10. Atención médico e indemnización en el caso de una lesión accidental
- Durante el participación de su niño/a en este estudio, él o ella no es paciente/cliente de la clínica de la Universidad Pacífic; su niño/a no recibirá servicios de salud mental como resultado de su participación en este estudio.
- Si su niño/a se lesiona durante participación en este estudio y no se debe a la negligencia de la Universidad Pacífic, los investigadores, o cualquier organización asociada con el estudio, usted y su niño/a no deben esperar a recibir compensación o atención médica por medio de la Universidad Pacífic, de los investigadores, ni de cualquier organización relacionada con el estudio.

11. Estudio voluntario
- Participar en el estudio es completamente voluntario.
- Su decisión de permitir que su niño/a participe no afectará sus relaciones actuales o futuras con la escuela primaria de Fern Hill o con la Universidad Pacífic.
- Si decide permitir la participación de su niño/a, usted y su hijo/a tienen la libertad de retirarse en cualquier momento sin perjuicio ni consecuencias negativas.
- Si su niño/a decide retirarse temprano, él o ella se le ofrecerá un juguete pequeño como agradecimiento.

12. Contactos y preguntas
- Los investigadores estarán encantados de responder a cualquier pregunta que pueda tener en cualquier momento durante el transcurso del estudio. La información de contacto del los investigadores se encuentra en la primera página de este documento.
- Si usted no está satisfecho/a con las respuestas que recibe, por favor llame al Comité de Revisión Institucional de la Universidad Pacífic al número (503) 352-2112 para discutir sus preguntas o preocupaciones.

13. Declaración de consentimiento

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Si</th>
<th>No</th>
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</table>
Nombre del niño/a: En letra imprenta

Fecha de nacimiento del niño/a

Nombre del padre/tutor legal: En letra imprenta

Firma del padre/tutor legal Fecha

Firma del investigador/a Fecha

14. Información de contacto del participante

Esta información de contacto es requerida en caso de que surja algún inconveniente con el estudio y deben ser notificados las familias de los participantes, o para notificar a las familias de los participantes sobre los resultados del estudio, si así lo desean.

Le gustaría tener un sumario de los resultados después de finalizar el estudio?  ___Si _____No

Dirección postal: ...........................................

Teléfono: ............................................

Correo electrónico: ............................................
Formulario de Asentimiento del Niño

1. **Titulo del estudio de investigación**
   
   Evaluación de satisfacción en la vida de niños como forma de prevención y identificación de riesgos (IRB# 021-11)

2. **Personal del establecimiento de investigación**

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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

3. **Sitio de estudio**

   El estudio en el que está invitado a participar se llevará a cabo en la escuela primaria de Fern Hill en Forest Grove, Oregon.

3. **Materiales del estudio y el procedimiento**

   Se les pide ser parte de este estudio a los niños en el tercer o cuarto grado en la escuela de Fern Hill. Los niños de otros grados no se les pide ser parte de este estudio. Solo formarás parte de este estudio si su padre o tutor legal le da permiso y solo si usted dice que quiere participar.

   Si usted elige ser parte de este estudio, se le pedirá responder a una hoja de preguntas con otros niños de su escuela. Un adulto le leerá las preguntas y usted elegirá las respuestas que mejor represente como se siente en su vida. Esto no es como una examen o prueba. No hay respuestas correctas o incorrectas. Si desea dejar de contestar a las preguntas, usted puede hacerlo en cualquier momento. Un adulto estará presente para contestar a cualquier pregunta que usted pueda tener. No mostraremos sus respuestas a otros niños o sus maestros. Si para usted es más fácil hacer preguntas en Español, habrá un adulto que hable Español para ayudarle. Respondiendo a la hoja de preguntas le durará 30 a 40 minutos. Después, le ofreceremos un pequeño juguete como agradecimiento.
Es probable que usted se sienta bien y normal después de haber sido parte de este estudio. Si usted no se siente bien acerca de cualquier pregunta o si desea hablar con alguien, tendremos a un adulto dispuesto a hablar con usted. También, el consejero/a de su escuela esta a su disposición en cualquier otro momento si quieres hablar de cualquier cosa. Toda su información se mantendrá privada.

Si usted tiene una reacción adversa a alguna de las preguntas, vamos a hablar con usted y ayudarle a encontrar un adulto bueno para hablar con el. No perderemos de vista el hecho de que tuvo una mala reacción y informaremos a la Junta Revisora Institucional de la Universidad Pacific.

Si usted es parte de este estudio, recibirá un juguete pequeño, incluso si se retira del estudio.

5. Privacidad

Toda la información que usted nos de se mantendrá privada. Usted estará sentado/a con un espacio entre los otros niños de la escuela mientras que marque respuestas a las preguntas. Así, no habrá ninguna forma de que los otros niños puedan ver sus respuestas.

6. Estudio voluntario

Es su decisión ser parte de este estudio. Su escuela no le tratará diferente si usted dice que no quiere ser parte del estudio. Si usted comienza a responder a las preguntas y luego decide dejar de contestar, seguirá recibiendo un juguete pequeño como agradecimiento.

7 Contactos y preguntas

Los investigadores estarán encantados de responder a cualquier pregunta que pueda tener en cualquier momento durante el transcurso del estudio. La información de contacto del investigador se encuentra en la primera página de este documento. Si usted no está satisfecho/a con las respuestas que recibe, puede llamar al Comité de Revisión de Protocolos Institucional de la Universidad de Pacific al numero (503) 352-2112. Todas las preocupaciones y preguntas se mantendrán confidenciales.

8. Declaración de consentimiento

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sí</th>
<th>No</th>
<th>Mi nombre es ______________________________ (escriba su nombre aquí).</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>He leído y entendido la descripción de como seré participante en este estudio.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>He preguntado todas las preguntas que tenía y todas mis preguntas han sido contestadas.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>Yo estoy de acuerdo en participar en este estudio.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>Yo entiendo que puedo dejar de participar en el estudio en cualquier momento y que nada malo va a pasar.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>Me han ofrecido una copia de este formulario para mis archivos.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Nombre del niño/a: En letra imprenta
Appendix B

MULTIDIMENSIONAL STUDENTS’ LIFE SATISFACTION SCALE (MSLSS)

We would like to know what thoughts about life you’ve had during the past several weeks. Think about how you spend each day and night and then think about how your life has been during most of this time. Here are some questions that ask you about things you may or may not like about your life. Circle the number (from 1 to 4) next to each statement that says how much you agree or disagree with each statement. It is important to know what you REALLY think, so please answer the question the way you really feel, not how you think you should. This is NOT a test. There are NO right or wrong answers. Your answers will NOT affect your grades, and no one will be told your answers.

Circle 1 if the sentence **Never** applies to you
Circle 2 if the sentence **Sometimes** applies to you
Circle 3 if the sentence **Often** applies to you
Circle 4 if the sentence **Almost Always** applies to you

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>1. My friends are nice to me</th>
<th>NEVER</th>
<th>SOMETIMES</th>
<th>OFTEN</th>
<th>ALMOST ALWAYS</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
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</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>2. I am fun to be around</th>
<th>NEVER</th>
<th>SOMETIMES</th>
<th>OFTEN</th>
<th>ALMOST ALWAYS</th>
</tr>
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<td>4</td>
<td></td>
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</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>3. I feel bad at school</th>
<th>NEVER</th>
<th>SOMETIMES</th>
<th>OFTEN</th>
<th>ALMOST ALWAYS</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
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<td>4</td>
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</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>4. I have a bad time with my friends</th>
<th>NEVER</th>
<th>SOMETIMES</th>
<th>OFTEN</th>
<th>ALMOST ALWAYS</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
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<td>1</td>
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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>5. There are lots of things I can do well</th>
<th>NEVER</th>
<th>SOMETIMES</th>
<th>OFTEN</th>
<th>ALMOST ALWAYS</th>
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<thead>
<tr>
<th>6. I learn a lot at school</th>
<th>NEVER</th>
<th>SOMETIMES</th>
<th>OFTEN</th>
<th>ALMOST ALWAYS</th>
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<thead>
<tr>
<th>7. I like spending time with my parents</th>
<th>NEVER</th>
<th>SOMETIMES</th>
<th>OFTEN</th>
<th>ALMOST ALWAYS</th>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>8. My family is better than most</strong></td>
<td>NEVER</td>
<td>SOMETIMES</td>
<td>OFTEN</td>
<td>ALMOST ALWAY</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<td>1</td>
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<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>9. There are many things about school I don't like</strong></td>
<td>NEVER</td>
<td>SOMETIMES</td>
<td>OFTEN</td>
<td>ALMOST ALWAY</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1</td>
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<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>10. I think I am good looking</strong></td>
<td>NEVER</td>
<td>SOMETIMES</td>
<td>OFTEN</td>
<td>ALMOST ALWAY</td>
</tr>
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<td></td>
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<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>11. My friends are great</strong></td>
<td>NEVER</td>
<td>SOMETIMES</td>
<td>OFTEN</td>
<td>ALMOST ALWAY</td>
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<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>12. My friends will help me if I need it</strong></td>
<td>NEVER</td>
<td>SOMETIMES</td>
<td>OFTEN</td>
<td>ALMOST ALWAY</td>
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<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>13. I wish I didn't have to go to school</strong></td>
<td>NEVER</td>
<td>SOMETIMES</td>
<td>OFTEN</td>
<td>ALMOST ALWAY</td>
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<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>14. I like myself</strong></td>
<td>NEVER</td>
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<td><strong>15. There are lots of fun things to do where I live</strong></td>
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<td>18. I enjoy being at home with my Family</td>
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<td>19. My family gets along well together</td>
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<td>20. I look forward to going to school</td>
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<td>26. I enjoy school activities</td>
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<td>a0. My parents and I do fun things together</td>
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<td>37. I like my neighbors</td>
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<td>38. I have enough friends</td>
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<th>40. I like where I live</th>
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**CUESTIONARIO MULTIDIMENSIONAL SOBRE LA SATISFACCION DE VIDA ESTUDIANTIL**

Nos gustaría saber que pensamientos has tenido acerca de tu vida durante las últimas semanas. Piensa en como pasas el tiempo cada día y noche y luego piense en como ha sido tu vida durante la mayor parte de este tiempo. Aquí hay algunas preguntas que preguntan sobre cosas que pueden gustarte o no gustarte en tu vida. Circula el numero (de 1 a 4) al lado de cada frase que indica que tanto de acuerdo o no de acuerdo estas con cada frase. Es importante saber lo que usted REALMENTE piensas, así que por favor responde a la pregunta de forma en la que realmente te sientas, no como crees que deberías sentirte. Esto NO es un examen. NO hay respuestas correctas o incorrectas. Tus respuestas NO afectaran a sus notas, y a nadie se le dirá sus respuestas.

Circula el numero 1 si le frase *Nunca* aplica a usted  
Circula el numero 2 si la frase *A Veces* aplica a usted  
Circula el numero 3 si la frase *A Menudo* aplica a usted  
Circula el numero 4 si la frase *Casi Siempre* aplica a usted

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<th>MUCHAS VECES</th>
<th>CASI SIEMPRE</th>
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<td>2. Soy divertido</td>
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<td>3. Me siento mal en la escuela</td>
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<td>4. Lo paso mal con mis amigos</td>
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<td>5. Hay muchas cosas que puedo hacer</td>
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<td>6. Aprendo mucho en la escuela</td>
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<td>7. Me gusta pasar el tiempo con mis padres</td>
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<td>8. Mi familia es mejor que la mayoría de las familias</td>
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<td>9. Hay muchas cosas acerca de la escuela que no me gustan</td>
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<td>Mis amigos me ayudan si los necesito</td>
<td>Ojala no tuviera que ir a la escuela</td>
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<td>28. Los miembros de mi familia hablan bien el uno al otro</td>
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<td>34. Este pueblo está lleno de gente mala</td>
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<td>38. Tengo bastantes amigos</td>
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<td>40. Me gusta donde vivo</td>
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Appendix C

Demographics Questionnaire

Please put an X next to the answer that best describes your child who will be participating in the research.

1. What is your child’s age?
   □ 8 years old
   □ 9 years old
   □ 10 years old
   □ Other __________

2. What is your child’s gender?
   □ Female
   □ Male
   □ Other __________

3. What grade is your child in?
   □ 3rd grade
   □ 4th grade
   □ Other __________

4. What is the primary language spoken in the home?
   □ Arabic
   □ English
   □ Spanish
   □ Other __________

5. Does your child qualify for reduced fee or free lunches?
   □ Yes
   □ No
   □ Other __________

6. How would you classify your child’s ethnicity?
   □ Arab
   □ Asian/ Pacific Islander
   □ Black
   □ Caucasian/ White
   □ Hispanic/ Latino
   □ Indigenous/ Native American Indian
   □ Multiracial (please specify)___________
   □ Other __________

7. How many parental figures live in your home, including yourself?
   □ 1
   □ 2
   □ Other___________
8. In your neighborhood, which of the following activities does your child regularly engage in? (Please mark an X by all that apply)
   - □ Sports
   - □ Arts and Crafts
   - □ Library
   - □ Religious activities
   - □ Playing at neighbor’s home
   - □ Playing outdoors
   - □ Playing at home with friends
   - □ None
   - □ Other_____________

9. Does your child feel like he or she has enough friends?
   - □ Always
   - □ Most of the time
   - □ Sometimes
   - □ Rarely
   - □ Never

10. Does your child feel like he or she has control over things that happen to him or her?
    - □ Always
    - □ Most of the time
    - □ Sometimes
    - □ Rarely
    - □ Never

11. Does your child appear motivated to learn in school?
    - □ Always
    - □ Most of the time
    - □ Sometimes
    - □ Rarely
    - □ Never

12. How much time does your child spend on homework every school day?
    - □ Less than 1 hour
    - □ 1 hour
    - □ 2 hours
    - □ 3 hours
    - □ More than 3 hours
    - □ Other___________
Cuestionario Demográfico

Por favor, marque con una X al lado de la respuesta que mejor describe a su niño/a que participará en la investigación.

1. ¿Cuál es la edad de su niño/a?
   - □ 8 años de edad
   - □ 9 años de edad
   - □ 10 años de edad
   - □ Otro __________

2. ¿Cuál es el género/sexo de su niño/a?
   - □ Mujer
   - □ Hombre
   - □ Otro __________

3. ¿En qué grado está su niño/a?
   - □ 3° grado
   - □ 4° grado
   - □ Otro __________

4. ¿Cuál es el idioma principal que se habla en su casa?
   - □ árabe
   - □ Inglés
   - □ Español
   - □ Otro __________

5. ¿Califica su niño/a para comida gratis o tarifa reducida en la escuela?
   - □ Sí
   - □ No
   - □ Otro __________

6. ¿Cómo calificaría la etnicidad de su niño/a?
   - □ árabes
   - □ Asiático/ Islas del Pacífico
   - □ Negro
   - □ Caucásico/ Blanco
   - □ Hispano/ Latino
   - □ Indígena/ Indio Americano
   - □ Multirracial (especificar)___________
   - □ Otro___________

7. ¿Cuántas personas con responsabilidades parentales viven en su casa, incluyendo a usted?
   - □ 1
   - □ 2
   - □ Otro___________
8. En su vecindario, ¿cuál de las siguientes actividades participa su niño/a regularmente?  
(Por favor marque con una X al lado de todo los que correspondan)

- □ Deportes
- □ Artes o Oficios
- □ Biblioteca
- □ Actividades Religiosas
- □ Juega en casa de los vecinos
- □ Juega afuera al aire libre
- □ Juega en su casa con amigos
- □ Ninguno
- □ Otro____________

9. ¿Se siente su niño/a como si él o ella tiene suficientes amigos?

- □ Siempre
- □ La mayoría de las veces
- □ A veces
- □ Casi nunca
- □ Nunca

10. ¿Se sienta su niño/a como si él o ella tiene control sobre las cosas que le ocurren en la vida?

- □ Siempre
- □ La mayoría de las veces
- □ A veces
- □ Casi nunca
- □ Nunca

11. ¿Parece que su niño/a esta motivado/a para aprender en la escuela?

- □ Siempre
- □ La mayoría de las veces
- □ A veces
- □ Casi nunca
- □ Nunca

12. ¿Cuánto tiempo pasa su niño/a cada día en la tarea escolar?

- □ Menos de 1 hora
- □ 1 hora
- □ 2 horas
- □ 3 horas
- □ Más de 3 horas
- □ Otro____________