

Children's rights essay

[Life](#), [Childhood](#)



Children's Rights Essay Each society, each culture, each ethnic group, in different historical periods, have constructed childhood in diverse ways. In social psychology we refer to such different images and ways of understanding what is best for children as social representations of childhood. Such different social representations are associated to diverse images of which are children's social problems, and how society (and social policies) must deal with social problems of childhood (Chombart de Lauwe, 1984; D'Alessio, 1990; Casas, 1998). In many countries we have traditionally assumed that children's rights are related to two "Ps", provision and protection - both of them refer to negative situations (social needs and social problems affecting children) that we must overcome: provision is a right when children do not have enough to survive or appropriately develop; protection is a right when the child is exploited, abused or neglected. After the adoption of the Convention on the Rights of the Child (on 20 November 1989) we are speaking of a third "P" principle, which is more positive: participation - children have the right to be taken into account, as human beings, as present citizens in our societies (Verhellen, 1994). The lack of respect towards some rights is reflected in deprived material conditions of living, but also in social exclusion. Quality of life is related with taking people into account. Quality of life studies are focusing on people's own perceptions, evaluations and aspirations, in order to know how much subjective well-being is in their lives. We are interested in people's satisfaction with their life as a whole, in people's satisfaction with specific domains (family, job, leisure, friends, neighborhood, and so on), in people's satisfaction with services they get, in people's happiness, etc. (Parmenter,

1994; Casas, 1998). However, we need two more "Ps" to be considered: prevention and promotion. Quality of life is a positive challenge, a value, and a goal for action, just to promote improvement of living conditions - no social problem, need or deficit is necessary in the scene in order to be proactive, in favor of quality of life. To know about children's quality of life it is not enough to have a lot of expert information about children - we also need to ask children themselves about their evaluations, satisfactions and aspirations. We already have a good number of researches asking children about their opinion on the family (CRN, 1994; Van Gils, 1995), about their own rights (Cherney and Perry, 1994; Ochaita, Espinosa and Grediaga, 1994), about their neighborhood or city (Casas, 1998), and so on. We actually need to exchange and disseminate much more research results on children's own perspectives and opinions about different aspects of their lives, and about instruments and methods used to get such data.