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SOCIOECONOMICS, SELF-ESTEEM AND LOCUS OF CONTROL IN THIRD GRADE
STUDENTS

by
Kathryn S. Gipe

A Thesis

Submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements of the
Master of Arts Degree
of
The Graduate School
at
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Professor

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ABSTRACT

Kathryn S. Gipe
Socioeconomics, Self-Esteem and Locus of Control in Third Grade Students
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Dr. John W. Klanderman
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The purpose of this study was to examine the relationship between third student's socioeconomic status and their corresponding levels of self-esteem and locus of control. Students who received free or reduced lunch were determined as lower socioeconomic status as compared to those who paid full price for their lunch. Five third grade classes were chosen in a suburban area of Philadelphia. One hundred children were used for the study. Seventy-two children were recipients of free or reduced lunch and twenty-eight paid full price for their lunches. The Coopersmith Self-Esteem Inventory was given as a measure of self-esteem and the Nowicki-Strickland Locus of Control Scale for Children was administered as a measure of locus of control. Results did not indicate a relationship between socioeconomics and self-esteem or locus of control. Findings did support a negative correlation between self-esteem and locus of control for all participants.

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Chapter One: The Problem

Introduction

The progressive organization Teach For America provides placement for teachers in underprivileged under-resourced school systems in an attempt to level the academic playing field for students in these troubled districts. It was during this two-year commitment that the vast disparity between the economically privileged and the disadvantaged became strikingly real. Teachers who as salaried professionals are considered economically stable may not intuitively relate to economically disadvantaged students. Therefore many times the connection between students and teachers is inhibited due to lack of commonality. Often economically disadvantaged students are feeling and thinking thoughts that economically stable teachers do not intuitively consider. It is imperative that teachers are able to gain insight into the frustrations and implications of being economically disadvantaged as a youth. Only after this insight is gained can quality rapport with students be built. In addition, low levels of self-esteem as well as an external locus of control have been correlated to lower academic achievement.

Purpose

The purpose of this study is to reveal the self-esteem levels and locus of control of third grade student who receive free and reduced lunch. This study is necessary so that teachers and individuals working with financially disadvantaged third graders are able to better understand their emotions and behaviors and the implications on their academic performance.

Hypothesis

Third grade students who receive free or reduced lunch have lower self-esteem and an external locus of control. In this study the dependent variable is defined as the level of self-esteem and locus of control while the independent variable is free or reduced lunch.

Theory

Situationism refers to the idea that variables which exist in situations surrounding an individual are more influential in determining how an individual will behave than personality characteristics. The theory of situationism supports the hypothesis that students receiving free and reduced lunch have lower self-esteem, and an external locus. These characteristics are correlated to the financial status of the individual.

Throughout the latter half of the twentieth century there has been a great investigation and study of people who receive financial assistance from the government. Issues such as self-esteem and locus of control are addressed. According to Burton (1992), those trapped in poverty exhibit patterns of behavior and values that are characteristically different from those of the dominant society and culture. Burton indicates that their values include helplessness, dependence, a sense of inferiority, resignation, and fatalism. Those individuals living in poverty consequently experience lower self-esteem and an external locus of control.

Such characteristics are different than those in the dominant society and culture, which is represented by the teachers in this study. Students who receive free or reduced lunch are determined by a percentage of their family income that based on the current poverty level. Therefore, the characteristics discussed would be applicable to students who are part of the Free and Reduced Lunch Program. Teachers do not have an innate comprehensive understanding of their financially disadvantaged students due to their financial differences.

Barbara Ehrenreich addressed the vast differences between financial stability and financial hardship when she performed her own experiment. When working a minimum wage job as the only method of income Ehrenreich details her anxiety ridden existence in Nickel and Dimed (Ehrenreich 2001). Ehrenreich (2001) reports low self-efficacy while being considered a financially disadvantaged member of society. Literally by becoming a financially disadvantaged Ehrenreich validated the hypothesis of low self-esteem and external locus of control among financially disadvantaged Americans.

Definitions:

Throughout the study the following terms and their definitions will be used consistently:

- Financially disadvantaged: families or individuals receiving government financial assistance or free and reduced lunch.
- External locus of control: people who feel that their outcomes in life are determined by forces beyond their control like luck, fate or other people (Findley & Cooper, 1983).
- Free and Reduced Lunch: is a federally assisted meal program providing nutritional lunches at a reduced cost or for free. Children whose families have an income level

at or below 130% of the poverty level qualify for free lunch. Students whose family incomes are between 130 and 185% of the poverty level qualify for reduced priced lunches (no more than total cost=.40) for the period July 1, 2001 through June 30, 2002. 130% of poverty level is \$22,945 for a family of four and 185% is \$32,653 (U.S. Department of Agriculture 2002).

- Internal locus of control: refers to people who feel personally responsible for the things that happen to them (Findley & Cooper, 1983).
- Locus of control: refers to a person's beliefs about control over life events (Findley & Cooper, 1983).
- Self-Esteem: the evaluation an individual makes and maintains with regards to himself: it expresses an attitude of approval or disapproval, and indicates the extent to which the individual believes himself to be capable, significant, successful and worthy (Coopersmith, 1967).
- Situationism: the idea that situations are the primary determinants of behavior (Carver & Scheier 2000).

Assumptions

The following study will be conducted with the assumptions that all students interviewed share the same degree of financial hardship, the same familial structure and that they are free of mental disorders. In addition, it is assumed that the subjects are performing at or above mandated grade level expectations.

Limitations

The subjects used in this study are third graders living in a suburb of Philadelphia. Therefore, the results can be correlated to other third grade students receiving free or reduced lunch living in a suburban area.

Overview

This study looks at the anxiety levels, locus of control and self-efficacy traits of third grade students who receive free and reduced lunch. In Chapter Two a comprehensive review of related literature will be presented. The design of the study will be provided in Chapter Three. Throughout Chapter Four an analysis of results will be reviewed and Chapter Five contains a summary and conclusions of the study.

Chapter Two

This chapter will review literature supporting the hypothesis. Literature about self-esteem will be presented first moving from general implications to more specific implications. Next, material discussing locus of control will be presented first in general terms expanding to implications specific for this study.

Parental Interaction and Self-Esteem

The effects of family economic hardship on children's self-esteem have been researched from various angles. Parental actions and attitudes, while experiencing economic hardship, have been examined in relation to the consequences experienced by their children. The age of children experiencing economic hardship has been correlated to the self-esteem of the child and societal views have also been examined as a factor effecting self-esteem among children whose families are receiving financial assistance. Finally, the relationship between welfare recipients and self-esteem was studied directly.

Economic hardship has been linked to lower self-esteem in children through parental actions and attitudes. Whitbeck, Simons, Conber, Lorenz, Huck and Elder (1991) examined the effects of parental reports of economic hardship on the self-esteem of their adolescent children in a study of 451 families. Family members completed questionnaires on topics such as parent-child interaction, psychological adjustment, self-concept, health, social support and economic status. Families were also videotaped discussing areas of disagreement and the tapes were reviewed by trained observers. Observers rated the tapes on several dimensions of family interaction and individual characteristics.

Whitbeck et al. (1991) concluded that the economic situations in which parents were immersed was reflected in their relationships with their children. Consequently the children's concepts of themselves were affected. Economic hardships were found damaging to the self-esteem of early adolescents because parental support and warmth were diminished because of parental preoccupation. Typically, parental support and warmth is a fundamental source of children's positive reflection (Whitbeck et al., 1991). These findings support the hypothesis that economic hardship affects adolescent self-esteem, however this correlation is indirect. Economic hardships are causing parents to become preoccupied which in turn lessens their support and warmth toward their children that then produces a negative effect on self-esteem.

Social Implications

A slight direct effect was found between economic hardship and adolescent self-esteem. The most likely explanation for this slight direct effect is the social implications of economic hardship. Particularly for adolescents family economic hardships may affect personal characteristics such as social activities, fashion and living conditions of the family which in turn contributes to a negative self-evaluation in comparison with peers. (McLoyd, 1998). Consequently, adolescents experiencing family economic hardship may consider themselves to be not "as good" in comparison to other children in their peer group (Whitbeck et al., 1991).

Research by Whitbeck et al. (1991) shows that pre-adolescents and adolescents whose families are experiencing economic hardship are found to have adverse affects on self-esteem. Although the parent's effect on children's self-esteem is indirect economic hardship

is causal nonetheless. A weaker correlation was found directly between economic hardship and self-esteem.

Academic Achievement

Studies have shown that financial standing and socioeconomic status negatively affect self-esteem (Blogger et al. 1995, Wiltfand & Scarbecz, 1990). Yet, how does self-esteem affect academic achievement? Purkey (1970) concluded that, there is a “persistent and significant relationship between the self concept and academic achievement,” after summarizing many studies (as cited in Faunce, 1984). In fact, Faunce (1984) found that the causal pattern in the relationship between self-esteem and achievement is concretely bi-directional and may be reciprocally reinforcing.

A study by Alves-Martins, Peixoto, Gouviea-Pereira and Pedro (2002) in which 838 secondary-school students in grades seven through nine were evaluated to see how their self-esteem was affected when threatened by negative self-evaluation of academic competence. Results indicated that academic achievement affects self-esteem among younger students (Alves et al. 2002). Earlier the bi-directional nature of academics and self-esteem as reported by Faunce (1984) was discussed, and therefore it is viable to question the bi-directional relationship in the study by Alves et al. (2002). Therefore, according to Faunce (1984) the bi-directional relationship described could be applied to this study and concluded that self-esteem would also affect academic achievement in the way that academic achievement affects self-esteem.

Fahey and Phillips (1981) randomly selected 10 Catholic systemic schools in New South Wales from the Sydney list of Systemic Disadvantaged Schools. The researchers explored the self-concept of 2,100 students from these schools using a free report technique.

Fahey and Phillips (1981) found that significantly fewer students in disadvantaged school showed ambition as compared to students in nondisadvantaged schools who exhibited a wide variety of ambitions. Fahey and Phillips (1984) also point out that many of the differences in self-concept between disadvantaged and nondisadvantaged students can be related to environmental differences and that these self-concept differences reflect the social structure of our society. The implications of this study show that the disadvantaged students have less ambition, which could be translated into the academic arena.

Age Variables

Rosenberg and Pearlin (1978) examined social class and self-esteem in terms of age. Although many prior results yield inconsistent data this study revealed a consistency between self-esteem and social class by incorporating age. Social class may have very different psychological meanings for individuals of varying maturity. One of the most observable examples is for adults and can be conversely applied to children. In theory the social class for adults is achieved, yet for children it is assigned (Rosenberg & Pearlin, 1978).

Information was gathered from 2,625 Baltimore City public school children and from 2,300 people aged 18-65 in an urbanized area of Chicago. The findings showed no association between social class and self-esteem among the pre-adolescents (8-11 year olds), a modest association between early adolescents (12-14 year olds) and for later adolescents (15 or older). The results are much stronger for the adult data where self-esteem is significant when correlated to education, occupation and income (Rosenberg & Pearlin 1978).

Social class is said to have little relation to self-esteem in children because they are not achieving their status, yet they are assigned their status. "From these findings, we may deduce that one reason social class has little effect on the self-esteem of children is that

children are not yet exposed to the class-related occupational conditions that help to shape self-esteem,” (Rosenberg & Pearlin 1978, p. 58).

Rosenberg and Pearlin (1978) also examined social class and self-esteem in terms of the homogeneous nature of children’s schools. Students typically attend schools with other children who have approximately the same socioeconomic status (SES). In fact, when asked if they were richer, poorer or the same as most of their schoolmates 93% replied “the same” (Rosenberg & Pearlin 1978). The younger the child who was asked about SES the greater the response of perceived similar environments in regard to SES. If children perceive similar surroundings then it would be understandable that their feelings of being neither above nor below the status of their peers would neither raise nor lower their self-esteem (Rosenberg & Pearlin, 1978). Therefore, the array of experiences that a child has and the opportunity to have self-esteem influenced by these experiences is very limiting. Unlike adults who see themselves in relation to other adults and consequently have the opportunity to compare one’s social standing to another impacting their self-esteem (Rosenberg & Pearlin, 1978).

Demo and Savin-Williams (1983) modeled their experiment partially after Rosenberg and Pearlin’s (1978) study. Among other things measured by Demo and Savin-Williams the relationship between age and self-esteem was measured, as well as homogeneous versus heterogeneous quality of the environment on early adolescent self-esteem.

Unlike Rosenberg and Pearlin, Demo and Savin-Williams (1983) used three measures of self-esteem instead of one to rate the correlation between social class and self-esteem. The scale used by Rosenberg and Pearlin (1978), the Rosenberg scale, doesn’t always correlate highly with other measures of self-esteem and Demo and Savin-Williams aimed to make

their study more accurate by using three measures of self-esteem. For a measure of social class father's occupations were used.

The findings show that the association between father's occupation (social class) and student's self-esteem was weak but positive, however, no significant findings were recorded between father's occupation and student's self-esteem in the homogenous schools versus the heterogeneous schools. Demo and Savin-Williams (1983) concluded that, among eighth graders social class was a greater determinant of self-esteem than it was for fifth graders and as age increased self-esteem levels increased as well. Older students should be more aware of social class differences, consequently having an increased importance for them, which aligns with the psychological centrality argument (Demo & Savin-Williams, 1983). These findings show that as age increase so does one's awareness of social class. In addition, social class, as measured by father's occupation, was proven to have a correlation with self-esteem.

The opinions and views that society embraces and exhibits about those suffering from economic hardship can have a significant impact on their self-esteem. Bullock (1999) investigated not only how the middle class thought about poverty, but how the poor thought about themselves. The purpose of the study was to examine how both of these groups explain poverty and how they perceive the welfare system. The investigation into these areas can provide information about self-esteem. Bullock (1999) states:

If individualistic attributions are made to explain poverty, and negative stereotypes are ascribed to welfare recipients, then poverty may become a potent label influencing how nonpoor persons react to the poor as well as how the poor think about themselves (p. 2061).

Bullock (1999) collected data during 1994 and 1995 from 236 European American participants in Rhode Island. 112 participants were middle-class and 124 were poor participants. The following questionnaires were given to participants to assess the areas being studied: Attribution for Poverty Questionnaire, the Attitudes Toward Welfare Questionnaire, and the Welfare Reform Policies Questionnaire. Results indicated that middle-class participants were more likely than the poor participants to believe that poor people were trapped in a cyclical state of poverty and that welfare dependency was permanent. The relationship between beliefs about welfare and self-esteem can be viewed as a domino type effect. Findings also showed that poor people were more likely to be skeptical of those receiving welfare and their dishonesty toward the welfare system. 45% of the poor women participating in the study indicated that welfare recipients cheat the system. One explanation given by Bullock (1999) for this result is the possibility that the poor participants have accepted the classist stereotypes perpetuated by negative language and images prevalent in the media. Groups subjected to negative stereotypes may take on negative beliefs about the low-status groups to which they belong as a way to distance themselves from such groups (Bullock 1999).

Welfare Participation

Many studies link public assistance to low self-esteem or self-concept. Kerbo (1997) concludes that those receiving public assistance are subjected to a stigma that leads to a degraded self-image. Those students receiving free or reduced lunch could be included in this group because their lunches are funded through a public assistance program.

The level of economic deprivation in relation to childhood poverty has been increasing. Brofenbrenner, McClelland, Wethington, Moen, and Ceci (1996) report that in

1975 32% of children ages zero to five lived in homes with incomes 50% below the poverty line and then rose to 47% in 1993 (as cited in McLoyd 1998). According to the U.S. Bureau of the Census (1996) about 14,665, 00, or one in five children in the United States are living below the poverty line (as cited in McLoyd 1998)..

Wiltfang and Scarbez (1990) attempted to validate and extend the 1978 study by Rosenberg and Pearlin. Wiltfang and Scarbez (1990) extended the study by using nontraditional measures of social class and self-esteem. Particularly family welfare status was one such nontraditional measure of social class. It was expected by the researchers that this nontraditional measure would have a stronger effect on adolescents self-esteem because of the negative connotation attached to welfare.

Wiltfang and Scarbez's (1990) study replicated and extended the study of Rosenberg and Pearlin's (1978) study and used information from 4,077 adolescents in the Richmond, California area. The respondent's age range was from 12 to 19. The respondents were given self-administered questionnaires that were a combination of Rosenberg's (1965) self-esteem scale and Coopersmith (1967) Self-Esteem Inventory. The researcher's findings showed that adolescents reporting that their family received assistance had a negative impact on their level of self-esteem (1990). The predicted effects of nontraditional measures of social class on adolescent's self-esteem were validated. Rosenberg and Pearlin's 1965 findings were supported and extended by this study that demonstrated that family's welfare status can have a negative effect on adolescent's level of self-esteem (Wiltfang & Scarbez 1990).

A similar study by Bolger, Patterson and Thompson (1995) hypothesized that children whose families were experiencing economic hardship would, among other things, have lower self-esteem. More specifically, boys within the age range of the study were

suspected to show even more intense difficulties, including self-esteem issues. This archival study was conducted using data from the Charlottesville Longitudinal Study (CLS) and used 575 of the original 1,154 subjects (Bolger, Patterson and Thompson 1995). The CLS was conducted from 1986-1989 and followed a large heterogeneous group of second, third and fourth graders.

Bolger et al. (1995) administered the Self-Perception Profile with a sub-scale for global self-worth in addition to other tests assessing many attributes. Children were categorized as a low-income family in any year that their family received federally mandated free or reduced priced school lunches. Furthermore, persistent economic hardship was defined as those families experiencing significant economic hardship the entirety of the study, while intermittent economic hardship was defined as economic hardship during part of the study. Results indicated that children who experienced economic hardship reported lower self-esteem than other children and those who persistently experienced economic hardship reported self-esteem lower than any other children (Bolger et al. 1995).

Poverty and Locus of Control

Julian Rotter developed the idea of Locus of Control from observing people in therapy. Rotter concluded that different people learn different things when immersed in essentially the same conditions. Rotter concluded that the extent to which people believe there is a direct cause and effect relationship between their behaviors and consequent events differs as well (Carver & Scheier 2000). Mirowsky and Ross (1991) described the sense of control as referring to the degree to which an individual perceives having command and influence over the result of events in life. Individuals with a little sense of control, or an

external locus of control, often feel powerless and believe that outcomes in life are a result of fate or luck and feel that they have little control over the negative events of their lives (Findley & Cooper, 1983). In contrast an individual with a higher sense of control, an internal locus of control, often feel a sense of power and believe that there is positive relationship between themselves and the outcome of life (Findley & Cooper, 1983).

Academic Achievement

Several studies have highly correlated Locus of Control with academic achievement. Galejs and D'Silva (1981) explore the relationship between locus of control and academic achievement of school-age children in Nigeria. Using the short form of Nowicki-Strickland Personal Reaction Survey was given to 180 children from ages 9 to 13. Grades in math and reading/language were used as a measure of academic achievement. The results, as reported by Galejs and D'Silva (1981), did suggest a modest correlation between locus of control and academic achievement and suggested that locus of control is a significant predictor of academic achievement. Galejs and D'Silva (1981) also reported that similar results had been found by researchers in the United States. Using grades received as an indicator, greater academic achievement was associated with internality (Galejs & D'Silva 1981).

Findley and Cooper (1983) conducted a quantitative review of research investigating the relationship between locus of control and academic achievement. A literature review of 36 studies by Bar-Tal and Bar-Zohar (1977) reported that , “there is a firm tern indicating that the perception of locus of control is related to academic achievement. This trend suggests that the more internal the individual’s orientations, the higher the individual’s achievement.” (as cited in Findely & Cooper, 1977). The overall results of the 275 studies tested resulted in 193 positive findings which were defined as grater internality being

associated with greater achievement. These findings lead to a confident conclusion that internality and academic achievement are positively related (Findley & Cooper 1983).

Socioeconomic Status

A first hand account of powerlessness is described in the essay, "What did I do to Deserve This Kind of Deal?"

There will be a time, you know, when I'll ask myself what I ever did, maybe in some other life, to deserve this kind of deal. You know what I mean? I mean I feel there must be someone who's decided you should live like this, for something wrong that's been done. I don't know. I can't say it any other way (Coles, 1971, p.20).

This sense of powerlessness is a common theme among America's poor. A low sense of control due to external factors can be described as an external locus of control in psychological terms.

Economic hardship was found to worsen strains on individuals. Mirowsky & Ross (1996) indicate that economic hardship may exacerbate strain, increase a sense of powerlessness and obstruct personal and social goals (as cited in Schieman 2001

In a study by Figueira-McDonough (1998) the experiences and views of young people living in extremely underprivileged neighborhoods were investigated. Using mostly qualitative data findings showed that opportunities in the community were nonexistent and those that were available lead to dead end jobs. Discussion of the neighborhood supported Glasgow's (1980) findings that young people living in intensely underprivileged areas experience a sense of entrapment (as cited in Figueira-McDonough 1998). These finding support the notion that individuals in the midst of financial distress experience an external locus of control.

McBride, Velma, Brown, Wisenbaker, Cutrona, and Simons (2002), examined many aspects of rural African-American single-mother-headed families receiving welfare. Among topics investigated was the link between maternal psychological functioning and parenting practices and children's attributions about poverty.

Children's thoughts about poverty were measured using a 16-scale item instrument (Cogner, 1995) on which children conveyed their thoughts about the reasons why some people are poor (as cited by McBride et al., 2002).. Findings indicated that children who had mothers that reported fewer financial pressures and felt a greater sense of control displayed a positive outlook and had a high monitoring parenting style were less likely to hold society responsible for causing poverty or other adversities (McBride et al., 2002). Although poverty is linked to social inequities and injustices (Bobo & Smith, 1994; Wilson, 1993), messages that do not focus on the individual as a victim can enhance augment a child's sense of control (as cited in McBride et al., 2002).

Goodban (1985) conducted a study of one hundred black single mothers receiving Aid to Families with Dependent Children (AFDC). How these clients psychologically coped with being on welfare was examined. Informal interviews were conducted in the homes of the subjects and consisted of 115 questions. When asked whether the reasons for being on welfare were controllable or uncontrollable 57 percent believed their reasons were very uncontrollable (Goodban 1985). Most of the women believed that they went on welfare for temporary reasons that they could not control.

Summary:

Self-esteem and socioeconomic status are found to have a correlation. Parental preoccupation with economic hardships proves to have an impact on children's self-esteem. When parents are consumed with economic issues their parenting style tends to suffer and children can be affected in terms of lowering self-esteem.

When the concepts of self-esteem and socioeconomic status are examined in relation to children, the younger the child the less socioeconomic status has a direct impact on self-esteem. As age increases the individual becomes more aware of socioeconomic status and consequently the correlation becomes stronger.

Societal views of individuals receiving public assistance have an effect on how welfare recipients view themselves. Often welfare recipients are subjected to negative stereotypes because of their economic hardship. These stereotypes often translate into a negative self-concept or lower self-esteem.

Quantitative and qualitative research shows that individuals experiencing economic hardships, and receiving government assistance, have a sense of powerlessness. In one study, 57 percent of welfare recipients reported that their economic status was uncontrollable.

Young people and children whose families receive government assistance were found to have an external locus of control. Young people living in underprivileged communities reported that opportunities were rare and that they felt trapped. Children's attributions of poverty have been linked to maternal psychological functioning. Children whose mothers reported fewer financial hardships had a higher sense of control.

Research supports that socioeconomic status has an effect on children's self-esteem either directly, depending on age or indirectly through maternal interaction. In addition, research upholds the notion that locus of control is effected by the receipt of government

assistance. Control is viewed as external in both children and adults who receive assistance, although the direct effects of welfare on children may be passed through maternal attitudes.

Chapter Three

Sample

There were 100 third grade students participating in this investigation. All students attended a suburban school in Southern New Jersey about 45 minutes from Philadelphia. There were 56 boys and 44 girls with ages that ranged from 8 to 10. Of the total 100 students 72 received free or reduced lunch while 28 did not. Of the 28 who did not receive free or reduced lunch 21 had chosen not to apply and 7 were denied.

Measures

To measure the Locus of Control the examiner administered the Nowicki-Strickland Locus of Control Scale for Children abbreviated form. This scale is a paper and pencil self-report test made up of 17 yes or no questions. Internal consistency is reliable $r=.63$ for Grades 3, 4,5 as determined by the split-half method (Nowicki, & Strickland 1973).

Self-Esteem was measured using Coopersmith's Self-Esteem Inventory Short School Form which is a paper and pencil self-report test consisting of 25 statements. The students responded "like me" to items that they interpreted to be like them and "unlike me" to items that they interpreted to be unlike them. This test was designed to measure attitudes toward self in social, academic, family and personal areas of experience.

Both measures used by the examiner were read aloud to all students in order to control for varying reading abilities. Students had a copy of the statements and questions in front of them to control for any auditory or comprehension weaknesses.

Method

The students were given the Coopersmith Self-Esteem Inventory, short form, followed by the Nowicki-Strickland Locus of Control Short form. Students were assigned a number to use as an identifier which corresponded to their alphabetical class listing. The students placed their number at the top of their paper where their names would normally be written. Students were read the Self-Esteem Inventory Short School Form for school age children and then were read the Nowicki-Strickland Locus of Self- Control for children abbreviated scale. Children responded to each question after it was read.

A separate paper listing the number of students in the class was given to an authority who marked next to the number if the student received free or reduced lunch, if they had chosen not apply or if they applied and were denied. Using this procedure complete anonymity was maintained both to the examiner and to the teacher.

Testable Hypothesis

For the purpose of this study the Null hypothesis was that receiving free or reduced lunch does not have an effect on student's self-esteem and that free or reduced lunch does not cause an external locus of control. The testable hypothesis for this study was that student's receiving free and reduced lunch will have a lower self-esteem and an external locus of control.

Analysis

The data was analyzed using independent sample t-tests. This method was appropriate because the comparison was between free and reduced lunch and self-esteem for both students receiving free and reduced lunch and those not receiving free or reduced lunch. Separate t-tests were run for students receiving free or reduced lunch and their locus of

control scores as well as for students who did not receive free or reduced lunch and their locus of control scores.

Summary

100 third grade students participated in the study. 72 students received free or reduced lunch and 28 did not. The Coopersmith Self-Esteem Inventory Short School Form was administered to the class first followed by the Nowicki-Strickland Locus of Control abbreviated form. Students used a special number to identify themselves that was later matched with a corresponding list that identified their lunch status.

Test results were calculated according to the user manuals for the tests and were analyzed for significance using Independent Samples t tests. The outcome of the statistics will be discussed in Chapter 4.

Chapter Four

The following results are based on the previously stated hypothesis, "Third grade students who receive free or reduced lunch have lower self-esteem and an external locus of control while children not receiving free or reduced lunch will have higher self-esteem and a more internal locus of control."

Results

After administering the Coopersmith Self-Esteem Inventory and the Nowicki-Strickland Locus of Control and analyzing the data the null hypothesis was not rejected. The analysis of the data yielded no significant results.

Correlations for the Independent Samples t-test were significant at the .05 level. The correlation between students receiving Free or Reduced Lunch and their level of self-esteem as measured by the Coopersmith yielded .753 and therefore were not significant. Similarly, the correlation between students not receiving a Free or Reduced Lunch and their level of self-esteem as measured by the Coopersmith yielded .737 and were not significant either. In addition, the correlation between students receiving free or reduced lunch and their locus of control as measured by the Nowicki-Strickland yielded results that were not significant at the .651 level. The locus of control for students who did not receive free or reduced lunch did show significant results as indicated by the .636 result.

A strong negative correlation was found between the Coopersmith Self-Esteem Inventory and the Nowicki-Strickland Locus of Control as indicated in Table 4.1. Using the Pearson Correlation significance is established at .001. The Coopersmith Self-Esteem Inventory and the Nowicki-Strickland Locus of Control were significantly negatively correlated with a -.368. As self-esteem scores rose, locus of control scores fell, indicating a more internal locus of control.

Summary

In conclusion, the Null Hypothesis, "Students who receive free or reduced lunch do not have lower self-esteem or an external locus of control. No significant findings were established between free and reduced lunch, self-esteem or locus of control. There was a weak, but significant negative correlation between the Coopersmith Self-Esteem Inventory Short School Form and the Nowicki-Strickland Locus of Control Scale abbreviated form.

Table 4.1

Correlations

		LUNCH	COOPERSMITH	NOWICKI
LUNCH	Pearson Correlation	1.000	-.032	-.046
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.	.753	.651
	N	100	100	100
COOPERSMITH	Pearson Correlation	-.032	1.000	-.368**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.753	.	.000
	N	100	100	100
NOWICKI	Pearson Correlation	-.046	-.368**	1.000
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.651	.000	.
	N	100	100	100

** .Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed)

Chapter Five

The purpose of this study was to examine the relationship between third student's socioeconomic status and their corresponding levels of self-esteem and locus of control. For the purpose of this study students who received free or reduced lunch were considered lower socioeconomic status as compared to those who paid full price for their lunch. Five third grade classes were chosen in a suburban area of Philadelphia and one hundred children were used for the study. 72 children were recipients of free or reduced lunch and 28 paid full price for their lunches. Of the 28 who paid full price 21 chose not to apply and 8 were denied free or reduced lunch.

The Coopersmith Self-Esteem Inventory School Short Form was given as a measure of self-esteem and the Nowicki-Strickland Locus of Control Scale for Children was administered as a measure of locus of control. The Coopersmith Self-Esteem Inventory School Short Form consists of twenty five statements to which the students can respond "like me" or "unlike me." The abbreviated version of Nowicki-Strickland Locus of Control Scale for Children consisted of seventeen questions appropriate for third grade students. The students were able to answer "yes" or "no" to each of the questions. Both tests were administered orally to the students and they independently marked their responses. Results did not indicate a relationship between socioeconomics and self-esteem or locus of control for either students from financially disadvantaged backgrounds or for students from stable economic

backgrounds. Findings did support a negative correlation between self-esteem and locus of control for all participants.

Discussion

This study attempted to investigate the relationship between socioeconomic status and self-esteem and locus of control in third grade students. Both students from financially disadvantage backgrounds and students from stable financial backgrounds were examined. Free or reduced lunch was used as the mechanism for determining financial status. It was hypothesized that students who receive free or reduced lunch would have lower self-esteem and a more external locus of control as compared to students who do not receive free or reduced lunch.

Many studies have proven an association between socioeconomic status and self-esteem as outlined in Chapter two. Whitbeck, et al (1991) implicated parental interaction of financially disadvantaged families as an indirect cause of lower self-esteem in children while McLoyd (1998) found socioeconomic factors to affect children's self-esteem through personal characteristics. Rosenberg and Pearlin (1978) concluded that as children grew older the affects of socioeconomics became more clearly linked to self-esteem.

Chapter two presented strong evidence as to the affects that socioeconomics have on locus of control. McDonough (1998) found that individuals in the midst of financial distress experience an external locus of control and Goodban (1995) reported percentages as high as 57% of women on welfare felt as though their reasons for receiving welfare were uncontrollable.

Surprisingly, the results of this study did not correspond with the vast literature on the subjects of self-esteem and locus of control in relation to socioeconomics. The results of this study may be been skewed because of the uniformity of the environment in which the

subjects were found. The subjects who received free or reduced lunch were in no way considered a minority because of their socioeconomic status. In fact, students from a stable financial background were in the minority. Therefore, the students from financially disadvantaged backgrounds may not have been aware of their standing. Consequently, the affects of their economic status may not have been implicated in the subject's self-esteem or locus of control. In addition, 21 of the 28 students who did not receive free or reduced lunch chose not to apply. Therefore, there was a possibility that these students could have qualified for free or reduced lunch if they applied.

There was a weak but significant coorelation between self esteem and locus of control. As scores on the Coopersmith Self Esteem Inventory increased scores on the Nowicki-Strickland Locus of Control Scale decreased meaning that as self esteem became stronger in the subjects the locus of control became more internal.

Conclusion

The results of this study do not mirror the majority of research done in the areas of socioeconomics, self-esteem and locus of control. Due to the discrepancy in prior research and the findings of this study further investigations would be necessary to form firm conclusions about the relationship of student's socioeconomic standing to their level of self-esteem and locus of control.

A significant negative coorelation exists between self-esteem and locus of control. As self esteem increases locus of control becomes more internal meaning that subjects are feeling more control in their lives.

Implications for Further Research

A further investigation into the relationship of student's socioeconomic standing to their level of self-esteem and locus of control would be useful in determining more concrete results. In replicating the study it would be advisable to expand the sample size and extend the study to other communities in order to increase reliability.

As discussed earlier age is one factor that weighs substantially in children's self-esteem and locus of control. Expanding the study to students of different ages may create a complete picture of how socioeconomic status affects self-esteem and locus of control.

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Appendix A

December 3, 2002

Dear Parents and Guardians:

Mrs. XXX's third grade class has been selected to participate in a study. The information from this study will be used to complete a Master's Degree thesis at Rowan University. The study investigates socioeconomic status, self-esteem and children's sense of control over their own lives.

All students will be given questionnaires and will be identified by a number so that information will be kept strictly confidential. The information collected from this study will be analyzed as a group and at no time will individuals be named. Only the researcher will view the answers to the questionnaires.

This study has been approved by the Institutional Review Board at Rowan University, and by XXX Public Schools. Thank you very much for your support in this study. If you chose not to have your child participate please contact XXX Elementary School at xxx-xxx-xxxx. If you are interested in the results of this study please contact Kathryn Gipe through the main office at XXX Elementary School.

Thank you,

Kathryn Gipe

Appendix B

Nowicki-Strickland Scale for Children

1. Do you believe that most problems will solve themselves?	Y	N
2. Do you believe that you can stop yourself from catching a cold?	Y	N
3. Are some kids just born lucky?	Y	N
4. Most of the time do you feel that getting good grades means a great deal to you?	Y	N
5. Are you often blamed for things that just aren't your fault?	Y	N
6. Do you believe that if somebody studies hard enough he or she can pass any subject?	Y	N
*7. Do you feel that most of the time it doesn't pay to try hard because things never turn out right anyway?	Y	N
8. Do you feel that if things start out well in the morning that it's going to be a good day no matter what you do?	Y	N
*9. Do you feel that most of the time parents listen to what their children have to say?	Y	N
*10. Do you believe that wishing can make good things happen?	Y	N
11. When you get punished does it usually seem it's for no good reason at all?	Y	N
12. Most of the time do you find it hard to change a friend's (mind) opinion?	Y	N
13. Do you think that cheering more than luck helps a team win?	Y	N
*14. Do you feel that its' nearly impossible to change your parent's mind about anything?	Y	N
15. Do you believe that your parents should allow you to make most of your own decisions?	Y	N
*16. Do you feel that when you do something wrong there's very little you can do to make it right?	Y	N
*17. Do you believe that most kids are just born good at sports?	Y	N
*18. Are most of the other kids your age stronger than you are?	Y	N
*19. Do you feel that one of the best ways to handle most problems is just not to think about them?	Y	N
20. Do you feel that you have a lot of choice in deciding who your friends are?	Y	N
21. If you find a four leaf clover do you believe that it might bring you good luck?	Y	N
22. Do you often feel that whether you do your homework has much to do with what kind of grades you get?	Y	N

23. Do you feel that when a kid your age decides to hit you, there's little you can do to stop it?	Y	N
24. Have you ever had a good luck charm?	Y	N
25. Do you believe that whether or not people like you depends on how you act?	Y	N
26. Will your parents usually help you if you ask them to?	Y	N
*27. Have you felt that when people were mean to you it was usually for no reason at all?	Y	N
28. Most of the time, do you feel that you can change what might happen tomorrow by what you do today?	Y	N
*29. Do you believe that when bad things are going to happen they just are going to happen no matter what you try to do to stop them?	Y	N
30. Do you think that kids can get their own way if they keep trying?	Y	N
*31. Most of the time do you find it useless to try to get your own way at home?	Y	N
32. Do you feel that when good things happen they happen because of hard work?	Y	N
*33. Do you feel that when somebody your age wants to be your enemy there's little you can do to change matters?	Y	N
34. Do you feel that it's easy to get friends to do what you want them to?	Y	N
*35. Do you usually feel that you have little to say about what you get to eat at home?	Y	N
*36. Do you feel that when someone doesn't like you there's little you can do about it?	Y	N
*37. Do you usually feel that it's almost useless to try in school because most of the other children are just plain smarter than you are?	Y	N
*38. Are you the kind of person who believes that planning ahead makes things turn out better?	Y	N
*39. Most of the time, do you feel that you have little to say about what your family decides to do?	Y	N
40. Do you think it's better to be smart than lucky?	Y	N

*Items selected for the abbreviated scale for grades 3-6.