

Bonnie Kaul Nastasi  
Stuart N. Hart  
Shereen C. Naser *Editors*

# International Handbook on Child Rights and School Psychology

**EXTRAS ONLINE**

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Bonnie Kaul Nastasi  
Stuart N. Hart • Shereen C. Naser  
Editors

# International Handbook on Child Rights and School Psychology

*Editors*

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*This book is dedicated to*

*The children (0 to 18 years) around the world, that they may each benefit from the human rights assured by the UN (1989) Convention on the Rights of the Child*

*School psychologists, that they may use their power, individually and collectively, to advance the rights of each child through research, policy, training, practice, advocacy, and leadership roles*

*Educators, mental health and physical health professionals, parents/guardians, and community members, that they take responsibility for promoting and protecting the rights of each child*

*Policy makers at local, national, and international levels, that they may use their power to ensure that each child is assured the rights afforded by the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child*

*The youth around the globe, who are changing the world for the better in the face of adult domination and indifference*

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## Foreword

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### School Psychology in the Trenches of Child Rights

To paraphrase physicist and philosopher Thomas Kuhn, meaningful scientific change occurs through successive transition from one paradigm to another via revolution. This assertion also applies seamlessly to the field of human rights which gradually came to include *The Second Sex*<sup>1</sup> via the suffragette movement, women's liberation, and feminism. In our times, I would suggest that a new paradigm shift is under way, a human rights revolution that was at first mostly muted and has suddenly grown into a global clamor spearheaded by children campaigning for their own rights. The rest of humanity, that is, all adults, is at a crossroads figuring out whether to join in or to pursue business as usual.

Who would have predicted this evolution when, almost a century ago, a young, stubborn, and visionary Englishwoman, the now famous Eglantyne Jebb, and her dream team of Swiss notables successfully lobbied the League of Nations to promulgate the 1924 Geneva Declaration of the Rights of the Child? Europe and much of the world had just emerged from the horrendous Great War and its 40 million casualties, including between 15 and 19 million military and civilian deaths and millions of orphaned children. This tragedy and the gut-wrenching humanitarian situation of the children, especially those in the countries that had been defeated militarily, shocked humanity's conscience, and human rights took a huge leap forward.

Yet, it took another gigantic conflict, World War II, to generate a Universal Declaration of Human Rights (1948) to serve as a moral and political beacon for humanity and to set the stage for the next phase of human rights, culminating in 1989 with the adoption of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) and establishing a distinct segment of human rights dedicated to children. And during the ensuing peaceful decades, the interdisciplinary field of children's rights, with school psychology as a core component, grew, promoted by talented scholars and practitioners. Indeed, many of whom are contributors to the very *International Handbook on Child Rights and School Psychology* you are holding in your hands!

Hart and Prasse (1991) wrote that the "The primary purpose of the profession of school psychology is to improve the development and quality of life

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<sup>1</sup>de Beauvoir, S. (1949). *Le Deuxième Sexe [The Second Sex]*. Paris, France: Gallimard.

of children. This purpose is given more specific direction by concepts of what is right for children and by the rights of children” (p. 344).<sup>2</sup> In my view, some of these main concepts are discrimination, protection, participation, social transformation, and professional engagement.

We must all address discrimination both within and without educational facilities. Estimates are that about 250 million children worldwide do not go to school. And even in countries with significant means, access to and the pursuit of quality education vary in relation to criteria that have nothing to do with a child’s capacity to learn but are strongly affected by sex, citizenship, being on the move and in situations of migration, being disabled, ethnic origin, cultural heritage, language, religion, and deprivation of liberty.

With regard to protection, in most countries, children spend more time in educational settings than anywhere else outside of their homes, and, clearly, children’s human rights should not end at the entrance of their school. Adults who oversee and work in educational settings, and by definition school psychologists, have a duty to provide safe environments that support and promote children’s dignity. To learn, schools should be safe havens and generate a positive climate respectful of the rights of each and all. A child learns best in an environment which applies the rules of *convivenza*, justice, and social cohesion.

Participation and social transformation go together. One of the most revolutionary principles of the CRC, enshrined in Article 12, is that the child has the right to express his/her views freely in all matters affecting the child. The right of the child to fully participate implies important changes as to how adults conduct their lives. Not only should adults no longer ever automatically assume that they can decide for children, they must also build a different rapport with children, make sustained efforts to inform children on matters that concern them, and authentically solicit their views. Profound social transformation is taking place in many communities that promote participation and empower children, and, to paraphrase Rousseau, a new *social contract*, enriching for all members of society, big and small, is steadily taking shape.

Another process, even more radical, is creating a global media buzz and drawing thoughtful attention. It is rooted in the fact that children of the world are beginning to take quite literally the text of Article 6 of the CRC: “States Parties shall ensure to the maximum extent possible the survival and development of the child.” And it may not be that children’s call for climate justice and their own survival will remain a polite request for the current adults to hand over a habitable planet. In an editorial in the French newspaper *Libération*, Pierre Ducrozet (February 14, 2019) aptly captured the essence of this major social development: “The big caesura is starting to take place; everywhere, children and adolescents are rising, mainly girls and young women, in movements that often refuse to carry leaders; on the other side, the last lights of the old world, evermore crumbling and hideous, from Trump to Bolsonaro, cling to the trappings of carbon democracy and a soil that is

<sup>2</sup>Hart, S. N., & Prasse, D. (Eds.) (1991). Theme issue: Children’s rights and education. *School Psychology Review*, 20(3), 344.

hidden under their feet. The wave that comes against the one that rears up and resists. Even if it will be slow, the fight will eventually end up leaning in the direction of what is in motion.”<sup>3</sup>

Children are a force to be reckoned with, and, much like universities in the late 1960s were cradles of social disruption and progress, schools are where much of the action may be taking place. They are already at the epicenter of *Fridays for Future*, the worldwide movement ignited by then 15-year-old Greta Thunberg who is on school strike every Friday to call for action on the climate emergency. Her stinging message to adults was “You are not mature enough to tell it like it is. Even that burden you leave to us children” (Thunberg, 2018).<sup>4</sup>

Whether one agrees or not with the significance of the trends that I have outlined, it is undeniable that, for the foreseeable future, school psychology, both as a field of research and practice, finds itself in a very privileged position – in the trenches of child rights!

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« La grande césure commence à s’opérer; partout, des enfants et des adolescents se lèvent, principalement des filles et des jeunes femmes, dans des mouvements qui refusent souvent de porter des leaders; de l’autre, les derniers feux du vieux monde, toujours plus croulant et hideux, de Trump à Bolsonaro, s’accrochent aux oripeaux de démocratie carbone et à un sol qui se dérobe sous leurs pieds. La vague qui vient contre celle qui se cabre et retient. Même si ce sera lent, le combat finira nécessairement par pencher dans le sens de ce qui est en mouvement » (Ducrozet, 2019)

Ducrozet, P. (2019, February 14). *Nous, enfants du XXI<sup>e</sup> siècle, allons prendre les commandes*, *Libération*. Accessed on 17/8/2019: [https://www.liberation.fr/debats/2019/02/14/nous-enfants-du-xxie-siecle-allons-prendre-les-commandes\\_1709420](https://www.liberation.fr/debats/2019/02/14/nous-enfants-du-xxie-siecle-allons-prendre-les-commandes_1709420)

<sup>3</sup>Accessed on August 17, 2019: [https://www.liberation.fr/debats/2019/02/14/nous-enfants-du-xxie-siecle-allons-prendre-les-commandes\\_1709420](https://www.liberation.fr/debats/2019/02/14/nous-enfants-du-xxie-siecle-allons-prendre-les-commandes_1709420)

<sup>4</sup>Thunberg, G. (2018, December 12). COP24, Cracow, Poland.



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To the professional organizations that have supported the work that made this handbook possible, particularly the ISPA and American Psychological Association (School Psychology Division, 16), and to our home institutions

To all the students, community members, and professionals around the world who made this book possible

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## About the Contributors

**Emiliya Adelson, Ph.D.,** is currently working on her postdoctoral residency in school psychology following the completion of her Ph.D. in School Psychology at Tulane University in 2018. Her research interests include children's rights within the school setting and understanding differences in how children, teachers, and parents define children's psychological well-being.

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**Theresa Casey** served as President of the International Play Association: Promoting the Child's Right to Play (IPA) from 2008 to 2017. With the IPA Board and Council, she coordinated the initiatives leading to the publication of *General Comment No. 17 on the Right of the Child to Rest, Leisure, Play, Recreational Activities, Cultural Life and the Arts* (Article 31 of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child) by the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child. In her final term as President (2014–2017), she led IPA's thematic work on "Access to Play in Crisis" and "Children's Rights and the Environment" linking to the UNCRC Day of Discussion 2016. In 2013, she drafted the Scottish Government's Play Strategy Action Plan and took up the role of vice chair of the implementation group. She has an honor degree in painting and a post-graduate certificate in playwork. Her playwork practice began in an adventure playground in Scotland and led to play development in Thailand where she worked for 3 years. She is a freelance consultant and writer on play, inclusion, and children's rights and frequent presenter at conferences in Scotland and internationally. Her recent publications include "Free to Play: A Guide to Creating Accessible and Inclusive Public Play Spaces" (Inspiring Scotland, 2018); "Play Types: Bringing More Play into the School Day" (Play Scotland, 2017); "Inclusive Play Space Guide: Championing Better and More Inclusive Play Spaces in Hong Kong" (Playright Children's Play Association & UNICEF, 2016); and "Loose Parts Play" (2016, Inspiring Scotland).



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