

## Comparing Children's Rights: Introducing the Children's Rights Index

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### Abstract

Children's rights continue to be subject of international debates. Moving past these debates can be facilitated with an international measure of children's rights. This article introduces the Children's Rights Index, an international measure of children's rights for over 190 countries. The Children's Rights Index consists of two civil rights, two political rights, two social rights, and two economic rights. This article presents country scores on the Children's Rights Index, then examines whether children's rights vary by region and other differences, such as country wealth. It is hoped that the Children's Rights Index will provide evidence on children's rights important to the work of governments and nongovernmental organizations, as well as scholars and others concerned about children's welfare.

### Keywords

children's rights; international; comparison

## Comparing Children's Rights: Introducing the Children's Rights Index

### *Introduction*

Across the world, many government and nongovernment officials seek to enhance children's rights, with experts reporting on factors that appear essential to promoting children's rights (UNICEF, 2002; UNICEF, 2004). Elsewhere, some scholars (compare Freeman, 2006; Guggenheim, 2005; Simon, 2000: 1) question the utility of rights. Are rights "on the books," found in legislation and case law, put into practice?

Evidence exists of government and nongovernment officials attempting to restrain development of children's rights (U.N. Committee, 2008). Some scholars, such as Savitri Goonesekere (1998), and activists, like Peter Newell (2000;

\*) I wish to thank Dawn Aliberti, Rachel Bryant, Rachel Hammel, Casey Schroeder, and Robin Shura for their assistance on this project. I am especially grateful to Lynn Falletta and Michael Flatt for co-directing the Children Rights Index Project.

Global Initiative to End All Corporal Punishment of Children, 2008), push for expansion to children's rights despite cultural differences. These experts believe that stronger rights will result in improved outcomes for children. Others contend that rights are valuable because they indicate the individual possessing the right is a full member of that society (Williams, 1987). Yet some critics argue that rights will have little payoff (Glendon, 1994), in contrast to views of other leading experts (Freeman, 2007).

Leading scholars express concern that others' rights not only conflict with children's rights, those rights are more important (Guggenheim, 2005). Reynolds *et al.* (2006: 293) suggest that opponents to children's rights say that children's rights are useful to particular groups who already have access to power. Reynolds *et al.* (2006: 297) state that "concern for children's rights has been from the inception linked to the sweeping political and economic processes connecting vast areas of the world into one global production system." These debates, however, demand a starting point. To answer what explains differences in establishment of children's rights and whether children's rights are valuable to children's and others' outcomes, a comparison across countries is necessary.

This article introduces the Children's Rights Index (CRI). The CRI is a measure of young people's formal rights for over 190 countries for the year 2004. It is hoped that the CRI will be useful to social scientific research, particularly studies of explanations and consequences of children's rights across countries and globally.

This article first places the CRI in a context of larger research efforts on children's rights. It then reviews the CRI's construction, assessing its validity and reliability. After examining overall CRI scores, including a map depicting a global view of children's formal rights, this article compares levels of children's formal rights across World Bank regions. Do children's rights differ according to where they live? Can we ascertain patterns by region? It then examines patterns of CRI scores according to responses to international pressures on children's rights, country wealth, and democracy. The article concludes with a discussion of potential uses of the CRI, its limitations, and questions for future research.

### *Conceptual Background*

As the 20th anniversary of the adoption of the U.N. Convention on the Rights of the Child draws near, children's rights continue to be subject to debate. The U.N. Convention on the Rights of the Child was adopted in 1989 and provides that national governments will respect and enforce children's rights. The U.N. Convention is a focal point of children's rights efforts, if only because nearly every national government has ratified the U.N. Convention (Reynolds *et al.*, 2006: 297). Ghana was among the first governments to ratify the Convention and Oman was one of the most recent. There are 192 state parties to the Convention;

only two national governments have not ratified the Convention. The U.N. Convention may be more than, or less than (Grover, 2004: 260), a nearly universal ratified children's treaty; it may serve as a "normative framework" (Ben-Arieh, 2008: 5), outlining goals for government officials and children's rights activists (Boyle *et al.*, 2007: 255; Reynolds *et al.*, 2006: 297; but see Libesman, 2007). Although the U.N. Convention is twenty-years old, and some experts advance the notion that children have inherent rights (Ben-Arieh and Frønes, 2007b: 249), evidence indicates variation across the world in children's rights (Boyle and Kim, 2008).

Even if a national government has ratified a children's rights instrument, such as the U.N. Convention, do rights exist in the national legal framework (Maripe, 2002; Odongo, 2004: 424)? Can a young person assume that those rights will be enforced? Do gaps exist between rights on the books and rights in practice (Hammad, 1999; Veerman and Levine, 2000; Wotipka and Ramirez, 2008: 312)? From institutional research on human rights, the concept of decoupling is used to identify the situation in which a state that has ratified a treaty, but not ensured those rights are put into practice. This term highlights that a state can more easily ratify a human rights treaty, which means it promises to enforce rights articulated in the treaty, but not intend to implement the treaty's requirements. There are two components to concerns about putting an international treaty into practice. First, has a national government endowed children with rights as a matter of law? Second, do children possess these rights in practice? Have national governments decoupled children's rights treaties like human rights treaties?

To answer what explains differences in establishment of children's rights and whether children's rights are valuable to children's and others' outcomes, a comparison across countries and over time is necessary. In his famous work on citizenship rights, *Citizenship and Social Class*, T.H. Marshall (1964: 69, 70) suggested that citizenship is a status that indicates an individual is a full member of his or her society, and consists of three rights: civil, political, and social (Marshall, 1964: 71). For Marshall (1964: 71, 75, 87) civil rights enable an individual to speak and think freely, and to defend one's civil rights and obtain due process when another individual tries to restrict civil rights. Political rights are rights individuals possess to participate fully in a political system (Marshall, 1964: 71-72, 77-78). Marshall (1964: 72) defined a political right as "the right to participate in the exercise of political power, as a member of a body invested with political authority or as an elector of the members of such a body." Although Marshall's notion of political rights may appear limited to voting or serving in an elected office, it seems fair to include within Marshall's notion the ability to shape governing institutions through participation in other institutions, such as schools. The right that follows civil and political rights is social rights. According to Marshall (1964: 72, 78-83), social rights enable an individual to enjoy a level of economic and social well being that permits effective participation in his or her own society. Marshall

contended that without an education, an individual could not effectively exercise her civil and political rights (Marshall, 1964: 93). Hindess (1993: 25) states, “In the absence of social rights, then, the impact of a formal equality of civil and political rights will be somewhat restricted.” Freedom of conscience and the right to assembly, for instance, are more useful if an individual can read and write (Marshall, 1964: 97).

Other experts of sociological theories of citizenship have argued for inclusion of additional rights. Bryan Turner (1993: 7; see Soysal, 1994: 126–127) contends that citizenship theorists need to contend with economic rights. Economic rights include freedoms from encroachments on individuals’ lives and harms to their welfare. An economic right, for instance, is freedom from economic exploitation.

In 1989 the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child was adopted. The U.N. Convention provides that national governments signing the Convention will respect and enforce children’s rights, as well as other objectives (Hanson, 2008: 7). Among other important items, the Convention highlights different rights children are expected to possess, including civil rights such as freedom of conscience; political rights like the right to express views and representation of those views; social rights, for example, rights to health care and education; and economic rights, for instance, freedom from exploitation and hazardous work (see Boyle and Kim, 2008; Freeman, 2004: xiv–xv). Since 1989, all national governments except those of the United States and Somalia have ratified the convention. Ratification means a state is committed to meeting obligations set forth in the U.N. Convention (U.N. Treaty Handbook, 2008).

### *Measurement Background*

Over the last fifteen years, a host of international indicators of children’s welfare has emerged. The various international indicators have different goals. For instance, one goal is measuring children’s well being (Bradshaw *et al.*, 2007). By well-being, Ben-Arieh and Frønes (2007b: 249) have in mind “quality of life in a broad sense,” including “economic conditions, peer relations, political rights, and opportunities for development” (compare Hanafin *et al.*, 2006: 80).

A separate field of indicators is growing that focus on children’s rights. Elizabeth Heger Boyle has developed a children’s rights indicator that measures how long a state took to ratify an international treaty on children’s rights, such as the U.N. Convention. More recently, Boyle and Kim (2008: 16) focus on rates of child labor, rates of primary and secondary education enrolment, and percentage of infants who are immunized.

The field of human rights, relative to children’s rights, is more developed. Comparative-historical measures are important components of human rights research. Human rights scholars have examined human rights dealing with

oppression when constructing this human rights measure. Hafner-Burton and Tsutsui's study (2007: 411) considers a measure of repression, which examines "five levels of behavior," with one extreme being "population-wide" terror with weak-to-no restrictions on decisionmakers, to the other extreme, which is a country under rule of law where political imprisonment, torture, and political murders are uncommon. Scholars employing such a human rights measure are often interested in whether a national government has ratified a human rights treaty compared to how its residents fare in practice.

Another type of human rights measure examines whether a national government has ratified international treaties on human rights. In their work, Hafner-Burton *et al.* (2008) have examined treaty commitments. One measure is "Any Treaty Commitment," which is if a state "has made a formal commitment to any international human rights treaty by ratifying, acceding, or succeeding to an agreement" (Hafner-Burton and Tsutsui, 2007; Hafner-Burton *et al.*, 2008: 127). Hafner-Burton *et al.* (2008: 127) have also looked at the "Number of Treaty Commitments," which measures to how many international human rights treaties has committed. Hafner-Burton and Tsutsui (2007: 409) refer to studies on "relationship between the *duration in years* since ratification of the core UN human rights laws and compliance behavior."

This article introduces the Children's Rights Index. The Children's Rights Index is an indicator for over 190 countries of four different types of children's rights: civil, political, social, and economic. The Children's Rights Index indicates levels of children's rights based in national laws with reference to restrictions in place (see below). The CRI may represent a measurement innovation because it conceptualizes children's rights as a bundle of four kinds of rights. For each kind of right, two specific rights are considered, so that the Children's Rights Index consists of eight rights. Consequently, as one step in empirically studying children's rights (see Beeckman, 2004: 71), the Children's Rights Index presents evidence across a range of rights children do and do not possess.

### **Constructing the Children's Rights Index**

As noted above, a disciplinary consensus on constructs of children's rights is emerging. While the Children's Rights Index is based on this research, it is hoped that it will make a contribution to this line of research. The Children's Rights Index consists of two rights of four different types: civil, political, social, and economic rights. The two civil rights are freedom of conscience (Article 14 of the U.N. Convention) and freedom from imprisonment with adults (Article 37 of the U.N. Convention). The right to vote and the right to assemble (Article 15 of the U.N. Convention) are the two political rights. Note that the right to vote is

not articulated in the U.N. Convention, although some analysts contend it is an important right (Archard, 2004). The two social rights are the right to education (Article 28 of the U.N. Convention) and the right to health care (Article 24 of the U.N. Convention). Freedoms from economic exploitation (Article 32 of the U.N. Convention) and hazardous work (Article 32 of the U.N. Convention) are the two economic rights in the Children's Rights Index.

### *Data Sources of Children's Rights*

The primary source of data on children's rights is the U.S. Department of State's *Country Reports on Human Rights Practices*. While the *Country Reports on Human Rights Practices* do not focus only on children's rights, the *Country Reports* do evaluate various children's rights. The State Department's *Country Reports* are selected because of their breadth and depth, and because experts agree they are accurate (Poe *et al.*, 2001: 651). Information in the *Country Reports* is assembled in a stepwise format (telephone conversation with Petersen, 2008). Officers of overseas bureaux of the State Department collect information on various countries. The officers receive information from governments, nongovernmental organizations, and country experts such as academics, lawyers, members of the media, and religious officials (Farrar, 2008). Officers in the State Department's Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights and Labor, and in other bureaux of the State Department, then prepare the *Country Reports*, which are widely considered accurate and objective.

Researchers, nevertheless, have compared *Country Reports on Human Rights Practices* with other sources of information on rights, primarily to reports filed by Amnesty International. While concerns were expressed for early *Country Reports* (Poe *et al.*, 2001), experts consider *Country Reports* filed in the last thirty years to be comparable to Amnesty International Reports. Hafner-Burton *et al.* (2008: 128) find that the State Department and Amnesty International Data are strongly correlated. As Hafner-Burton *et al.* (2008: 128) suggest, the U.S. State Department data offer an important advantage of reporting on more states over more years than Amnesty International.

Each member of the project team took turns gathering information on a specific right from the *Country Reports*. Each team member then reviewed a country's State Department *Country Report* to identify relevant information on the specific right. This team member copied this information into a spreadsheet. Suffrage information was obtained from the Central Intelligence Agency's (CIA) *World Factbook* ([www.odci.gov/cia/publications/factbook/fields/2123.html](http://www.odci.gov/cia/publications/factbook/fields/2123.html)). The *World Factbook* is intended to provide a "snapshot" of the world for intelligence purposes. The age at which suffrage is granted was extracted and coded numerically.

### *Coding of Children's Rights*

Each of the eight rights noted above were coded according to four levels, which are (1) no right, (2) right exists with significant, formal limitation; (3) right exists with informal, minor limitation; and (4) right exists. This study used the 1 to 4 coding scheme to try to capture differences in levels of each right for over 190 countries. Rather than a dichotomy between the right existing and not existing, the approach is to distinguish between when a significant, formal limitation on the right exists, as well as when a minor limitation on the right is in place, and when a right exists. An example may elucidate the rationale of this approach. In Bangladesh for the year 2004, the right to education is only available to children through age 10, a significant, formal limitation. For the year 2004, in Suriname, the right to education is limited by whether individuals can pay nominal fees. Bangladesh received a score of 2 for the formal limitation based on age; Suriname received a score of 3 for the informal limitation on fees.

A four-person team was responsible for data coding. The team consisted of the principal investigator, the project director, and two doctoral students. Two team members separately coded each right. Each team member scored the specific country, as well as provided a rationale for the score. The project director assessed inter-rater reliability for each year. If inter-rater reliability was unsatisfactory, the project director identified discrepancies, then asked the two team members who coded the specific right to revise their scores. The project director and principal investigator reviewed each right after team members scored all rights.

### *Reliability, Validity, and Normal Distribution*

To assess reliability, Cronbach's Alpha and inter-rater reliability were examined. Cronbach's Alpha is an estimate to determine if items are sufficiently interrelated to justify their combination into an index. The Cronbach's Alpha is .714 for the Children's Rights Index, which experts consider appropriate (Garson, 2008). We turned to Cohen's Kappa to assess inter-rater reliability, which for the Children's Rights Index is .81, regarded as "almost perfect" inter-rater reliability (Landis and Koch, 1977: 165).

Convergent validity, concurrent validity, content validity, and discriminant validity were assessed. Convergent validity was assessed through Cronbach's Alpha. To assess concurrent validity, we correlated the Children's Rights Index with a direct measure of an outcome associated with children's rights. For 138 countries for which data are available, total educational expenditures relative to gross domestic product and CRI scores have a bivariate correlation of .199

(significant at the .05 level). The project also examined discriminant validity to assess whether the CRI is highly related to ratification of the U.N. Convention on the Rights of the Child, which could lead to the conclusion that they measure the same social phenomena. The dates between adoption of the U.N. Convention and a state's ratification have a bivariate correlation of  $-.079$  (.277, for 192 countries), suggesting the CRI and time to ratify the U.N. Convention do not measure the same phenomena.

The present study assessed the distribution of Children's Rights Index scores across the 193 countries. It examined the index's kurtosis, which is the peakedness of its distribution. An accepted level for a normal distribution is +2 to -2. The Children's Rights Index kurtosis level is  $-.56$ . Skewness is the tilt in the distribution of Children's Rights Index scores. An acceptable level ranges from +2 to -2; the index's skewness is 0.013.

## **An Analysis of Children's Rights**

### *Children's Rights Index Scores*

Potential scores on the CRI range from 8 (a score of one on each of the eight rights) to 32 (a score of four on each of the eight rights) (see Table 1). Across the 193 countries, CRI scores range from a minimum of 13 (Somalia and Swaziland) to a maximum of 31 (Saint Kitts and Nevis).

The median CRI score is 22. Nearly 26% of the countries score below 20, less than 3% score above 30; the great majority, over 70%, have scores from 20 to 29. This review, however, does not readily indicate patterns in levels of children's rights.

### *International Perspectives of Children's Rights*

We can study patterns of children's rights by examining maps of children's rights. Below is a map of children's rights (see Figure 1). This map suggests regional patterns in children's rights. Children's formal rights appear strongest in northern and western European countries, as well as Canada. Children's rights appear to be weaker in some African countries, as well as elsewhere.

### *CRI Scores by World Bank Regions*

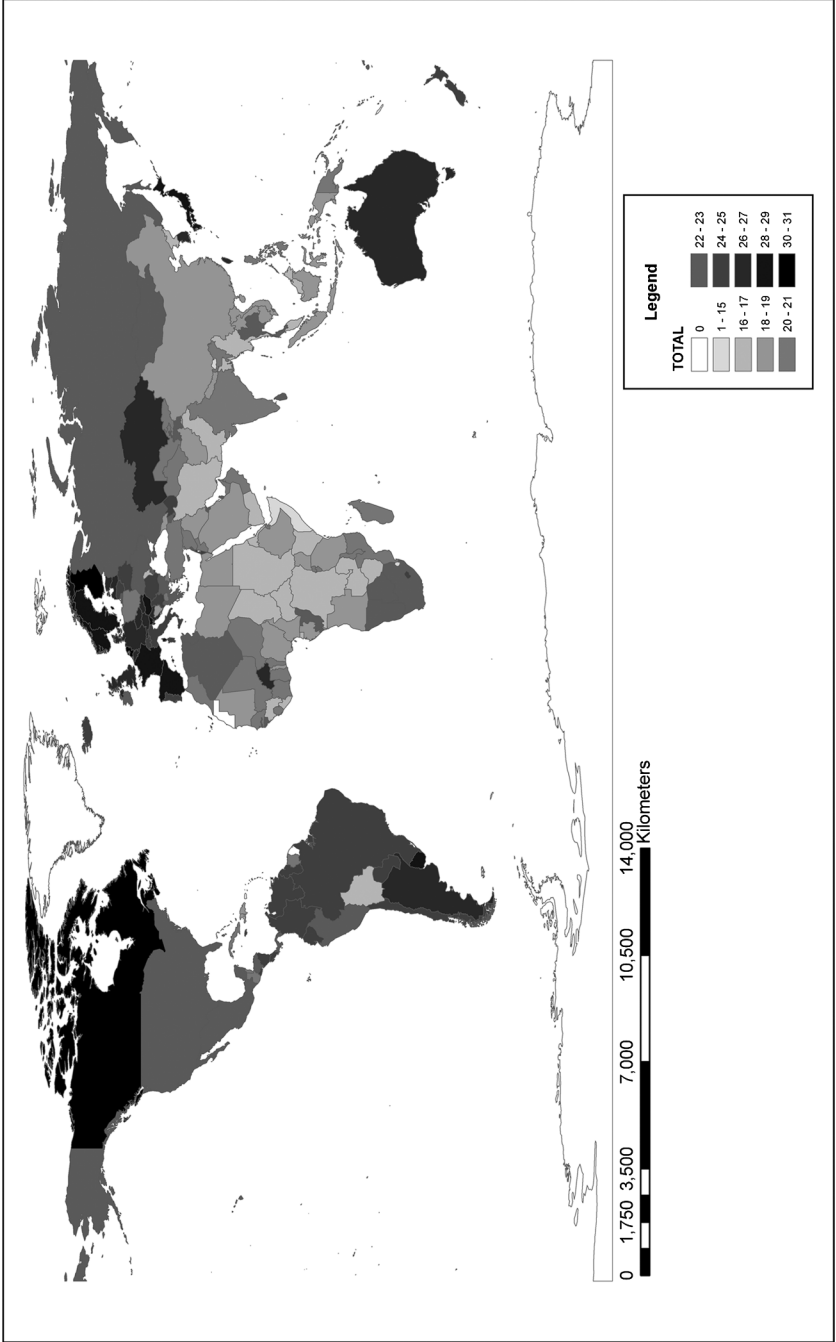
The World Bank has made significant impacts on a variety of social, political, and economic issues, as well as on human and children's rights (Shihata, 1996). Do children's rights vary by World Bank region (see Table 2)?

**Table 1** Children's Rights Index: Scores of children's formal rights (2004)

Afghanistan	18	Cameroon	19	Finland	30	Korea, North	17	Mozambique	20	Saudi Arabia	19	Uganda	19
Albania	22	Canada	30	France	28	Korea, South	26	Namibia	23	Senegal	21	Ukraine	23
Algeria	23	Cape Verde	23	Gabon	19	Kuwait	22	Nauru	24	Serbia and Montenegro	25	United Arab Emirates	20
Andorra	30	Central African Republic	16	Gambia	22	Kyrgyz Republic	21	Nepal	19	Seychelles	27	UK	27
Angola	19	Chad	17	Georgia	18	Laos	18	Netherlands	30	Sierra Leone	21	USA	23
Antigua/ Baruda	27	Chile	25	Germany	26	Latvia	27	New Zealand	25	Singapore	22	Uruguay	28
Argentina	26	China	19	Ghana	21	Lebanon	22	Nicaragua	24	Slovakia	27	Uzbekistan	21
Armenia	22	Colombia	25	Greece	22	Lesotho	25	Niger	20	Slovenia	29	Vanuatu	21
Australia	26	Comoros	20	Grenada	26	Liberia	17	Nigeria	18	Solomon Islands	21	Venezuela	24
Austria	27	Congo, Democratic Republic of the	17	Guatemala	20	Libya	18	Norway	28	Somalia	13	Vietnam	19
Azerbaijan	25	Congo, Republic of the	23	Guinea	16	Liechtenstein	28	Oman	20	South Africa	23	Yemen	17
Bahamas	23	Costa Rica	25	Guinea Bissau	23	Lithuania	24	Pakistan	16	Spain	29	Zambia	17
Bahrain	22	Cote d'Ivoire	20	Guyana	24	Luxembourg	27	Palau	26	Sri Lanka	23	Zimbabwe	16
Bangladesh	17	Croatia	27	Haiti	18	Macau	22	Panama	23	Sudan	17		
Barbados	28	Cuba	20	Honduras	22	Macedonia	20	Papua New Guinea	20	Suriname	21		
Belarus	25	Cyprus	23	Hungary	28	Madagascar	21	Paraguay	24	Swaziland	13		
Belgium	26	Czech Republic	27	Iceland	24	Malawi	20	Peru	23	Sweden	29		
Belize	21	Denmark	26	India	20	Malaysia	17	Philippines	20	Switzerland	25		

**Table 1** (cont.)

Benin	20	Djibouti	20	Indonesia	18	Maldives	21	Poland	21	Syria	20
Bhutan	15	Dominica	26	Iran	17	Mali	20	Portugal	25	Taiwan	26
Bolivia	17	Dominican Republic	19	Iraq	19	Malta	28	Qatar	23	Tajikistan	22
Bosnia and Herzegovina	19	East Timor	18	Ireland	23	Marshall Islands	21	Romania	24	Tanzania	19
Botswana	23	Ecuador	24	Israel	24	Mauritania	18	Russia	22	Thailand	23
Brazil	25	Egypt	19	Italy	24	Mauritius	25	Rwanda	20	Togo	19
Brunei	16	El Salvador	24	Jamaica	24	Mexico	23	Saint Kitts and Nevis	31	Tonga	24
Bulgaria	22	Equatorial Guinea	16	Japan	28	Micronesia	19	Saint Lucia	25	Trinidad and Tobago	26
Burkina Faso	26	Eritrea	16	Jordan	21	Moldova	17	Saint Vincent and the Grenadines	22	Tunisia	23
Burma	16	Estonia	27	Kazakhstan	26	Monaco	29	Samoa	23	Turkey	20
Burundi	20	Ethiopia	19	Kenya	17	Mongolia	22	San Marino	28	Turkmenistan	20
Cambodia	19	Fiji	22	Kiribati	28	Morocco	21	Sao Tome and Principe	25	Tuvalu	27



**Figure 1.** Children's Rights Index: Total.

**Table 2** CRI scores by World Bank Regions

Region	Mean	Median	Range	Std Dev
Africa	19.55	20.00	14	3.30
East Asia & Pacific	20.40	19.00	11	3.25
Europe & Central Asia	23.25	22.50	12	3.24
Latin America & Caribbean	23.97	24.00	14	3.03
Middle East & North Africa	20.56	20.50	7	2.12
South Asia	20.43	19.50	11	3.41

When considering World Bank regions, on average, the highest levels of children's formal rights are found in Latin America and the Caribbean, followed by Europe and Central Asia. The lowest CRI scores are typically found in the World Bank Africa region.

It is important to note, however, that the *range* of scores among countries making up these World Bank regions is largest not only for the Latin America and Caribbean region, but for the Africa region. The narrowest range of scores is found in the Middle East and North Africa region, for which the mean score of 20.56 and median score of 20.50 are low. This narrow range suggests that children living in most Middle East and North Africa countries do not possess strong formal rights.

Are countries scoring low, medium, and high on the CRI characterized by differences in their wealth, responses to international pressures, or levels of democracy (see Table 3)? Comparing average wealth, measured as gross domestic product per capita, children living in countries with greater wealth tend to enjoy higher levels of rights. On the other hand, children whose national governments quickly ratified the U.N. Convention tend to possess moderate levels of rights. In contrast, children living in countries whose national governments were later ratifiers of the Con-vention tend to possess fewer rights, but children living in the latest ratifiers seem to possess the highest level of rights. Children living in stronger democracies, as measured by Vanhanen (2008), tend to enjoy stronger levels of

**Table 3** CRI scores by National Differences

CRI scores→	Below 20	20-29	30+
Average gross domestic product per capita	\$2794.90	\$9080.89	\$19420.00
Days to U.N. Convention ratification	1015	903.83	1143
Democracy levels	5.96	18.34	30.40

rights, according to the CRI. A higher score on Vanhanen's Index of Democracy indicates stronger democracy.

## **Discussion**

As a measure of children's rights across countries, the Children's Rights Index provides empirical evidence of children's formal rights. Rather than identify whether or not a right exists, the CRI analyzes rights as matters of degree. To reiterate, the CRI consists of eight different rights, each of which ranges from 1 to 4, so that CRI scores can potentially be 8 to 32. In the context of broader work on children's rights, the CRI represents an important step in measuring children's rights. As a valid and reliable measure, it is hoped that scholars and advocates can use the CRI to answer critical questions to children's rights research.

This article presents evidence that children's rights vary across countries. Nearly 26% of the countries score below 20, nearly 72% score below 30, and less than 3% score above 30. While no country receives a score of 8, the lowest possible score, no country receives a score of 32, the highest possible score. This variation is in contrast to nearly universal ratification of the U.N. Convention, raising questions of whether national governments are able or willing to implement children's rights according to this rights instrument.

While there is substantial international variation in children's rights, important patterns are revealed. Considering countries with lower CRI scores, the lowest scoring region is Africa, although the greatest variation among countries is among African countries and Latin American and Caribbean countries. The World Bank's region of the Middle East and North Africa tend to share similar scores, with a mean CRI score of 20.56. These findings raise questions for differences and similarities in children's rights across countries.

This article suggests that children's rights do vary according to international pressures, country wealth, and democracy. The wealthier and more democratic a country, the higher levels of rights its children seem to possess. On the other hand, international pressures appear to have mixed impacts. Children living in countries whose national governments were quick to ratify the U.N. Convention tend to have moderate levels of rights, but countries with low and high scores are late ratifiers. This result suggests that ratifying the U.N. Convention is not enough to improve children's rights.

## **Conclusion and Future Research**

The CRI focuses on children's formal rights. An important concern raised by law and society scholars is whether rights matter to children's outcomes. This project has approached children's rights by first separating children's rights in law, relative

to rights in practice. The CRI can be used by law and society researchers to examine differences in rights on the books with rights in practice.

It is hoped that researchers can use the CRI to study the question of whether rights matter. Even if a country has not firmly established children's formal rights, do children do well in practice? If the answer is no, then scholars, policy makers, and advocates of children's rights should bolster their efforts in advancing and implementing children's rights. If the answer to this question is yes, that there is a weak link between children's rights and children's welfare, then scholars and policy makers should then ask whether alternatives to rights should be explored for improving well being of young people (Reynolds *et al.*, 2006: 292).

Analyses of the CRI indicate children's formal rights vary significantly across countries. Very few are the countries where children's formal rights are extensive. Instead, children in most countries possess moderate levels of formal rights. In many more countries are children entitled to fewer formal rights, compared to countries where children enjoy strong formal rights. This finding raises concerns about treaty decoupling. It is hoped that the CRI will be useful to identify states that have decoupled practices from treaties. In the future, researchers can use the CRI to illuminate distances between children's rights treaties and implementation of children's rights. These descriptive analyses suggest the phenomenon of decoupling treaties from practices should be examined for children's rights.

Researchers may explore other consequences of children's rights, including changes to families and other social groups (Hanson, 2007). Scholars may use the CRI to compare young people's perspectives of their rights across countries (Khoury-Kassabri and Ben-Arieh, 2008). Future research can use the CRI to investigate whether children's rights coincide with human rights across countries. The CRI can contribute to research on children's rights by considering whether theoretical explanations of human rights are strong explanations for differences in children's rights. For example, strong evidence exists in support of external influences on human rights. Are external factors similarly powerful explanations of why children do or do not possess rights? Likewise, are internal factors found to have impacts on human rights similarly powerful explanations of children's rights? The CRI can be used to evaluate institutions and policies specifically established to further children's rights. As an example, researchers can use the CRI to answer the question of whether institutions set up specifically to augment children's rights, such as national independent children's rights institutions (sometimes called children's commissioners and children's ombudspersons), promote children's rights (Gran and Aliberti, 2003).

It is anticipated that disaggregating the Children's Rights Index into the four types of rights will be useful to determining whether some factors are more powerful explanations of types of rights. For instance, historical research (Detrick *et al.*, 1992) suggests that leaders of some countries have advocated for strong social rights, and some leaders have pursued strong civil rights. Researchers can

employ the CRI to study whether children living in some countries are entitled to weaker social rights, compared to civil rights. Another question to be pursued is whether children living in earlier ratifiers of the U.N. Convention possess stronger rights of some kinds compared to children who live in late-ratifying countries.

Future research should include measures of additional rights. The CRI is for one time point, 2004; expanding the CRI to other time points will enable researchers to examine changes in rights, and the causes and consequences of these changes. The CRI is a measure of rights for all ages of children. In the future, researchers may consider differences among various age groups.

The CRI represents a small step in comparative research on children's rights. It is hoped that the CRI will be a useful resource for scholars, policy makers, and advocates of children's rights.

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