

# Poverty Level and its Influence on Students' Willingness to Pursue a Higher Education

Satcha Sanon, Graduate Student, Educational Leadership and Policy Studies

## Introduction

### Abstract

The purpose of this study is to determine how students feel about continuing their education passed high school in underprivileged communities. This will be examined by conducting a series of interviews with students that their parents have identified as being of low socioeconomic status. These interviews will take place during the summer session of a CDF Freedom School site located at the Florida Agricultural and Mechanical University Developmental Research School (abbreviated as FAMU DRS). The goal is to determine overall themes amongst students to gauge their feelings about their current education and their future educational aspirations.

### Aims of the Research

- How do students feel about continuing their education past their high school diploma in disadvantaged communities?
- Consistent thought around students in low-income communities often defaults to a "lack of interest" from these students. Is this notion in fact true?
- Do these notions affect the type of education the scholars receive at their schools?

### Research Questions

Does poverty level have an influence on students' current mindset around education and does it influence their willingness to pursue a higher education?

## Method

### Research Design

- Students participated in a Semi-structured Interview containing approximately 40-50 questions.
- Criteria to Participate: Students must be on Free-Reduced Lunch Program AND must have a signed parental consent form.
- Scholars could choose to conclude the interview at will.

### Participants

A total of Five Scholars were interviewed (*All names have been changed for confidentiality*):

- Leslie, rising 3<sup>rd</sup> grader
- Casey, rising 6<sup>th</sup> grader
- Taylor, rising 5<sup>th</sup> grader
- Phoenix, rising 4<sup>th</sup> grader
- Noel, rising 4<sup>th</sup> grader

All scholars ranged between rising 3<sup>rd</sup> graders to rising 6<sup>th</sup> graders.

### Data Collection and Analysis

Scholars were given the opportunity to speak freely without a time limit. Interviews were conducted during the final week of the six week FS camp. The interviews were all recorded and further transcribed. Following transcriptions, the data underwent two cycles of coding to identify commonalities and overall themes (if any) amongst the student responses.

## Results

### Conclusion

There were multiple themes that appeared among all of the scholars interviewed. The top five, overarching themes among the scholars included (*As defined by the scholars*):

1. Happiness & Joy
2. Mean/Judgement
3. Eagerness to learn
4. Desire to continue education
5. Perseverance/ Resilience

### Discussion

Based on the students surveyed, there is a strong desire to continue their education beyond their high school diploma and this is great information for college campuses to know. It is a great resource and knowledge to be passed on to the Center for Academic & Retention Enhancement (CARE) office at Florida State University or similar offices. Schools within Leon County (especially high schools) can use this information to tailor more programs around college readiness.

### Key References

- Baker, E. H. (2014). Socioeconomic Status, Definition. In *The Wiley Blackwell Encyclopedia of Health, Illness, Behavior, and Society*. doi:10.1002/9781118410868.wbehibs395
- Berkowitz, R., Moore, H., Astor, R.A., & Benbenishty, R. (2017). A research synthesis of associations between socioeconomic background, inequality, school climate, and academic achievement. *Review of Educational Research, 87* (2), 425-469.
- Bradley, R.H. & Corwyn, R.F. (2002). Socioeconomic status and child development. *Annual Review of Psychology, 53*, 371-399.
- Thomas, J. & Stockton, C. (2003). Socioeconomic status, race, gender, & retention: impact on student achievement. *Essays in Education, 7*(4), 1-16.



# PURPOSE

PARTNERS UNITED FOR RESEARCH PATHWAYS  
ORIENTED TO SOCIAL JUSTICE IN EDUCATION

