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Psychometric Properties of Two Brief Measures of Children's Life Satisfaction:
The Students' Life Satisfaction Scale (SLSS) and the
Brief Multidimensional Students' Life Satisfaction Scale (BMSLSS)

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Abstract

Traditional assessments of children's mental health have focused on measuring symptoms of psychopathology. A growing body of empirical evidence supports widening assessment to include measures of individual and environmental protective assets. One personal strength that merits study among children and adolescents is life satisfaction, which represents peoples' subjective judgments of the quality of their lives as a whole *or* quality of specific domains within their lives. This paper reviews the psychometric properties and research histories of two brief life satisfaction measures available for use with youth. The Students' Life Satisfaction Scale (Huebner, 1991) is a 7-item measure of global life satisfaction; the Brief Multidimensional Students' Life Satisfaction Scale is a 5-item measure of adolescents' satisfaction with important domains of life. Both scales are appropriate for large-scale studies of children and adolescents' psychological health, and would provide worthwhile information about children's well-being that would not otherwise be captured by pathology-oriented scales.

Introduction

Psychology has long focused on the study of psychopathological conditions. In contrast, positive psychologists have argued for the complementary study of wellness, including the nature and development of key human strengths (Seligman & Csikzentmihalyi, 2000). Although a taxonomy of human strengths has been suggested (Seligman, 2002), research is just beginning in this area, particularly studies devoted to identifying, understanding, and promoting important strengths in children and youth. The first purpose of this paper is to suggest that one crucial, personal strength that merits study among children and adolescents is life satisfaction. Although research on child and adolescent life satisfaction is scant relative to that of adults, a body of literature is emerging that supports its meaningfulness and relevance to the promotion of positive well-being and the prevention of psychopathology in children and adolescents (see Huebner, Suldo, Smith, & McKnight, in press). The second purpose of this paper is to review research on two measures of life satisfaction, the Students' Life Satisfaction Scale (SLSS: Huebner, 1991a) and the Brief Multidimensional Students' Life Satisfaction Scale (BMSLSS: Seligson, Huebner, & Valois, 2003), both of which are appropriate for use with youth in large scale survey research. The final purpose of this paper is to delineate recommendations for future research needed to further validate the two measures.

Life satisfaction has been defined as a person's subjective, global evaluation of the positivity of her/his life as a whole or with specific life domains (e.g., family life, school experiences) (Diener, Suh, Lucas, & Smith, 1999). Life satisfaction scales encompass judgments ranging from very negative (e.g., terrible) to neutral to very

positive (e.g., delighted). Thus, life satisfaction scales reflect conceptualizations of positive well-being that extend beyond merely the absence of dissatisfaction. In support of distinction between positive and negative well-being indicators, Greenspoon and Saklofske (2000) have demonstrated the usefulness of a dual-factor model of child mental health, in which life satisfaction is the key indicator of positive psychological well-being.

Life satisfaction research with adults has shown that positive levels of life satisfaction are *not* just an epiphenomenon, that is a simple by-product of positive life experiences, personality characteristics, and so forth. Rather, many benefits accrue to those who typically experience high levels of life satisfaction. These benefits include positive outcomes in intrapersonal, interpersonal, vocational, health, and educational arenas (see King, Lyubormirsky, & Diener, 2003). Low levels of life satisfaction are similarly predictive of a variety of negative outcomes, including mental and physical health problems (see Frisch, 2000, for a review).

Research with children has been restricted mostly to studies of correlates of life satisfaction. An impressive array of correlates has been revealed, including a variety of risk behaviors (e.g., alcohol and drug use, aggressive and violent behavior, sexual activities), psychopathological symptoms (depression, anxiety, low self-efficacy, loneliness) and physical health indices (e.g., eating behavior, exercise) (see Huebner, Suldo, Smith, & McKnight, in press, for a review). Although there has been little research on the consequences of individual differences in life satisfaction among children and youth, recent research in our lab has shown that life satisfaction links stressful life events and psychopathological behavior in adolescents. Studies have revealed that global life satisfaction mediates the impact of stressful life events (McKnight, Huebner, &

Suldo, 2002) and parenting behavior (Suldo & Huebner, in press-a) on adolescent problem behavior. Furthermore, a longitudinal study (Suldo & Huebner, in press-b) showed that initial life satisfaction reports of adolescents moderated the relationship between their experiences of stressful life events and their later externalizing behavior. That is, adolescents with high levels of life satisfaction showed significantly less subsequent externalizing behavior in the face of adverse life events relative to students who were dissatisfied with their lives. Thus, life satisfaction appears to operate as an intrapersonal strength that helps buffer against the development of psychopathology in the face of increasing stressful life events. Taken together, research to date demonstrates that assessment of levels of life satisfaction in children and youth provide important information in and of itself, and also provides important information regarding risk for subsequent psychological problems.

There exist roughly a half dozen life satisfaction scales suitable for use with children and/or adolescents. However, most of these measures are too lengthy or impractical for large-scale group administration. On the other hand, two instruments, the SLSS and BMSLSS, are sufficiently brief, appropriate for children, and demonstrate adequate reliability and validity; these measures are useful in large-scale surveys, longitudinal studies, experience sampling studies, and other studies in which time constraints limit the number of items that can be administered. These instruments will be reviewed below.

Review of Students' Life Satisfaction Scale (SLSS)

The SLSS is a seven-item self-report measure that has been used with children ages 8-18. The items require respondents to rate their satisfaction with respect to items

that are domain-free (e.g., *My life* is better than most kids' vs. *My family life* is better than most kids'). The original version of the scale consisted of 10 items; the scale was subsequently reduced to 7 items based on item analysis data and reliability estimates (Huebner, 1991a). Additional positive and negative affect items were included and used to clarify the boundaries of the construct tapped by the SLSS, through the provision of evidence of discriminant validity vis-a-vis other subjective well-being variables (Huebner, 1991c).

Early studies of the SLSS used a response format comprised of a 4-point frequency scale, with 1 = never, 2 = sometimes, 3 = often, and 4 = always. More recent studies have employed a 6-point extent format, with 1 = strongly disagree, 2, moderately disagree, 3 = mildly disagree, 4 = mildly agree, 5 = moderately agree, and 6 = strongly agree. One study has suggested caution with respect to the assumption of comparability of scores across the two formats (Gilman & Huebner, 1997).

Samples

The SLSS has been employed in studies involving samples of students ranging in age from 8 -18 years. Samples from independent studies that employed the SLSS include the following: 254 students ages 7-14 and 329 children ages 8-14, both from a Midwestern state (Huebner, 1991a); 79 students from grades 5-7 in a Midwestern state; 222 students from grades 8-12 in a Southern state (Dew & Huebner, 1994); 321 students from grades 9-12 in a Southern State (Huebner, Funk, & Gilman, 2000); and 1201 students from grades 6-12 in a Southern state (McKnight, Huebner, & Suldo, 2002; Suldo & Huebner, in press-a). Additional samples of clinical populations have included students referred for psychoeducational evaluations and at-risk programs (Huebner & Alderman,

1993), and adjudicated adolescents (Crenshaw, 1998). Other clinical samples involve students with identified exceptionalities, such as children with learning disabilities (McCullough & Huebner, 2003), emotional disturbance (Huebner & Alderman, 1993), and gifted students (Ash & Huebner, 1998).

All aforementioned studies have employed the SLSS as a continuous measure in investigating the relationships between life satisfaction and various constructs and outcomes. To date, empirical guidelines for “cut-points” that might classify children into optimal/adequate/risk levels of life satisfaction have not been established. Future researchers may be interested in following methodology set forth by Gambone, Klem, and Connell (2002) that facilitated the identification of *thresholds* “at which youth’s chances for success on later elements increase dramatically” (p. 11), thus identifying palpable levels of variables for which practitioners concerned with public policy and/or intervention and prevention programs could strive to meet. To date, only one study (Suldo & Huebner, in press-b) has analyzed SLSS scores on a dichotomy. In this case, classifying children into initial levels of high vs. low life satisfaction based on their mean SLSS score allowed these researchers to predict different developmental outcomes in the groups’ reactions to stressful life events. This study used a cut-point of 4.0, with the low life satisfaction group comprised of students with mean scores between 1 and 3.9, and mean scores at or above 4.0 indicating high life satisfaction. Future research employing more sophisticated methodology (i.e., conditional probabilities) may be useful in identifying optimal and, conversely, risk levels of life satisfaction that would predict dramatic changes in future levels of psychosocial variables of interest.

Distribution of Responses

Extant research with the SLSS demonstrates that students' mean SLSS scores typically contain substantial variability among the six response options, with the average score consistently in the positive range of life satisfaction. For instance, in Suldo and Huebner's (in press-a) sample of 1188 adolescents, the mean SLSS score was 4.21 (range: 1 – 6) with a standard deviation of 1.14. As further evidence of response variability, over a quarter of the sample possessed mean SLSS scores in the bottom half of the range, indicating dissatisfaction with their lives. Although the distribution of responses among the 1188 subjects had a slight negative skew (-0.61) and was slightly platykurtic (-0.26), these values are within acceptable limits (i.e., between -1.0 and +1.0) demonstrating acceptable levels of skewness and kurtosis and, therefore, a normal distribution of scores on the SLSS.

Reliability

Coefficient alphas in the .70-.80 range have consistently been reported across all age groups (see Table 1). For example, Huebner (1991a) reported an alpha of .82 in a sample of students in grades 4-8 in a Midwestern US state, and Dew and Huebner (1994) reported an alpha of .86 in a sample of students in grades 9-12 in a Southeastern US state. Furthermore, comparisons of alpha coefficients for African-American and Caucasian adolescents revealed cross-group comparability (Huebner & Dew, 1993). Similar internal consistency coefficients for the SLSS have been obtained with students in South Korea (Park & Huebner, in press) and Spain (Casas, Alsinet, Rosich, Huebner, & Laughlin, 2001).

Test-retest reliability has also been established with correlations of .76, .64, and .53 across 1-2 weeks (Terry & Huebner, 1995), 1-month (Gilman & Huebner, 1997), and 1-year (Huebner, Funk, & Gilman, 2000) time intervals respectively.

Validity

Factor Structure. The SLSS items have been subjected to factor analyses in several studies, all of which have supported a one-factor structure for the instrument (Dew & Huebner, 1994; Gilman & Huebner, 1997; Huebner, 1991a). Comparisons across African-American and Caucasian students have revealed factorial equivalence for adolescents (Huebner & Dew, 1993) and pre-adolescents (Huebner, 1994). Conjoint factor analyses of the SLSS with self-concept measures have supported discriminant validity as well (Huebner, 1995; Huebner, Gilman, & Laughlin, 1999; Terry & Huebner, 1995).

Relationships with other Life Satisfaction Measures. SLSS scores demonstrate significant associations with parent estimates of their child's life satisfaction. Dew and Huebner (1994) obtained a correlation of .48 between self- and parent-reports of high school students. Similarly, Gilman and Huebner (1997) obtained a correlation of .54 between middle school students and their parents. These correlations are comparable to similar self-other reports of life satisfaction for adults.

SLSS scores also display appropriate correlations with other life satisfaction self-report measures. These measures include the Perceived Life Satisfaction Scale ($r = .58$), the Piers-Harris Happiness subscale ($r = .53$), Andrews and Withey one-item scale ($r = .62$), and DOTS-R Mood scale ($r = .34$) (Huebner, 1991a).

Criterion-Related Validity. Construct validity of SLSS reports has been supported by a wide-ranging nomological network of related variables, as illustrated in Table 2. Life satisfaction is not an isolated variable, but is related to a variety of important life outcomes (see Huebner et al., in press, for a review). For example, as noted previously, SLSS reports of children and youth are inversely related to important maladaptive psychosocial conditions, such as depression, anxiety, social stress, loneliness, and aggressive behaviors. SLSS scores have also been related in predictable ways to personality characteristics, such as temperament (extraversion, neuroticism), coping styles, cognitive attributions, and self-perceptions. Additionally, environmental experiences, including positive and negative life events (e.g., death of a parent) and everyday conditions (e.g., chronic family discord) are associated in meaningful ways with SLSS scores. Taken together, the pattern of associations suggests substantial concurrent validity.

Discriminant Validity. SLSS reports have been distinguished from several constructs with which life satisfaction is not expected to relate. First, SLSS scores have weak correlations with social desirability responding (Huebner, 1991a). Second, SLSS scores are not significantly related to IQ scores (Huebner & Alderman, 1993) or school grades (Huebner, 1991b). Finally, using conjoint factor analysis procedures, SLSS scores have been differentiated from measures of positive and negative affect (Huebner, 1991c; Huebner & Dew, 1996).

Discriminative validity studies have also been conducted, with SLSS scores distinguishing appropriately among various known groups. Compared to normal students, SLSS scores are lower for students with emotional disorders (Huebner &

Alderman, 1993) and adjudicated adolescents (Crenshaw, 1998). Consistent with studies in which SLSS scores are unrelated to school grades and/or IQ scores, MSLSS scores did not distinguish between normal students and gifted students (Ash & Huebner, 1998) or students with learning disabilities (McCullough & Huebner, 2003).

Predictive Validity. Finally, predictive validity studies have been supportive of the SLSS. Using zero-order correlational analyses, Huebner, Funk, & Gilman (2000) reported in a study of 99 adolescents that SLSS scores significantly predicted social stress, depression, and anxiety scores one year later. Furthermore, using hierarchical multiple regression analyses, Suldo and Huebner (in press-b) demonstrated that Time 1 SLSS scores of 816 adolescent students predicted externalizing behavior one year later, even after controlling for Time 1 externalizing behavior scores. Finally, and most importantly, Suldo and Huebner found support for a moderational model of the influence of life satisfaction on the relationship between adverse life events and externalizing behavior of adolescents one year later. Specifically, adolescents with positive Time 1 SLSS scores (in contrast to youth who reported dissatisfaction with their lives) were less likely to develop subsequent externalizing behavior problems in the face of adverse life events. Taken together, the predictive validity studies show that life satisfaction, as measured by the SLSS, operates as a protective strength that buffers against the effects of adverse life events in adolescence.

Demographics and the SLSS

SLSS scores have shown meager relationships with demographic variables in studies of students in the USA (see Gilman & Huebner, in press, for a review). These variables have included age, gender, ethnicity, and socio-economic status (SES). It

should be noted that studies with very low SES students (e.g., homeless students) have yet to be undertaken. The mean life satisfaction score of students from each demographic group is consistently positive (i.e., above the neutral point), suggesting that most children and youth are satisfied with their lives in general. These findings are consistent with studies of adults in the US and many other countries, suggesting that the baseline for life satisfaction is positive, that is, among people whose basic needs (e.g., food, clothing, shelter) have been met.

Summary

Over a decade of research supports the SLSS as a brief, psychometrically sound measure of global life satisfaction for students from grades 3-12. Predictive validity studies suggest that the SLSS predicts important mental health behaviors independently and interactively with measures of stressful life events. The SLSS has been used effectively with a variety of student populations, including students with emotional disabilities, learning disabilities, and gifted students. However, difficulties have been encountered in using the SLSS with adolescents with mild mental disabilities (Brantley, Huebner, & Nagle, 2002), despite the fact that the students were able to reliably respond to a multidimensional life satisfaction measure. Major limitations of the SLSS include (a) lack of a nationally representative sample, (b) repetitive wording of the items, and (c) the need for further research with students with cognitive impairments (e.g., children with mental disabilities).

Perhaps the major limitation of the SLSS is that it measures only satisfaction with life as a whole. The scale does not allow for the assessment of satisfaction across various, important domains of interest to children and youth, such as satisfaction with

family, friends, school, etc. Multidimensional measures, which assess satisfaction with multiple life domains, would offer a more differentiated picture of the perceived quality of life of children and youth. For example, although a large statewide sample of high school students in a US southeastern state revealed generally positive global life satisfaction scores, scores across five specific domains (family, friends, school, self, living environment) were more variable, with substantial dissatisfaction observed among students' reports of satisfaction with their school experiences in particular (Huebner, Drane & Valois, 2000). Such differences in levels of life satisfaction illustrate the incremental validity of multidimensional measures of life satisfaction. Thus, in the next section, research findings for a brief, multidimensional measure of life satisfaction for children and youth (i.e., the Brief Multidimensional Students' Life Satisfaction Scale) will be reviewed.

Review of Brief Multidimensional Students' Life Satisfaction Scale (BMSLSS)

The BMSLSS is a five-item self-report measure developed to assess children and adolescents' satisfaction with respect to the areas of life most pertinent during youth development. Specifically, students are instructed to rate their satisfaction with their family life, friendships, school experiences, self, and then living environment. Response options are on a 7-point scale (Andrews & Withey, 1976) that ranges from 1 = terrible to 7 = delighted. All studies to date have employed subjects' mean response to the five items as a continuous variable in data analyses. The BMSLSS was initially created for inclusion in the 1997 South Carolina Youth Risk Behavior Survey of the Center for Disease Control, administered to over 5,500 public school students from 63 high schools (Huebner, Drane, & Valois, 2000). An additional item, measuring students' satisfaction

with their overall life, was included in initial data collection opportunities to provide preliminary validation information about the BMSLSS' relationship to global life satisfaction.

Samples

Since its inception, the BMSLSS has been employed in studies of middle and high school students who reside in the Southeastern US. In addition to the aforementioned sample of students in grades 9 – 12, the BMSLSS was used in a study of 2,502 students from grades 6 – 8 (Huebner, Suldo, Valois, & Drane, 2002). Later, independent samples of 221 students in grades 6 – 8 and 46 high school students completed the BMSLSS during preliminary validation studies of the measure (Seligson, Huebner, & Valois, 2002). The BMSLSS, still in its early years of development and use, clearly has not yet received the research attention afforded the senior SLSS. However, it is notable that the sampling procedures used in the larger studies assured a diversified, representative sample composed of large numbers of adolescents from all SES levels and ethnic backgrounds in South Carolina.

Distribution of Responses

Similar to the SLSS, the BMSLSS affords considerable variability in regard to the distribution of mean scores. Data from the 1997 South Carolina YRBS (see Huebner, Drane, & Valois, 2000) indicated that most students report positive feelings toward the important domains in their life; specifically, the mean BMSLSS score was in the positive range ($M = 4.97$, $SD = 1.25$, range: 1 – 7). Moreover, slightly more than a quarter of the sample reported mean BMSLSS scores in the “mixed” range or below. Skew and kurtosis values of the BMSLSS were also within acceptable limits (skew = -0.98, kurtosis

= .88) and thus demonstrated that while the distribution of scores is slightly negatively skewed and leptokurtic, the BMSLSS possesses a relatively normal distribution.

Reliability

Coefficient alphas for the Total score (the sum of respondents' ratings across the five items) have been reported at .75 for middle school students and .81 for high school students (Seligson, Huebner, & Valois, 2003; Zullig, Valois, Huebner, Oeltmann, & Drane, 2001). Zullig et al. report that alpha coefficients ranging from .80 to .85 were continually yielded following the removal of any single item from the BMSLSS. In sum, preliminary data with young and late adolescents indicates that the internal consistency of the BMSLSS meets acceptable levels for research purposes when used with secondary school students.

Validity

Construct validity. The BMSLSS was designed to tap the same dimensions of life measured in the lengthier and well-researched Multidimensional Students' Life Satisfaction Scale (MSLSS: Huebner, 1994). The MSLSS is based on a hierarchical model of life satisfaction with general life satisfaction at the apex, along with the five lower order domains (i.e., family, friends, school, etc.). Confirmatory factor analyses have supported the hierarchical model underlying the MSLSS (see Huebner, Laughlin, Ash, & Gilman, 1998).

Construct validity of the BMSLSS has been supported in two ways. First, the meaningfulness of the general or total life satisfaction score has been assessed. Specifically, BMSLSS reports of 221 middle school students were subjected to principal axis factor analysis. Only one factor displayed an eigenvalue greater than 1, and the

results of the scree test also suggested that only one factor was meaningful. This single factor accounted for 50% of the total variance. BMSLSS items and corresponding factor loadings are presented in Table 3. Using a factor loading cutoff of .40, all five items were found to load satisfactorily on the first factor.

Item-total correlations have also been reported with the middle school sample (Seligson, Huebner, & Valois, 2003). Coefficients ranged from .65 to .73.

Second, the construct validity of the five one-item domain based scores for the BMSLSS has been supported by multitrait-multimethod (MTMM) correlation matrix comparisons of the total domain scores from the MSLSS with the single items on the BMSLSS using Campbell and Fiske's (1959) procedures (see Seligson, Huebner, & Valois, 2003). In all cases, correlations between the measures' corresponding domains were substantially higher than intercorrelations among the BMSLSS domains as well as between different domains of the BMSLSS and MSLSS (e.g., MSLSS family domain, BMSLSS friend item). This pattern was produced in separate analyses of middle and high school samples; interestingly, higher convergent validity coefficients were found in the group of older students.

In sum, statistical analyses support the hierarchical structure of the BMSLSS. The scale contains a higher-order domain of general life satisfaction, in addition to differentiable lower-order domains (in this case, items). Thus, the BMSLSS affords researchers both a brief measure of adolescents' satisfaction in the areas of life historically deemed important during adolescence as well as a Total score which provides a meaningful overall picture of adolescents' life satisfaction.

Relationships with other Life Satisfaction Measures. Acceptable correlations have been obtained between the BMSLSS Total score and other validated measures of life satisfaction, such as the MSLSS Total score ($r = .66$) and the SLSS ($r = .62$).

Criterion-Related Validity. Extant research with the BMSLSS has demonstrated concurrent validity through significant relationships with multiple behaviors central to the health of adolescents. For example, adolescents' BMSLSS reports have shown concurrent, negative relationships with their alcohol, tobacco, and illegal drug use (Valois, Zullig, Huebner, & Drane, 2001), as well as with their violent and aggressive risk behaviors such as physical fighting and carrying a weapon (Zullig, Valois, Huebner, Oeltmann, & Drane, 2001).

Discriminant Validity. Similar to the SLSS, BMSLSS reports yield a low correlation with indicators of social desirability (Seligson, Huebner, & Valois, 2003). In addition, the BMSLSS shows weak relationship with health-related quality of life scales (Valois, 2003). Despite the high associations often found between the components of subjective well-being (i.e., positive affect, negative affect, and life satisfaction), the BMSLSS distinguished life satisfaction from affect through yielding only moderate correlations with the PANAS-C Positive Affect scale ($r = .43$) and Negative Affect scale ($r = -.27$).

Predictive Validity. Initial evidence of the predictive validity of the BMSLSS is promising. In an ethnically diverse sample of more than 1,000 Florida middle school students, Farrell, Valois, Meyer, and Tidwell (in press) reported statistically significant prospective correlations between the BMSLSS (note: the aforementioned item measuring global life satisfaction was included in analyses) and the four subscales of the Problem

Behavior Frequency Scales (Farrell, Kung, White, & Valois, 2000), which were administered at the beginning of the sample's sixth and eighth grade years. The following Pearson product-moment correlations were found between initial BMSLSS scores and problem behavior subscales measured two years later: Violent Behavior Frequency ($r = -.20$), Delinquent Behavior Frequency ($r = -.22$), Drug Frequency ($r = -.23$), and Peer Provocation ($r = -.27$). These correlations were likely attenuated as a result of the nature of the study, as approximately one half of the sample participated in a violence prevention program (RIPP) during the time interval. Nevertheless, the results were consistent with expected predictions in that higher levels of student dissatisfaction predicted higher levels of future problem behaviors, including aggression, drug use, and peer problems.

Demographics and the BMSLSS

Just as the research with measures of global life satisfaction (e.g., SLSS) has found that mean scores are remarkably similar across children of various races, ages, and gender, in general the BMSLSS Total score produces comparable mean levels across demographic groups of adolescents. Even in large samples that maximize statistical sensitivity, the BMSLSS Total score yields similar means between males and females in grades 6 – 12 (Huebner, Suldo, Valois, & Drane, 2002a; Huebner, Suldo, Valois, Drane, & Zullig, 2002b). Similarly, no significant differences have been found between mean BMSLSS scores of African-American and Caucasian middle school students. While one study found that Caucasian students in high school provide higher BMSLSS reports than their African-American classmates, the effect size of this finding was small (.08), and both groups' mean rating were in the positive range (Huebner et al., 2000b). BMSLSS

scores also vary little among adolescents of different age levels. For instance, Huebner et al. (2002b) found no significant differences in BMSLSS scores in adolescents in grades 9 – 12. Although a survey of several thousand middle school students found that students in 6th grade provided slightly higher BMSLSS scores than their 7th and 8th grade counterparts (Huebner et al., 2002a), it should be noted that mean BMSLSS scores are in the positive range for all students grade 6 – 12. Given the remarkable similarity of average BMSLSS rating among adolescents of various race, gender, and age groups, it appears that the BMSLSS Total score is one measure of positive youth development that is not strongly influenced by demographic differences within the USA.

In contrast to findings pertinent to general life satisfaction, research employing multidimensional measures has yielded more complex results. For instance, Huebner, Drane, and Valois' (2000) study of the BMSLSS with high school students indicated demographic differences within *domains* of satisfaction. Specifically, Caucasian students reported higher satisfaction than African-American students on items assessing satisfaction with friends, living environment, and self. Gender differences were also found; specifically, female students reported higher levels of satisfaction than males in regard to their friends, school, and self. Thus, the BMSLSS has the potential to provide more complex information than measures that only yield a global level of life satisfaction.

Summary

The BMSLSS is a brief measure of life satisfaction in youth that gathers data concerning children and adolescents' satisfaction in important domains of their life that, taken together, provide a more complete picture of youth's overall well-being. The scale

has been used successfully with students from grades 6 – 12, and research is currently underway to explore its suitability for younger children. Initial studies involving middle and high school students provide preliminary support of the psychometric properties of the BMSLSS. Moreover, the concurrent and predictive utility of the BMSLSS has been demonstrated through its relationships with important behavior outcomes in youth, such as substance use and risky violent behaviors. While the potential of the BMSLSS is evident, at present the scale should be used with caution due to the limitations inherent to its relative youth. Areas that should be addressed in future research include: (a) securing a nationally representative sample, (b) assessing psychometric properties with elementary level students and students with disabilities, and (c) conducting additional prospective studies.

Clearly, the BMSLSS is in the formative stage of development. Our lab is currently involved in administering the measure to children in elementary school (grades 3 – 5), and including the BMSLSS in longitudinal studies. Given the comprehensive picture of children and adolescent's life satisfaction provided through use of the BMSLSS, we are optimistic that it can provide a crucial contribution to large national and international databases evaluating students' overall subjective well-being as well as pinpointing specific areas of life that may serve as protective or risk factors. In addition, the straightforward, concrete wording of the items lends well to large-scale surveys in which data are often analyzed (and disseminated) at the item level.

Conclusion

Both the SLSS and BMSLSS provide developmentally appropriate measures of positive subjective well-being of children and youth. Although both measures would

benefit from further validation work, both offer promising evidence related to their psychometric properties. Each measure predicts important mental health outcomes. The SLSS has received considerable research attention and emphasizes the respondents' own standards of evaluation. The BMSLSS has received less research attention, but the preliminary evidence is very promising, especially with middle school and high school age students. The choice of which measure to use will involve the research interests of particular investigators. When unidimensional appraisals of satisfaction with life as a whole are desired, the SLSS should be the instrument of choice. When researchers would like to gather appraisals of satisfaction across multiple, important domains, the BMSLSS should be useful. Whatever the case, the findings of the available research offer much support for the usefulness of the life satisfaction construct with children and adolescents. National assessments of the well-being of children and youth would benefit from the addition of these measures, which complement the more traditional pathology-based measures.

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Study	Participants	Coefficient Alpha
Griffin & Huebner, 2000 (one item removed from the scale)	49 Severely Emotionally disabled students, grades 6-8 and 49 students matched, but without a Severe Emotional Disability	SED (.75) Non-SED (.79)
Huebner, Funk, & Gilman 2000	321 students, grades 9-12 at time 1, 99 students, grades 10-12 at time 2	Time 1 (.84) Time 2 (.79)
Gilman & Huebner, 1997	84 students, grades 6-8	6 pt extent scale (.84) 4 pt frequency scale (.82)
Terry & Huebner, 1995	183 students, grades 3-5	.73
Dew & Huebner, 1994	222 students, grades 8-12	.86
Huebner, 1991b	79 students, grades 5-7	.82
Huebner, 1991a	254 students, grades 3-8	.84

Table 2

Studies of Correlates of the Students' Life Satisfaction Scale (SLSS) with Children and/or Adolescents

Study	Participants	Correlates
Ash & Huebner, 2001	152 students, grades 9-12	Locus of control (-.46) Life Stressors: Family (-.33) Friends (-.36) Health (-.18) Home and money (-.40) Parents (-.33) School (-.41) Sibling (-.17) Boyfriend/girlfriend (-.19) Negative life events (-.46) Social Resources: Family (.22) Friends (.26) Parents (.23) School (.24) Sibling (.18) Positive life events (.20)
Dew & Huebner, 1994	222 students, grades 8-12	Locus of Control (-.52) Global Self-esteem (.52) Self-concept areas: Physical abilities (.15) Physical appearance (.19) Opposite-sex peer relations (.33) Same-sex peer relations (.29) Honesty-trustworthiness (.38) Parent relations (.62) Emotional stability (.48) General-self (.52) Math (.17) General school (.25)
Fogle, Huebner, & Laughlin, in press	160 students, grades 6-8	Social self-efficacy (.29) Extraversion (.22) Neuroticism (-.33)
Gilman & Huebner, 1997	99 students, grades 6-8 at time 1, and 84 students, grades 6-8 (4 weeks later) at time 2	Time 1: Self-report academic self-concept (.31) Parent-report academic self-concept (.35)

		<p>Parent-report life sat. (.54)</p> <p>Time 2:</p> <p>Grade (-.24)</p> <p>Self-concept areas:</p> <p>Math (.30)</p> <p>Physical appearance (.31)</p> <p>General self (.57)</p> <p>Honesty-trustworthiness (.37)</p> <p>Physical abilities (.30)</p> <p>Verbal (.35)</p> <p>Emotional stability (.43)</p> <p>Parental relations (.54)</p> <p>General school (.50)</p> <p>Opposite-sex relations (.45)</p> <p>Same-sex relations (.27)</p> <p>Global self concept (.58)</p>
Huebner, 1991a	254 students, grades 3-8	<p>General self concept (.53)</p> <p>Happiness (.53)</p> <p>Anxiety (.38)</p> <p>Mood (.34)</p> <p>Happiness item (.36)</p> <p>Life satisfaction item (.62)</p>
Huebner, 1991b	79 students, grades 5-7	<p>Anxiety (-.51)</p> <p>Locus of control (-.48)</p> <p>Extraversion (.23)</p> <p>Neuroticism (-.46)</p> <p>Self-esteem (.65)</p>
Huebner, Funk, & Gilman, 2000	166 students, grades 10-12	<p>Clinical Scales:</p> <p>Locus of control (-.39)</p> <p>Depression (-.39)</p> <p>Anxiety (-.33)</p> <p>Social stress (-.50)</p> <p>Atypicality (-.35)</p> <p>Adaptive:</p> <p>Self-esteem (.22)</p> <p>Relations with parents (.38)</p> <p>Interpersonal relations (.25)</p>
Huebner, Gilman, and Laughlin, 1999	290 students, grades 6-8 (study 1), and 183 students, grades 3-5 (study 2)	<p>Self-concept areas (study 1):</p> <p>Physical abilities (.22)</p> <p>Physical appearance (.38)</p> <p>Opposite-sex peer relations (.26)</p> <p>Same-sex peer relations (.38)</p> <p>Honesty-trustworthiness (.37)</p> <p>Parent relations (.61)</p> <p>Emotional stability (.44)</p>

		<p>General-self (.52) Math (.30) Verbal (.27) General school (.37) Demographics: Sex (.17) Self-concept areas (study 2): Physical abilities (.31) Physical appearance (.30) peer relations (.41) Parent relations (.56) Reading (.29) Math (.34) General school (.36) General-self (.47)</p>
McCullough, Huebner, & Laughlin, 2000	92 students, grades 9-12	<p>Positive daily events (.39) Negative daily events (-.34) Positive major events (.30) Negative major events (-.22) Self-concept (.45) Positive affect (.44) Negative affect (-.28)</p>
McKnight, Huebner, & Suldo, 2002	1,201 students, grades 6-12	<p>Stressful life events (-.23) Neuroticism (-.39) Externalizing behavior (-.37) Internalizing behavior (-.50)</p>
Rigby & Huebner, 2003	212 students, grades 9-12	<p>Emotional stability (.29) Attributions good events (.40) Attributions bad events (-.23)</p>
Suldo & Huebner, in press-b	<p>1045 students, grades 6-11 at time 1 816 students, grades 7-12 at time 2 (one year later)</p>	<p>Time 1 (concurrent): Stressful life-events (-.22) Externalizing behavior (-.37) Internalizing behavior (-.49) Time 2 (concurrent): Stressful life-events (-.23) Externalizing behavior (-.37) Internalizing behavior (-.48) Time 2 (delayed): Stressful life-events (-.17) Externalizing behavior (-.30) Internalizing behavior (-.37)</p>
Suldo & Huebner, in press-a	1201 students, grades 6-12	<p>Parental supervision (.21) Parental social support (.49) Parental autonomy granting (.17) Externalizing behavior (-.38)</p>

Terry & Huebner, 1995	183 students, grades 3-5	Internalizing behavior (-.49) Self-concept areas: Physical abilities (.30) Physical appearance (.26) Reading (.23) Math (.31) Peers (.40) Parent (.53) General school (.32) General-self (.45)
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Table 3

Factor Loadings from Principal Axis Factor Analysis of BMSLSS (N = 221)

Factor	
1	Item/Domain
.66	Family
.65	Friend
.62	Living Environment
.60	School
.53	Self

Appendix

Items in Life Satisfaction Measures

Students' Life Satisfaction Scale (SLSS)

1. My life is going well
2. My life is just right
3. I would like to change many things in my life*
4. I wish I had a different kind of life*
5. I have a good life
6. I have what I want in life
7. My life is better than most kids

*Items are reverse-scored

Note: Response options are a 6-point Likert scale: Strongly Disagree, Moderately Disagree, Mildly Disagree, Mildly Agree, Moderately Agree, Strongly Agree

Brief Multidimensional Students' Life Satisfaction Scale (BMSLSS)

1. I would describe my satisfaction with my family life as:
2. I would describe my satisfaction with my friendships as:
3. I would describe my satisfaction with my school experience as:
4. I would describe my satisfaction with myself as:
5. I would describe my satisfaction with where I live as:

Note: Response options are a 7-point scale: Terrible, Unhappy, Mostly Dissatisfied, Mixed (about equally satisfied and dissatisfied), Mostly Satisfied, Pleased, Delighted
