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**Child Well-Being in Middle Childhood:  
A Mixed Methods Cross-National Comparison**

**Anastasia Miliffe**

**Student No. 07097964**

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## Abstract

This mixed methods case study explores child well-being in middle childhood with the overarching goal of completing a strength-based, cross-national comparison. In order to develop an understanding of what child well-being means to local children aged between 9 to 11 years old, semi-structured interviews were held using an adjusted version of the interview guide developed by Fattore, Mason and Watson (2009). The main dynamic child well-being dimensions included relationships, emotional health and interests, with independent contributions from the themes of accomplishment, special events, safety, values and the environment. These findings respond to international requests for age-specific child well-being research (Dex & Hollingworth, 2012) and uniquely contribute to the national literature.

The limited cross-national research that includes New Zealand details our poor child well-being outcomes (Heshmati, Bajalan & Tausch, 2007). Using the Developmental Assets questionnaire, the current study identifies local children's well-being to be in the good range, although at the low end. This is comparable to the well-being levels reported in the American pilot sample (Scales, Fraher & Andress, 2011). With one third of participants in both samples reporting fair but vulnerable levels of well-being, similar room for improvement is purported.

The integration of the assets data and thematic data presents a rich and pragmatic picture of local child well-being in middle childhood. With the Education Review Office (ERO, 2013) requiring all schools to develop well-being initiatives by 2015, the current case study identifies the children's agenda and supports the design of 'complete' policies (Ben-Arieh, 2010).

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