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ABSTRACT

This report describes disadvantaged urban eighth-grade students. All statistical data were drawn from the student, parent, and school files of the base year of the National Education Longitudinal Study of 1988 (NELS:88). The following findings are summarized: (1) rural schools contain the greatest proportion of disadvantaged eighth-graders, but urban schools contain the highest concentration of such students; (2) one-third of poor urban students live only with their mothers; (3) 43 percent of the parents of urban disadvantaged students have not completed high school; (4) African Americans and Hispanic Americans together constitute 68 percent of urban disadvantaged students compared to non-Hispanic Whites, who make up only 23 percent of such students; (5) 28 percent of poor urban students come from homes in which English is not the dominant language or is not spoken at all; (6) 93 percent of urban disadvantaged students attend public schools, compared to 56 percent of urban students in the top socioeconomic quartile; and (7) 80 percent of urban disadvantaged students scored in the bottom half of standardized tests for reading and mathematics. Statistical data are presented in 8 tables, 10 graphs, and 1 map. A glossary is included. A seven-item annotated bibliography is appended. (FMW)

DESPITE A DECADE of education reform, most disadvantaged students are not achieving their potentials.

Most reform efforts have been aimed at improving the overall state of American education and not solely the education of America's impoverished youngsters. However, a major effort to target the disadvantaged was launched in 1989 by the Program for Disadvantaged Youth of the Edna McConnell Clark Foundation. The Program aims to help five urban school districts fundamentally change the way their young adolescents are perceived and served. As part of the Program, the Hispanic Policy Development Project has been funded by the foundation to support middle-grades education reform through analysis of education data from a national sample of 8th grade students.

This issue of *The Research Bulletin* deals with the big picture: where do disadvantaged 8th graders go to school, and how do family and school factors affect the academic work and self-assessment of disadvantaged 8th graders who attend schools in urban areas?

Disadvantaged Urban Eighth Graders: Where They Are and How They Do

Some striking findings have emerged:

• Schools in rural areas contain the greatest proportion of disadvantaged 8th graders, but urban schools contain the highest concentration of such students.

• A third of these impoverished urban students live only with their mothers.

• Many of the parents of urban disadvantaged students have not completed high school (43 percent).

• African Americans and Hispanics together constitute 68 percent of urban disadvantaged students, compared to non-Hispanic Whites, who make up only 23 percent of such students.

• Fully 28 percent of impoverished urban students come from homes in which English is not the dominant language or is not spoken at all.

• Ninety-three percent of urban disadvantaged students attend public schools, compared to 56 percent of urban students in the top socioeconomic quartile.

• Eighty percent of urban disadvantaged students scored in the bottom half of standardized tests for reading and math.

How To Read This Bulletin

All data used in this issue of *The Research Bulletin* are drawn from the base year of NELS:88, the National Education Longitudinal Study of 1988, sponsored by the U.S. National Center for Education Statistics. NELS:88 is a nationally representative sample of the nation's 8th graders — nearly 25,000 youngsters — taken in 1988.

The first follow-up, in 1990, traced the cohort to the 10th grade; the next will follow them to the 12th. Additional follow-ups will come at two-year intervals.

Data were collected through four different questionnaires, given to students, their parents, their teachers, and administrators of the schools the students attended. All students also were given a battery of cognitive tests. Data for this issue of *The Bulletin* were drawn from the student, parent, and school files.

SES (socioeconomic status) was constructed using father's educational level, mother's educational level, father's occupation, mother's occupation, and family income. SES is divided into quartiles: 1=lowest and 4=highest.

Location or **Urbanicity** categorizes the schools as urban, suburban, or rural. The term *Urban* means central city; *suburban* is the area surrounding a central city but within a county constituting an MSA (Metropolitan Statistical Area); and *rural* is outside an MSA.

Geographic Region indicates in which of the four U.S. Census regions a school is located:

Northeast — Maine, New Hampshire, Vermont, Massachusetts, Connecticut, Rhode Island, New York, New Jersey, and Pennsylvania.
North Central — Ohio, Indiana, Illinois, Michigan, Wisconsin, Iowa, Minnesota, North Dakota, South Dakota, Nebraska, Missouri, and Kansas.
South — Delaware, Maryland, District of Columbia, Virginia, West Virginia, North Carolina, South Carolina, Georgia, Florida, Kentucky, Tennessee, Alabama, Mississippi, Arkansas, Louisiana, Oklahoma, and Texas.
West — Montana, Idaho, Wyoming, Colorado, New Mexico, Arizona, Utah, Nevada, Washington, Oregon, California, Alaska, and Hawaii.

Free Lunch categorizes the percentage of students receiving free or reduced-price lunches at school. The values follow:

0 = none
1 = 1-5%
2 = 6-10%
3 = 11-20%
4 = 21-30%
5 = 31-50%
6 = 51-75%
7 = 76-100%

Recoded: 1 = 0 and 1; 2 = 2 and 3; 3 = 4 and 5; 4 = 6 and 7.

Family Composition categorizes household make-up. The categories follow:

1. Mother and father
2. Mother and male guardian
3. Father and female guardian
4. Mother only
5. Father only
6. Other relative or non-relative

Recoded: 1 = 1; 2 = 2; 3 = 3, 5, and 6; 4 = 4.

Test is a composite of students' standardized tests for reading and math, with students falling into quartiles (low=1) depending on their scores

Grade is an average of self-reports, from 6th grade until mid-year of the 8th grade, of grades earned in four subject areas (English, math, social studies/history, and science). The grade average is represented here in quartiles (low=1).

Self-concept is a composite measure of student self-esteem, obtained from questions put to students:

I feel good about myself.
I feel I am a person of worth, the equal of other people.
I am able to do things as well as most other people.
On the whole, I am satisfied with myself.

The measure is presented in tertiles or thirds. Each tertile shows the percentage of students registering that self-concept:

Low Self-concept (about 37 percent).
Medium Self-concept (about 27 percent).
High Self-concept (about 35 percent).

Locus of Control is a composite measure of the degree of control that the student feels he has over his life:

In my life, good luck is more important than hard work for success.
Every time I try to get ahead, something or somebody stops me.
My plans hardly ever work out, so planning only makes me unhappy.

The measure is presented in tertiles (thirds), each showing the percentage of students registering that locus of control.

High External Locus (33 percent) = 1 (low).
Neither High External nor High Internal (33 percent) = 2 (neutral).
High Internal Locus (34 percent) = 3 (high).

(Continued on page 16)

A Portrait of the Nation's Urban Disadvantaged Eighth Graders

In the following pages we will look at the schools that disadvantaged 8th graders attend, and we will learn how some of the most important family background and school factors are related to the academic and psychological measures of this nation's disadvantaged urban 8th graders.

In future issues we will present continuing analyses of these impoverished city youngsters. The major focus of our reports will be the factors, associated with schools, families, and communities, that can lead to what the Edna McConnell Clark Foundation calls an education of ***high expectations, high content,*** and ***high support*** for disadvantaged young people. The next issue of *The Bulletin* will focus on high expectations.

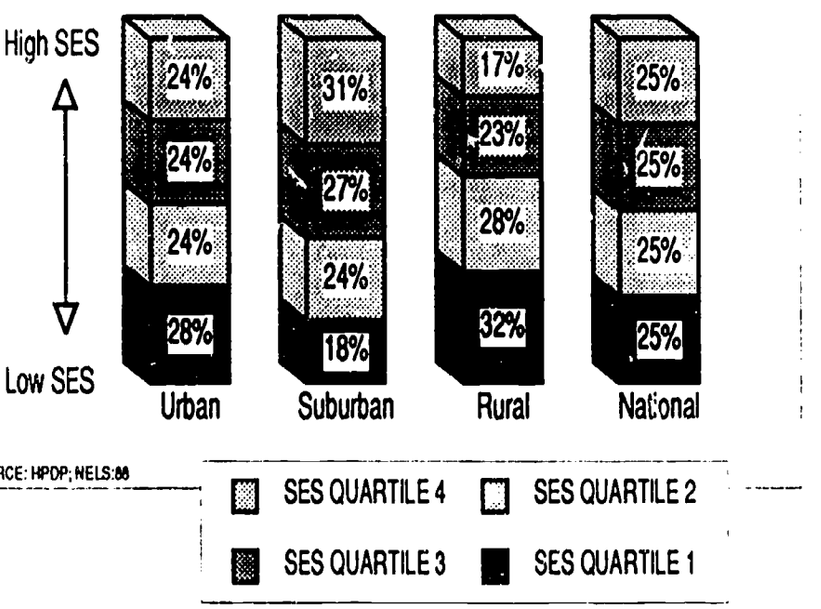
Where Do Disadvantaged Students Go To School?

Twenty-eight percent of the students who attend schools in urban areas are in the 1st (low) socioeconomic status (SES) quartile, while 18 percent of suburban students are in the low SES quartile (see **Exhibit 1**). Rural areas contain the highest proportion of disadvantaged students: almost one-third (32 percent) of all rural students are in the 1st SES quartile.

Exhibit 2 displays the population estimates of all U.S. 8th graders in 1988 by SES quartiles and urbanicity. These estimates are projections based on the NELS:88 nationally-representative sample of nearly 25,000

EXHIBIT 1

SOCIOECONOMIC STATUS OF 8TH GRADERS: BY URBANICITY



SOURCE: HPDP; NELS:88

EXHIBIT 2

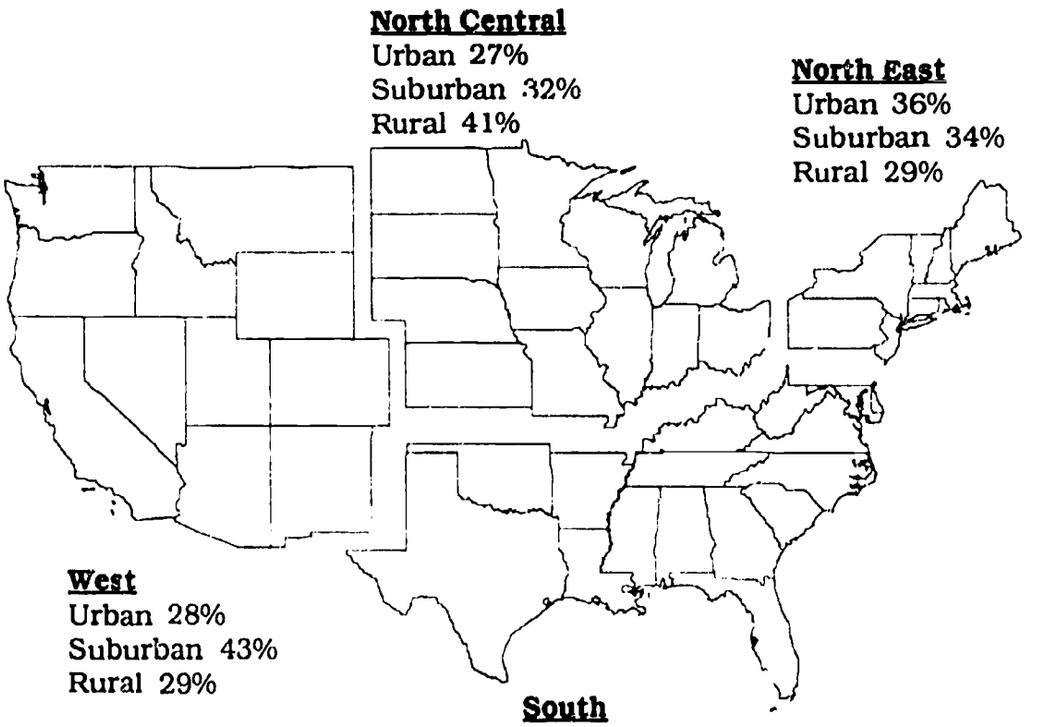
1988 8TH GRADERS SOCIOECONOMIC STATUS: BY URBANICITY

	Urban	Suburban	Rural	Total
QUARTILE 1 LOW	211,325	240,927	297,469	749,721
QUARTILE 2	179,612	308,720	264,996	753,328
QUARTILE 3	181,810	356,865	214,453	753,128
QUARTILE 4	182,840	404,805	103,166	750,811
TOTAL	755,588	1,311,317	940,084	3,006,989

SOURCE: HPDP; NELS:88

EXHIBIT 3

EIGHTH GRADERS OF LOW SOCIOECONOMIC STATUS: BY GEOGRAPHIC REGION



SOURCE: HPDP; NELS:88

students. Obviously, the popular notion that urban areas contain the largest proportion of disadvantaged students is not supported by these figures. Rural and even suburban areas contain more students from the low SES quartile than do urban areas. However, these figures do not address the *concentration* of hardcore poor in urban areas.

In **Exhibit 3**, we can see that the highest percentage of disadvantaged students in an urban sector, 36 percent, is in the Northeast region. The highest percentage of disadvantaged students in a suburban sector, 43 percent, is in the West region. The highest percentage of disadvantaged students of any sector in any region is the rural sector in the South, at 47 percent.

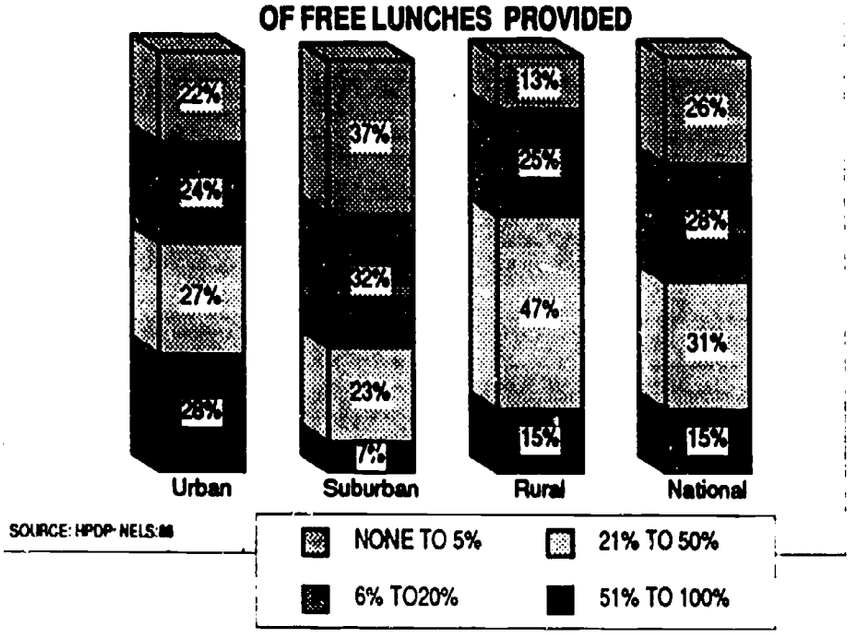
The percentage of students who receive free or reduced-price lunches in a school gives us a picture of the concentration of poverty within specific schools. **Exhibit 4** portrays the distribution of 8th graders attending schools according to the percentage of free lunches or reduced-price lunches provided by the schools. The urban sector has by far the largest percentage of students, 28 percent, in schools where from 51 to 100 percent of the student body receives free lunches. On the other hand, the suburban schools have the lowest percentage; only 7 percent of students are in schools with the highest concentrations of free-lunch students, while the comparable figure for rural schools is 15 percent. Rural schools also have the highest percentage of students, 47 percent, in schools where from 21 to 50 percent of students receive free lunches. This high percentage of rural students in schools with the second highest concentration of free-lunch students again reflects the reality that more poverty exists in rural areas than in urban areas, but it is less concentrated than in urban areas.

In the remainder of this *Bulletin*, we will be looking at how different degrees of a family or school factor, such as parent education or size of school enrollment, are distributed among students in the four SES quartiles in urban areas. Then we will focus on how different levels of the factor are associated with the way urban disadvantaged students perform at school and on standardized tests, the way they feel about themselves, and their sense of control over their own lives. The actual measures include achievement on the NELS standardized tests, school grades, self-concept, and locus of control. (See *How to Read This Bulletin* for information on the four measures.)

Before proceeding, we need to explain how we use *locus of control*. The term attempts to describe the perception of personal control that

EXHIBIT 4

DISTRIBUTION OF 8TH GRADERS ATTENDING SCHOOL ACCORDING TO THE PERCENTAGE OF FREE LUNCHES PROVIDED



SOURCE: HPDP- NELS:88

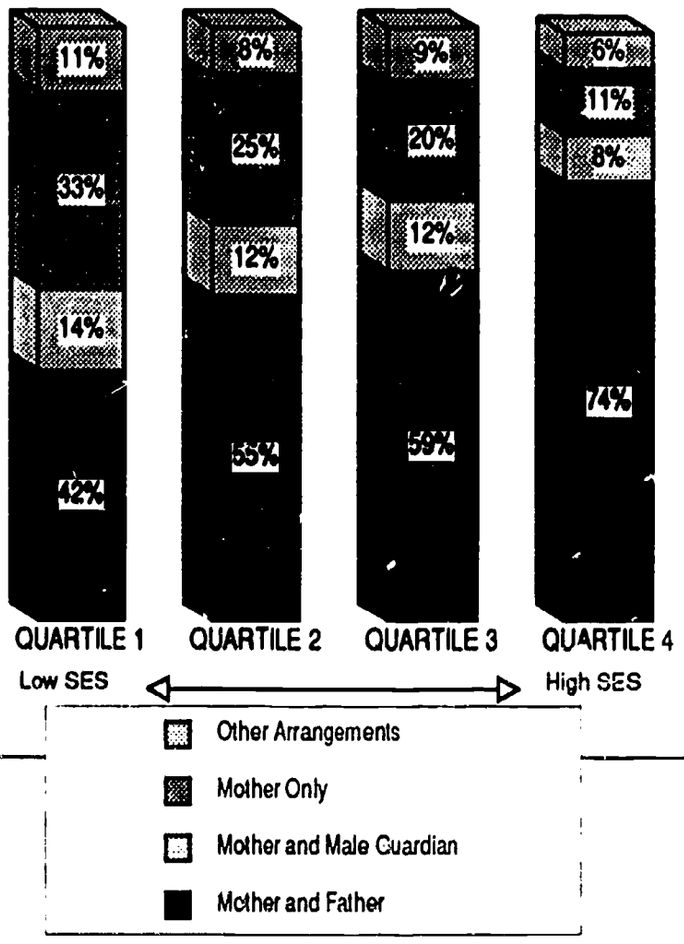
one has over the reinforcements that follow one's behavior. According to the original formulation of the concept, "internal" persons perceive that they are in control of their fates, and that effort and reward are correlated. "External" persons perceive that powerful others or "the system" determine how well they can do, and that rewards are distributed by such powerful others in a random fashion. Instead of referring to *an external locus of control*, we will say *a low locus* or *sense of control*. Instead of saying *an internal locus of control*, we will say *a high locus*, or *sense of control*.

Family Composition: Who's at Home?

In **Exhibit 5**, less than half (42 percent) of students in the low SES quartile have a family composed of a mother and father, compared to about three-quarters of the students in the top quartile. The 42-percent figure is lower than that for both suburban and rural low-quartile students, about 54 percent (not shown). At the same time, a third of the students in the low quartile live with only their mothers, three times the rate of students in the top quartile.

EXHIBIT 5

URBAN 8TH GRADERS' FAMILY COMPOSITION: BY SOCIOECONOMIC STATUS



SOURCE: HPDP, NELS:88

Exhibit 6 indicates, according to the composition of their families, how well students from an urban and low SES background did on the four measures or outcomes mentioned above.

Specifically, the *mother and male guardian* category shows the highest percentages of students on three of the four measures. No real statistical difference exists on the fourth measure — average grades — between the 68 percent of students in the *mother and male guardian* category and the 69 percent in the *mother only* category. Interestingly, more students in the *mother only* category do not do so well on the two academic measures but fare better than students in the other family categories on the psychological measures of self-concept and locus of control. And yet these are the very children who are most likely to suffer material disadvantages. Is it because more of these children have to do things for themselves and, therefore, develop a stronger sense of independence and control over their immediate affairs and environment?

EXHIBIT 6

URBAN 8TH GRADERS OF LOW SOCIOECONOMIC STATUS: STUDENT OUTCOMES, BY FAMILY COMPOSITION

	Mother & Father	Mother & Male Guardian	Mother Only	Other Arrangement	Total
TESTS Qt 1 & 2	76%	88%	81%	82%	80%
GRADES Qt 1 & 2	62%	68%	69%	68%	66%
SELF-CPT Trt 1	35%	36%	28%	32%	33%
LOC CTRL Trt 1	46%	48%	42%	48%	45%

SOURCE: HPDP; NELS:88

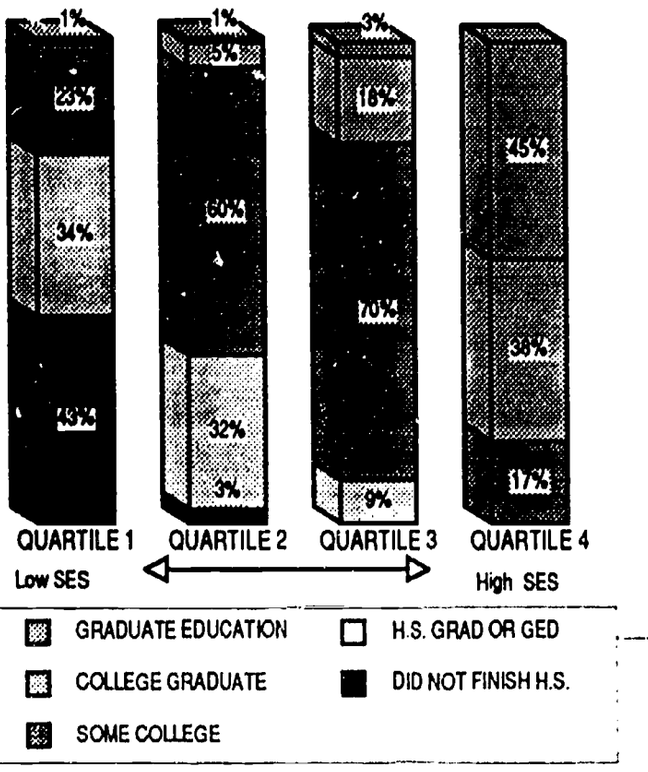
Among the four measures, the self-concept measure stands out for its relatively low percentages of students in the low tertile across the different family composition categories. On the other hand, the percentages for locus of control are close to the percentages for half of all the students from a low socioeconomic background. Well over half the low SES students scored in the first two quartiles on the academic measures, especially for the standardized test scores. Indeed, it is important to realize that only about 20 percent, one out of five, of these students scored in the upper two quartiles of the standardized tests.

Parents' Education

Exhibit 7 presents parental educational attainment for each urban SES quartile. It is not surprising to see that the most prevalent educational attainment in the low SES quartile is *high school non-completer*, 43 percent, followed by *high school graduate or GED*. The 2nd quartile contains mostly parents who attained *some college* (60 percent), followed by *high school graduate or GED*. The 3rd quartile contains even more parents who attained *some college* (70 percent). Finally, the top SES quartile shows 45 percent of parents who attained at least some graduate education. (It should be noted that not all SES quartiles contain all the educational attainment levels.)

EXHIBIT 7

PARENTS' EDUCATION IN URBAN AREAS: BY SOCIOECONOMIC STATUS



SOURCE: HPDP; NELS:88

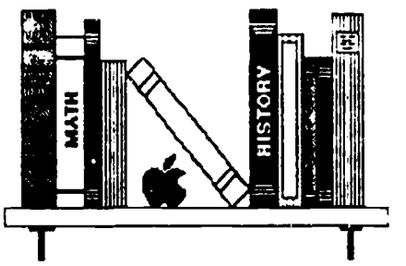


EXHIBIT 8

URBAN 8TH GRADERS OF LOW SOCIOECONOMIC STATUS: STUDENT OUTCOMES, BY PARENTS' EDUCATION*

	Did Not Finish H.S.	H.S. Grad	Some College	Total
TESTS Qt 1 & 2	82%	78%	78%	80%
GRADES Qt 1 & 2	68%	64%	64%	66%
SELF-CPT Trt 1	34%	34%	28%	33%
LOC CTRL Trt 1	49%	42%	41%	45%

*The number of cases for parents with college degrees and graduate education is too small to yield reliable estimates.

SOURCE: HPDP; NELS 88

In **Exhibit 8** the percentages of students in the lower quartiles and the low tertile decline as parental educational attainment increases, but the decreases, except for locus of control, are modest.

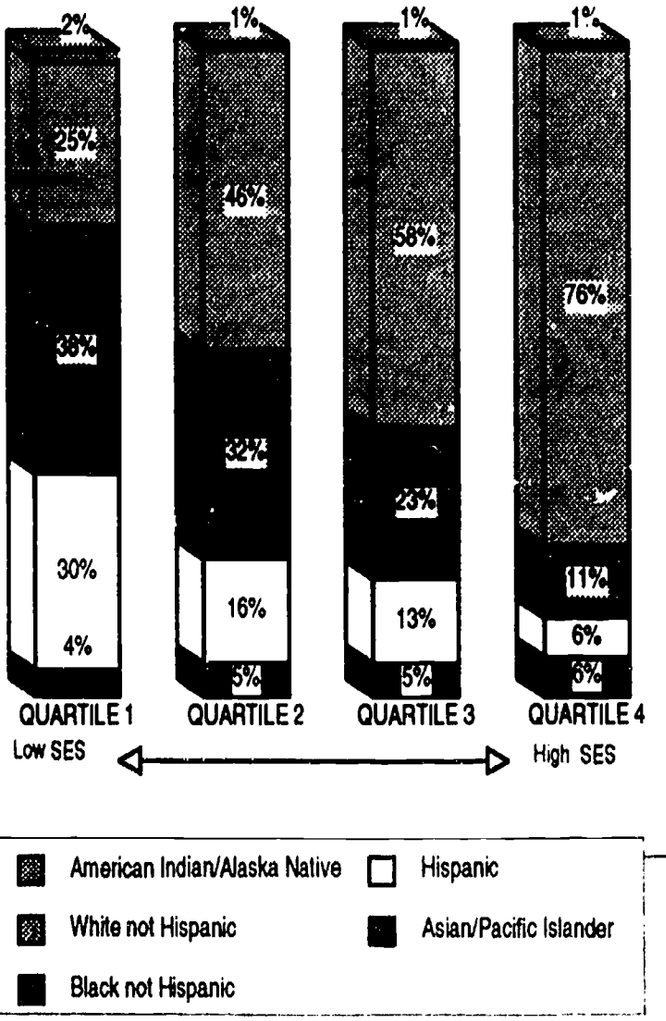
Race and Hispanic Origin

In **Exhibit 9**, African American and Hispanic students are the most prevalent groups, at 38 and 30 percent respectively, in the urban, low SES quartile. The proportion of Whites increases as SES increases; they are the most prevalent group in the 2nd, 3rd, and 4th quartiles. In the same three quartiles, African Americans are the second most prevalent, but decrease as SES increases. Hispanics are the third most prevalent group in the three quartiles, but also decline as SES rises. The distribution of the Asian/Pacific Islanders and American Indian/Alaskan natives across the four quartiles is rather even, although the rate for Asian/Pacific Islanders increases modestly, from 4 to 6 percent, as SES increases.

(Continued on page 10)

EXHIBIT 9

RACE/ETHNICITY IN URBAN AREAS: BY SOCIOECONOMIC STATUS



SOURCE: HPDP; NELS 88

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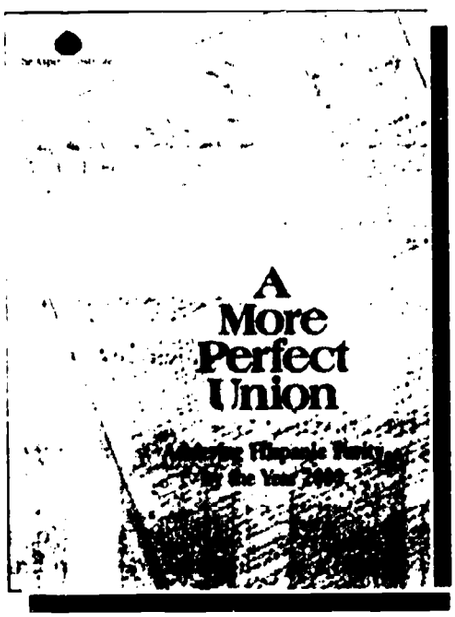

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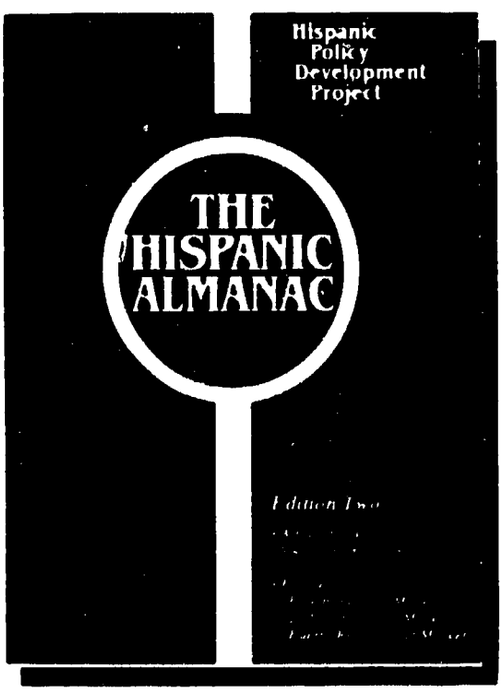

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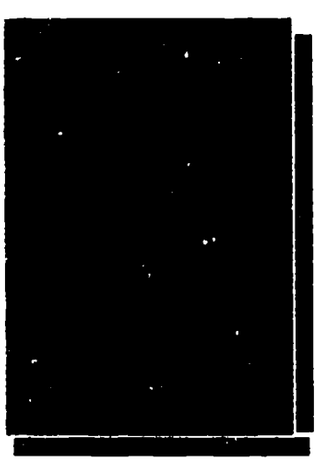

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A memoir describing the birth and dev
of the Mexican American non-profit or
tions that emerged in the late 1960s, w
emphasis on the National Council of L
founding and early history. *Eye* is the ir
in *The Ernesto Galarza Latino History Se*

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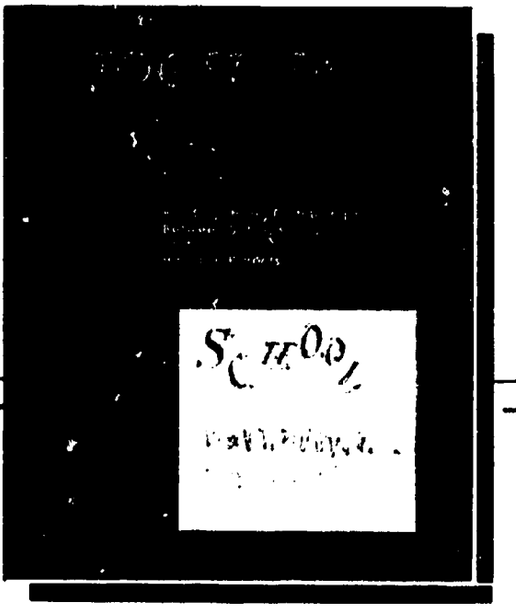

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Too Late To Patch:

Reconsidering Second Chance Opportunities for Hispanic and Other Dropouts (126 pp. – $5.00)

A research report on the education and job training needs of at-risk Hispanic youth, plus practical strategies to use in attacking their problems.

EXHIBIT 10

URBAN 8TH GRADERS OF LOW SOCIOECONOMIC STATUS: STUDENT OUTCOMES, BY RACE*

	Asian/ Pacific Islander	Hispanic	Black not Hispanic	White not Hispanic	Total
TESTS Qt 1 & 2	61%	82%	87%	68%	80%
GRADES Qt 1 & 2	41%	64%	69%	68%	66%
SELF-CPT Trt 1	44%	40%	21%	39%	33%
LOC CTRL Trt 1	51%	49%	44%	40%	45%

* The number of cases for the American Indian/Alaskan Native category is too small to yield reliable estimates.

SOURCE HPDP, NELS 88

How the five racial/ethnic groups fare on the four student measures in **Exhibit 10** is generally in accord with previous research on these groups. To illustrate, Asian/Pacific Islanders have the lowest percentages of students in the bottom half on the academic measures, but they do considerably worse on the psychological measures, especially the self-concept measure. African Americans, on the other hand, display a reverse pattern. More of them score in the bottom half on the academic measures than do students in any other group, but they do better on the psychological measures, especially self-concept.

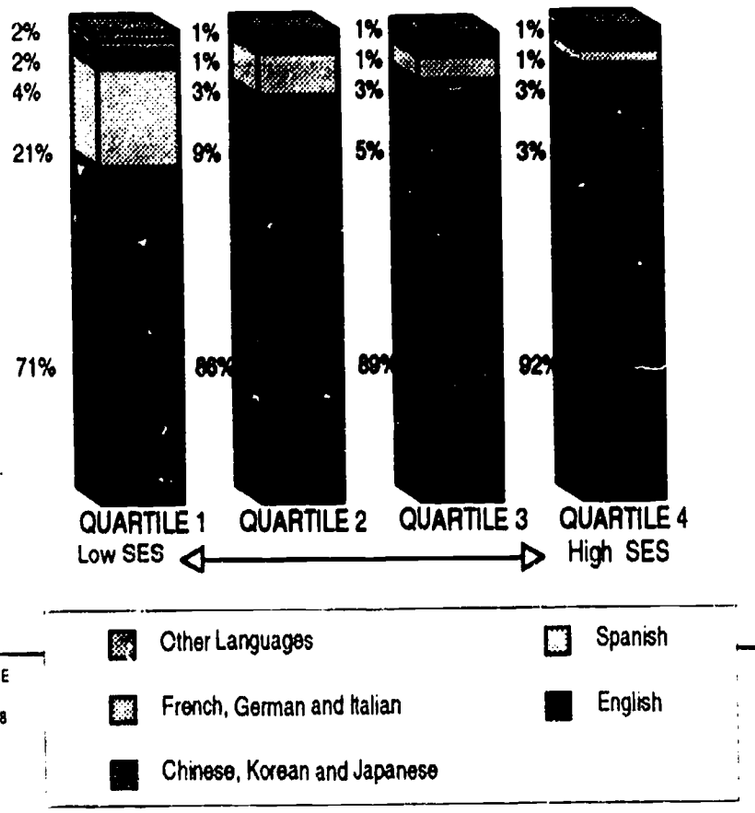
These patterns underscore recent research that indicates little relationship or association between the two academic measures and the two psychological measures, especially for minorities. How students feel about themselves may not relate directly to academic performance.

The White percentages fall within the average range on all measures, except for locus of control. Whites, with the lowest percentage, 40 percent, appear to possess a greater sense of control than do other groups.

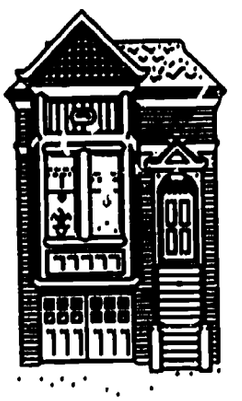
More Hispanic students fall within the lower quartiles on test scores, and in the low tertiles for both self-concept and locus of control, than does the total group of urban, low SES students. Indeed, it is remarkable that African Americans and Hispanics did so poorly on these tests; only 13 and 18 percent respectively scored in the two top quartiles.

EXHIBIT 11

HOME LANGUAGE IN URBAN AREAS: BY SOCIOECONOMIC STATUS



SOURCE HPDP NELS 88



Home Language: Speaking What?

Except for urban students with a Spanish language background, students with non-English languages are distributed fairly evenly across the four SES quartiles, as can be seen in **Exhibit 11**. Twenty-one percent of the urban students in the low SES quartile come from homes where Spanish is spoken, either primarily or exclusively. As the prevalence of students with Spanish language background declines in the 2nd through 4th SES quartiles, the percentage of English language

background students increases.

Another way to look at the influence of language background on student outcomes is to ignore specific language background and focus on home language dominance in general. In **Exhibit 12** fully 28 percent of the students come from homes in which either English is not the dominant language or is not spoken at all. The percentages for the comparative categories in the remaining SES quartiles declines from 13 percent in the 2nd quartile to 7 percent in the 4th.

It is interesting to note that, in general, about 20 percent of all students in the three highest SES quartiles come from homes where languages other than English are spoken. In other words, the fact that these are not English-only homes does not preclude these families from being in the top SES quartiles.

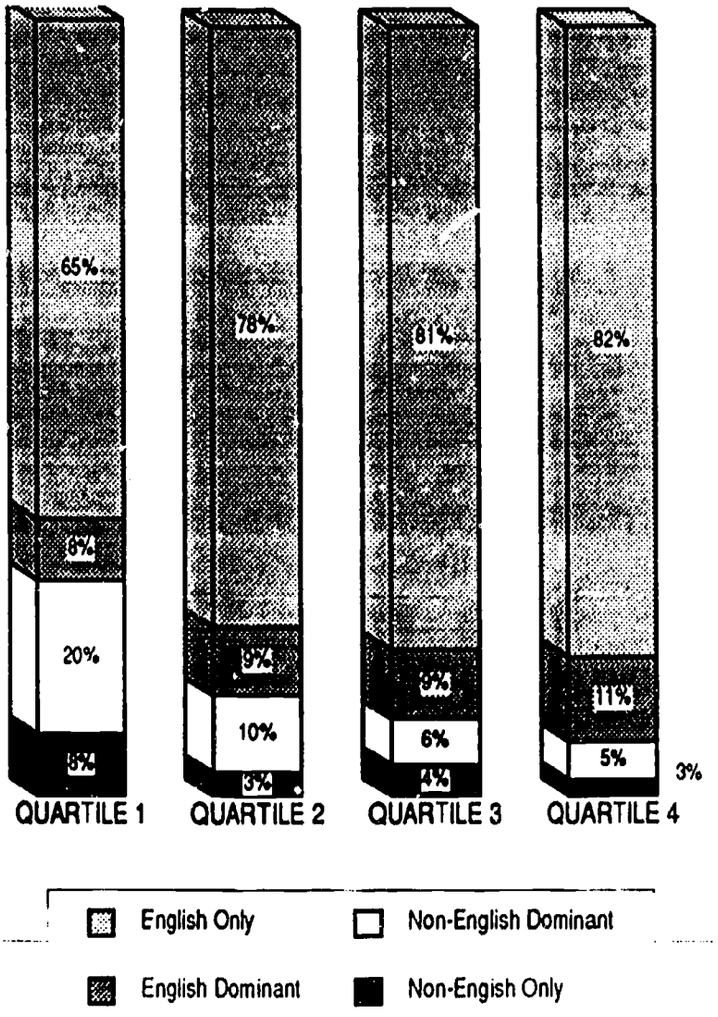
But, if schools want parents to be partners in the education of their children, then a clear need exists, especially in regard to the low SES quartile, for school personnel who can communicate with limited English or non-English-speaking parents or guardians in their native language.

It is useful to look at how non-English-dominant home language backgrounds are related to urban student outcomes in the low quartile. The results in **Exhibit 13** indicate that differences on the student measures between the four categories of English language use in the home are not extreme. In fact, only 6 percentage points separate the non-English home students from the bilingual home students on the standardized scores in the lower quartiles. It may surprise some readers to see that fewer of the bilingual home students, 78 percent, were in the two lower test quartiles, compared to 80 percent of the English-only home students. The difference is not statistically significant, but the result is in accord with other research.

On the other hand, although the differences are not as large as they are in the other tables on student measures, there are distinct differences on the psychological measures that favor the

EXHIBIT 12

HOME LANGUAGE DOMINANCE IN URBAN AREAS: BY SOCIOECONOMIC STATUS



SOURCE: HPDP; NELS:88

EXHIBIT 13

URBAN 8TH GRADERS OF LOW SOCIOECONOMIC STATUS: STUDENT OUTCOMES, BY HOME LANGUAGE DOMINANCE

	Non-English Only	Non-English Dominant	English Dominant	English Only	Total
TESTS Qt 1 & 2	84%	78%	78%	80%	80%
GRADES Qt 1 & 2	64%	59%	63%	69%	66%
SELF-CPT Trt 1	42%	42%	31%	29%	33%
LOC CTRL Trt 1	53%	53%	42%	43%	45%

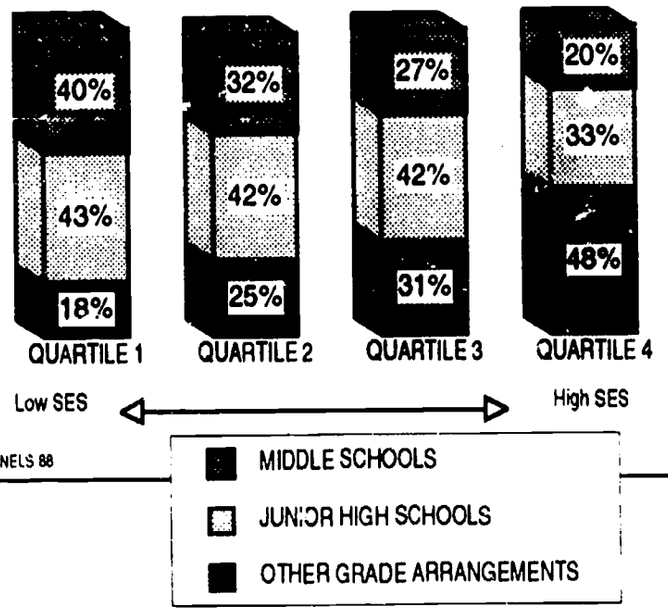
SOURCE: HPDP; NELS:88

About Exhibit 13:

We did not use the limited-English-proficient (LEP) student sub-sample because it is too small for our purposes; only about 2 percent of the entire sample were considered LEP. Moreover, almost 2 percent of the students in the original, potential sample unfortunately were excluded, because a school authority judged them unable to complete the survey due to their lack of proficiency in English. This means that the LEP sub-sample in this data base is not entirely representative of the national LEP 8th grade population in 1988.

EXHIBIT 14

TYPE OF SCHOOLS ATTENDED BY URBAN 8TH GRADERS: BY SOCIOECONOMIC STATUS



SOURCE HPDP NELS 88

EXHIBIT 15

URBAN 8TH GRADERS OF LOW SOCIOECONOMIC STATUS: STUDENT OUTCOMES, BY SCHOOL TYPE

	Middle Schools	Junior High Schools	Other Arrangements	Total
TESTS Qt 1 & 2	83%	80%	75%	80%
GRADES Qt 1 & 2	66%	67%	64%	66%
SELF-CPT Trt 1	29%	34%	39%	33%
LOC CTRL Trt 1	44%	47%	46%	45%

SOURCE HPDP NELS 88

students from English-dominant and English-only homes. These differences probably are due to a need for greater acculturation and adjustment to U.S. life on the part of students from non-English homes.

We have been looking at family and other background factors that are likely to affect student outcomes. We now turn to three basic school factors that are likely to affect student outcomes: school type, school enrollment, and school control.

These basic school factors should be considered before we look at other school factors, such as tracking, which generally are seen as more directly associated with student outcomes. In future issues of *The Bulletin*, we will be looking at such factors.

School Type

Except for students in the high SES quartile, more students attend junior high schools than middle schools or schools with other grade arrangements. (See page 16 for definitions of these school types.) (See **Exhibit 14**). Students in the top quartile are most likely (48 percent) to attend schools with other grade arrangements, such as either elementary or secondary schools with an 8th grade or schools with all grades through the 12th grade. These grade arrangements are more likely to be found in private schools.

Of all the students in the four SES quartiles, students in the bottom SES quartile are the most likely (40 percent) to attend a middle school.

Middle schools (see **Exhibit 15**) have the highest percentage of students (83 percent) in the lower test quartiles, but also the lowest percentage of students (29 percent) in the low tertile on self-concept.

These results for middle school students are the reverse of the pattern for students in schools with other grade arrangements: the lowest percentage (75 percent) in the lower test quartiles and the highest percentage (39 percent) in the low self-concept tertile.

The junior high school pattern on test scores and self-concept falls

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between the patterns for middle schools and schools with other grade arrangements. Little difference exists between the three types of schools on grades and locus of control, although middle schools have the lowest percentage (44 percent) in the low tertile for locus of control.

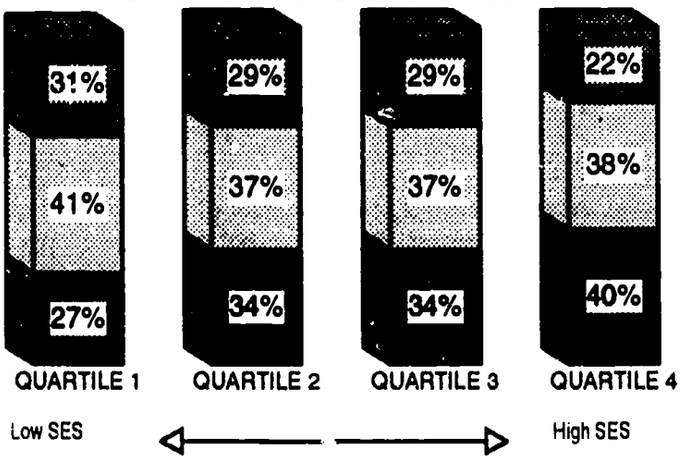
School Enrollment: How Many?

Urban students (see **Exhibit 16**) in the low SES quartile are the least likely (27 percent) to attend a school with a small enrollment, less than 600 students. They are also more likely (31 percent) to attend schools with student enrollments of 1,000 or more.

Generally speaking, size of school enrollment does not seem to make much difference in student outcomes for urban disadvantaged students, except for self-concept. (See **Exhibit 17.**) Schools with enrollments of 1,000 or more have the highest percentage of students (37 percent) in the low self-concept tertile.

EXHIBIT 16

SCHOOL ENROLLMENT IN URBAN AREAS: BY SOCIOECONOMIC STATUS



SOURCE HPDP: NELS 88

STUDENT ENROLLMENT
1000+ 600 TO 999 1 TO 599

EXHIBIT 17

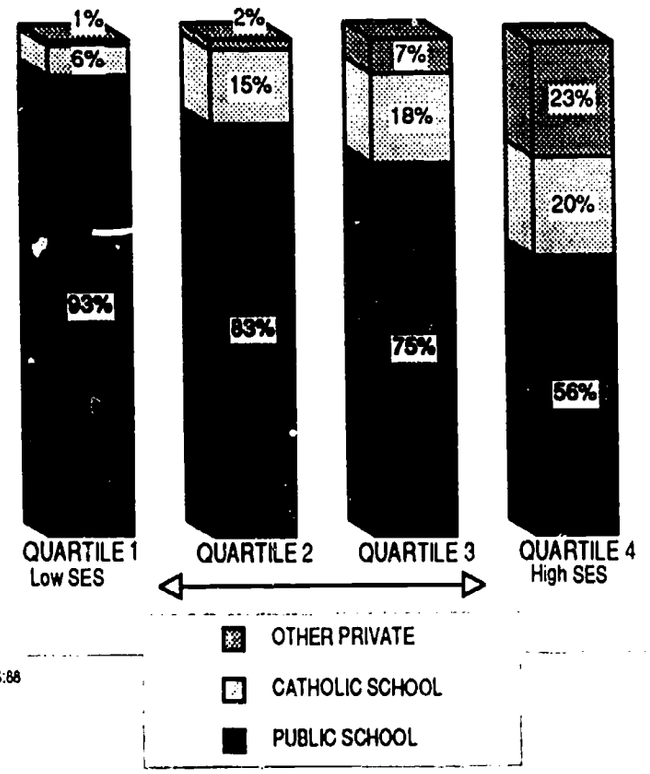
URBAN 8TH GRADERS OF LOW SOCIOECONOMIC STATUS: STUDENT OUTCOMES, BY SCHOOL ENROLLMENT

	1 to 599	600 to 999	1000+	Total
TESTS Qt 1 & 2	82%	79%	80%	80%
GRADES Qt 1 & 2	67%	67%	64%	66%
SELF-CPT Trt 1	30%	31%	37%	33%
LOC CTRL Trt 1	45%	45%	47%	45%

SOURCE HPDP NELS 88

EXHIBIT 18

SCHOOL CONTROL IN URBAN AREAS: BY SOCIOECONOMIC STATUS



SOURCE: HPDP; NELS:88

School Control: Public or Private School?

Urban disadvantaged students are much more likely to attend public schools (93 percent) than are students in the three other SES quartiles, as shown in **Exhibit 18**. Only 6 percent of urban disadvantaged students attend Catholic schools, compared to 15 to 20 percent of students in the three other SES quartiles.

Only 1 percent of the low SES quartile attends other private schools, compared to 23 percent of the high SES quartile.

While only 6 percent of low SES quartile students attend Catholic schools, those that attend do considerably better on the standardized tests than their counterparts in the public schools. (See **Exhibit 19.**) Specifically, only 64 percent of Catholic school disadvantaged students were in the bottom two test quartiles, compared to 81 percent of the public school students.

Fewer Catholic school students (35 percent) are in the low locus of control tertile, compared to public school students (46 percent). But more Catholic school students (37 percent) are in the low self-concept tertile, compared to public school students (32 percent).

EXHIBIT 19

1988 8TH GRADERS OF LOW SOCIOECONOMIC STATUS: STUDENT OUTCOMES, BY SCHOOL CONTROL*

	Public School	Catholic School	Total
TESTS Qt 1 & 2	81%	64%	80%
GRADES Qt 1 & 2	67%	64%	66%
SELF-CPT Trt 1	32%	37%	33%
LOC CTRL Trt 1	46%	35%	45%

*The number of cases for other private schools is too small to yield reliable estimates.

SOURCE: HPDP; NELS:88

Cautions and Implications

The Bulletin normally concludes with a section on its implications for policy makers and practitioners. We will continue the practice in future issues, but — because of the nature of this issue — not in this one. Nonetheless, some observations about the data we have presented and their interpretation are in order here.

- In comparing groups, race/ethnicity is often used as a shorthand proxy for a variety of underlying conditions. Even when considering only urban, disadvantaged students, as we are doing here, we are not making direct comparisons about underlying conditions *within* racial/ethnic categories. Such conditions include parent education, extent of poverty, family composition, English proficiency, racial/ethnic discrimination, and often other factors as well. If sample sizes were large enough to permit such comparisons, we probably would find, in accord with some research, that purely racial/ethnic differences on student outcomes would diminish, or even disappear with respect to some factors.
- Alternatively, some racial/ethnic differences on student outcomes reflect the cultural values and socialization practices of the groups. For example, do not the high percentages of Asian/Pacific Islanders in the low tertile on self-concept, 44 percent, and locus of control, 51 percent, reflect a cultural aversion to boasting and conspicuous individual achievement? (See **Exhibit 10.**)

It may strike some as paradoxical that the two academic measures, test scores and grades, are not directly correlated to the two psychological measures, self-concept and locus of control, espe-

cially when we focus on racial and Hispanic groups. To again take Asian Americans as an example, why do these students have higher achievement scores than all the other groups, including non-Hispanic Whites, and yet have the highest percentage of students in low self-concept and low locus of control categories? Even with the contemporary influences of school and the norms of mainstream American society, it is apparent that the different ways in which children from various backgrounds see themselves is still greatly shaped by the cultural influences of their homes and communities. Schools need to be aware of these cultural differences among their students and to build, educationally, on these differences.

• It is also true that self-concept and locus of control need not work together, nor are they always in concert. To illustrate, only two out of 10 disadvantaged African American students (**Exhibit 10**) have a low self-concept, despite obvious material disadvantages and the discrimination they face in U.S. society. Yet, more than four out of 10 (44 percent) of these same students have a low (or external) locus of control. An explanation of how it is possible for individuals to have an average self-concept along with a low sense of control over their lives may be useful:

As long as individuals consider the state of their circumstances attributable to their own shortcomings and not to some external force, then poor self-image and a sense of inability to control matters can exist side by side in the same individuals. However, if one believes that he cannot control or shape his circumstances despite his efforts, then he cannot be held responsible for these circumstances. Thus, one's self-concept does not depend on one's circumstances; self-concept can be divorced from social status. Similarly, in static situations that present little opportunity for upward social mobility, as in colonial societies, people base their own sense of self worth on their perception of how well they carry out their roles or jobs — not on their status in life or how others in the larger society perceive them.

This discussion may suggest to the reader that linking self-concept, locus of control, and academic achievement in a positive manner may involve complex considerations, not initially apparent, to say nothing about how school reform might bring about such linkages. We agree.

• How Catholic students perform on the four student measures again points up the fact that the student measures do not necessarily act in concert.

In **Exhibit 19**, the reader will recall that about two-thirds of the disadvantaged eighth graders in Catholic schools scored in the lower half of standardized tests, compared to about four-fifths of the public school students.

At the same time, Catholic schools had a higher percentage of the students in the low self-concept tertile than did the public schools, but a lower percentage in the external locus of control tertile. In other words, more of the disadvantaged students in Catholic schools achieved higher test scores and had a greater sense of control than those in public schools. But more of the Catholic school students had a lower self-concept than their public school counterparts.

In the future we will revisit this discussion on student outcomes and grapple with the complexities involved in order to offer practical suggestions for policy and practice.

Two Final Points

• Average grades, unlike the three other measures, is a relative measure that does not take into account the varying standards of different schools. The student who is doing A-level work at one school might do C-level work at another, even though the work at both schools is of the same quality. Nonetheless, we think it is important to consider average grades along with the other three measures.

• Finally, it is obvious that despite the differences on student measures related to the eight family and school factors featured in this issue, SES or class itself does take its toll. Disadvantaged students generally will score lower on student measures than do non-disadvantaged students.

This presents a challenge: In future issues of *The Bulletin*, can we delineate those school and family factors that allow disadvantaged students to do well in school and to establish the solid foundation that will let them take advantage of future opportunities? ❑

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Bulletin postal rates have increased by 67 percent, and HPDP's mailing list has grown far beyond original expectations. Thus HPDP finds it necessary to reduce the number of *Bulletins* that we distribute. Nevertheless, we want to send you *The Bulletin* if you find it useful. If so, please complete and return the form below. **Please do this even if you have previously asked us to place your name on *The Bulletin* list.** If we do not hear from you, your name will be removed from that list. (It will *not* be removed from our general list.)

Name _____

Address _____

City, State, and Zip _____

Title or Affiliation _____

How To Read This Bulletin (Continued from page 2)

Parent Education is the highest level of education reported by either of the student's parents. The categories follow:

1. Did not finish high school.
2. High school graduate.
3. Some college.
4. College graduate.
5. MA or equivalent.
6. Ph.D, M.D., or other advanced graduate degree.

Recoded: 1 = 1; 2 = 2; 3 = 3; 4 = 4; 5 = 5 and 6.

Race categories follow:

Asian/Pacific Islander;
Hispanic, regardless of race;
Black, non-Hispanic;
White, non-Hispanic; and
American Indian or Alaskan Native.

Home Language characterizes the primary language used in the home. The NELS:88 list of 13 languages was recoded:

1 = English.
2 = Spanish.
3 = Chinese, Korean, or Japanese.
4 = French, German, or Italian.
5 = Other.

Home Language Dominance characterizes the primary language used in the home, first by differentiating between English and non-English languages, and second, by indicating whether the language was the only language or was dominant among several.

If only English is spoken, the home is *English Only.*
If the language usually spoken is English, but another language is also used, the home is *English Dominant.*
If another language is used, exclusively, the home is *Non-English Only.*
If another language is used primarily, but English is also used, the home is *Non-English Dominant.*

School Type classifies the school by grades spanned. Grade spans were collapsed, creating the following categories:

1 = P or K or 1 through 8 (K-8).
2 = P or K or 1 through 12 (K-12).
3 = 6 or 7 or 8 through 12 (7-12).
4 = 3 or 4 or 5 through 8 (5-8).
5 = 6 through 8 (6-8).
6 = 7 through 8 (7-8).
7 = 7 or 8 through 9 (7-9).

Recoded as *Middle Schools* = 4, 5, and 6; *Junior High Schools* = 7; and *Other Grade arrangements* = 1, 2, and 3.

School Enrollment categorizes total enrollment. Categories, created by collapsing the data, follow:

1 = 1-199 students
2 = 200-399
3 = 400-599
4 = 600-799
5 = 800-999
6 = 1,000-1,199
7 = 1,200+

Recoded: 1 = 1, 2, and 3; 2 = 4 and 5; and 3 = 6 and 7.

School Control classifies the school as —

1 = *public.*
2 = *Catholic.*
3 = *other religious, private.*
4 = *non-religious, private.*

Recoded: 1 = 1; 2 = 2; and 3 = 3 and 4.

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