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ABSTRACT

One of the largest problems facing rural school counselors is confronting the low career expectations that many rural students have by the time they reach high school. To clarify this problem, the relationships among career choice, self-concept, and fear of success in rural students is explored here. The study critiques earlier studies of adolescents' fear of success, compares fear of success to self-concept and career decision making, and determines if previous studies of fear of success conducted in urban areas can be applied to rural areas. Students completed a self-esteem inventory, fear of success scale, and a career-decision-making scale. Analysis of the results revealed no significant interaction effects, but the main effect of sex was males having higher self-esteem scores. Contrary to previous findings, the present study found higher fear of success in males. Also, results support earlier studies which claim that older adolescents are more self-confident and self directed. Results demonstrate that previous fear of success research conducted in urban settings may not generalize to rural areas. (Author/RJM)

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Fear of Success, Self-Concept, and Career Choice of Adolescents

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Abstract

This study investigated the relationships among career choice, self-concept, and fear of success of students in rural Appalachia. The problem under investigation: (1) clarify Horner's (1968) and Ishiyama and Cabassol's (1985) studies of adolescents' fear of success; (2) compare fear of success to self-concept and career decision making; and (3) determine if previous studies of fear of success conducted in urban areas are predictive of rural Appalachia. Students completed self-esteem inventory, fear of success scale and a career decision making scale. Two (gender) by three (grade) Analyses of Variance were performed on the three dependent variables. There were no significant interaction effects, but the main effect of sex was males having higher self-esteem scores. There was a significant two way interaction for Certainty scores between gender and grade, but no significant main effects. Contrary to previous findings, the present study found higher fear of success in males. Also, this study supports Ishiyama and Cabassol's (1985) finding that older adolescents are more self confident and self directed. The present study demonstrates that previous fear of success research conducted in urban settings may not generalize to rural areas.

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Fear of Success, Self-Concept, and Career Choice of Adolescents

One of the largest problems facing rural school counselors is that of confronting the low career expectations that many rural students have by the time they reach high school. The relationship between career development and self-concept has been shown to be intimately connected (Super, 1957). What about "fear of success"? Perhaps rural youth have low career aspirations because they do not have confidence in their competence.

Fear of Success

For many years researchers have been interested in educational and career barriers as related to fear of success (FOS). Horner's (1968) work with undergraduate college students, was among the first to posit that the motive of avoiding success was a stable disposition among women. Horner found that while 65.5% of the females expressed FOS, only 9.1% of males expressed FOS themes. In a later study Horner (1972) noted that 47% of males expressed FOS, while 88.2% of females indicated FOS showing the predicted sex difference. Although the difference between males and females was still significant, the difference was not as great as indicated in Horner's earlier (1968) research. Replications of Horner's procedures, which have been conducted in urban settings, have not provided support for the contention that males and females differ regarding FOS (Tresemer, 1974).

Baruch (1973) found FOS not related to career aspirations or IQ in her samples. Also, Zuckerman and Wheeler (1975) suggest that fear of success is not related in any consistent way to direct and indirect measures of achievement motivation.

In a related study of adolescents' fear of social consequences of academic success as a function of age and sex, Ishiyama and Chabassol (1985) found that, in an urban high school,

FOS was higher among girls than among boys and higher among early adolescents than mid-adolescents. Regarding the general trend of declining FOS with age among both boys and girls, the researchers cite three plausible developmental and cultural factors: (1) emotional and social independence; (2) changes in academic and vocational concerns and future goals; and (3) changes in peer norms and cultural norms (Ishiyama & Chabassol, 1985, p. 44).

Ishiyama and Chabasol (1985) also reported that older adolescents were more self-confident and self-directed with a lessened emphasis on approval seeking and governing by peers. They speculated that adolescent girls in the 1980s may have been less inhibited culturally about their aspirations for developing their own occupational and academic identities.

Self Concept

Super's (1957) theory posits that students with high self-esteem have clearer and more definitive conceptions of themselves relative to career decision making than do low self-esteem students. In this regard, Munson (1992) investigated the self-esteem, vocational identity and career salience of high school students in the context of Super's (1957) theory of life span career development. Munson (1992) found that students with high self-esteem scored higher on vocational identity. Also, students with high self-esteem could be differentiated from those with low self-esteem in the areas of greater participation in school and home and family roles.

Perhaps one of the reasons for students with high self-esteem to score higher in the areas of participation, commitment and valuing the roles of student and homemaker, may be related to the family, home, and school environments having such a powerful influence on

the development of children's and adolescents' conceptions of the self. For example, Fuhrmann (1986) found that positive self-concepts are developed in environments that promote acceptance and opportunities for realistic self appraisals.

In fact, Kidd (1984) suggests that self-concepts and occupational preferences do have a role in career development. She indicated that Super's self-concept theory is more applicable to higher ability students who possess high self-esteem. Kidd reported that the young people's self-concepts may have lacked insight, and their job knowledge may have been inadequate due to their limited experience in the world of work.

Socioeconomic status (SES) has also had an impact on self-concept. Elder (1974) theorized that in economically deprived families children internalized the family's losses resulting in self-consciousness, emotional sensitivity, and lowered self esteem. Interestingly, Elder (1974) examined the indirect effect of unemployment status on self-concept using a simple path model and found that deprivation had a negative impact on the parent-adolescent relationship, which in turn, contributed to a decline in the adolescents' self-esteem. However, this hypothesis was not supported in Ortez and Farrell's (1993) study which examined the effects of significant economic loss and changes in family structure on adolescents' self-concept and found no direct effect of unemployment status on self-concept.

Career Choices

The family system has been influential in career decision making. For example, Penick and Jepsen (1992) reported that functions maintaining the family system may contribute more to career development experiences of the adolescent than relationship factors. Rojewski (1994) included other residual factors which may inhibit rural youth in

their career aspirations, such as geographic location, fewer employment opportunities, lack of economic vitality and lower educational and vocational achievement. Rubisch (1995) states that it is hard to get students motivated when their parents do not emphasize the importance of education. Low academic achievement and low career aspirations are also attributed to the amount of hours students work at part-time jobs.

Research Concerns

Horner's (1968, 1972) postulations on the motive to avoid success in women have elicited some controversy among researchers. The most frequent criticism relates to the unconventional development of her projective assessment and the questionable reliability of the measurement technique. In addition, the establishment of FOS as an independent motivational component is questionable (Ward, 1978). Condry and Dyer (1976) propose consideration of fear of success as a situational variable. Interestingly, empirical trends (e.g., Schnitzer, 1977; Peplau, 1976) tend to support Horner's conceptualization of FOS as a debilitating anxiety in achievement oriented situations.

Condry and Dyer (1976) emphasize that a "motive possessed by women cannot be used to explain away the inequities of society", (p. 76). Instead, we are called upon to look at the barriers to female achievement in terms of the social feedback received as a consequence of playing various social roles.

The purpose of this study was to investigate the relationships between fear of success, self-concept, and vocational choices, especially in adolescent females and males in a rural area. It is unclear from an analysis of the literature whether rural youth have the same patterns of fear of success which have been identified in research on urban youth.

It is speculated that rural youth may have low career expectations because they do not have a wide variety of opportunities and do not have confidence in their competence, evidenced by a high fear of success and a poor self-concept. There is an indication in the literature that males and females differ on fear of success, although this has not been demonstrated in replication studies. The strength of the present study is that it looks at the three measurements of fear of success, self-concept, and career decision-making in a previously understudied rural population.

Method

Participants

Two-hundred and seventy-six students from three middle and three high schools participated in the study: 134 males and 135 females, 7 did not indicate their gender. The population surveyed in rural Appalachia is predominantly white. One-hundred and six students were 7th graders, 88 were 9th graders, and 70 were 12th graders. A majority of students are identified as low socioeconomic status (SES).

Instruments

Self Esteem. The Self Esteem Inventory (SEI; Coopersmith, 1987) was administered to the students to measure student evaluations about their own self-worth. Coopersmith states, "The term 'self-esteem' refers to the evaluation a person makes and customarily maintains with regard to him or herself", (p.6). The School Short Form was used in this study, with a maximum possible Total Self Score of 100. The SEI has a reported test-retest reliability of .88 (interval 5 weeks) and .70 (3-year interval) (Coopersmith, 1967). The manual, Self-Esteem Inventories (Coopersmith, 1987), reports studies of the SEI's construct

validity, concurrent validity, predictive validity, factor analyses, and multitrait-multimethod validity. Fullerton (1972) reported a validity coefficient between the SEI and behavioral observations of self-esteem recorded in the Behavior Rating Form (BRF) of $r=.44$, $p < .005$. Kokenes (1974, 1978) conducted a construct validity study of the SEI that included 7,600 students and concluded that the SEI did indeed yield "scores of self-esteem."

Fear of Success. Students also completed the Fear of Success Scale (FOSS; Zuckerman & Allison, 1976). Fear of success refers to a motive to avoid success (Horner, 1972). The FOSS contains 27 items. For 16 of the items agreement was keyed as high fear of success. The remainder of the items (11) were keyed for low fear of success (Zuckerman & Allison, 1976). Each item was adapted to a Likert format with 1 indicating "strongly disagree" and 7 indicating "strongly agree". Scores on the FOSS range from 27 to 189 with high scores indicating high fear of success. Coefficient alpha was .69 for males and .73 for females (Zuckerman & Allison, 1976).

Career Decisions. Career decision making was determined by the Career Decision Scale (CDS; Osipow, Carney, Winer, Yamico, & Koschier, 1976). The CDS contains 19 items, 18 of which are in a Likert format with 4 indicating "like me" and 1 indicating "not like me". For the purposes of the present study, item 19, an open-ended item, was omitted. The items relate to statements people make about their educational and occupational plans. Items 1 and 2 comprise the Certainty Scale, which provides a measure of the degree of certainty that the student feels regarding their decision about a major and a career. Item 3 through 18 comprise the Indecision Scale, which is a measure of career indecision (Osipow, 1987). Certainty Scale (CS) scores at the 15th percentile or less suggest that the student is uncertain about a

career. Indecision Scale (IS) scores at or above the 85th percentile indicates indecision about a career. The CDS is appropriate for high school students, and the reading level is "modest" (Westbrook, Cutts, Madison & Arcia, 1980). The CDS takes about 15 minutes to complete. Test-retest correlations of .82 to .90 have been reported for the Indecision Scale (Osipow, Carney, & Barak, 1976). Osipow (1987) reported that studies have generally supported the validity of the CDS.

Procedure

Participants were solicited after brief presentations to the designated grade levels were made by five graduate counseling practicum students, two school counselors, and 1 school psychologist. Students who agreed to participate were provided with consent forms to be completed by them or their parents. Following receipt of consent forms, the SEI, FOSS, and CDS were administered to the students during one class period.

Results

Two-way Analyses of Variance (ANOVA) were conducted with sex (male, female) and grade (7th, 9th, 12th) as the independent variables. The dependent variables were self-esteem, fear of success, and career decision making. Career Decision Scale scores were divided into two measures; a Certainty Scale (CDS1) score and an Indecision Scale (CDS2) score.

The ANOVA for self-esteem scores indicated a significant main effect for sex, F (1, 256)=3.98, p=.05, which accounts for 2% of the variance (See Table 1.). There were no other significant nor interaction effects. Table 2 shows that males had higher mean self-esteem scores than did females.

According to Coopersmith (1987) the means of the SEI in one study have ranged from 68.4 to 71.6 with a standard deviation (sd) range from 18.5 to 19.5 for males and females, respectively. With a mean of 67.16 and sd of 19.93 it appears that the present sample is within the low medium to medium level of self-esteem for males, as compared to the normative sample. However, with a mean of 62.29 and sd of 19.35 it appears that the present sample had lower self-esteem scores than did the normative sample. (See Table 2.). This score may be a result of different age groups in the normative sample, (e.g., 16-34).

The ANOVA for fear of success scores indicated a significant main effect for sex, $F(1, 256)=4.67$, $p=.03$, which accounts for 2% of the variance. (See Table 3.) There were no other significant nor interaction effects. Table 4 shows that males had higher mean fear of success than did females.

With regards to fear of success, Zuckerman and Allison (1976) reported that in samples of undergraduate students, the means and sd's for FOSS scores ranged from 107.2 to 111.3 and sds 13.5 to 14.7 respectively for females, and means from 101.4 to 106.7 with similar sd's respectively for males. In the present study, the mean of 115.62 and sd of 17.96 for males is a little higher than the normative sample. With the mean of 110.75 and sd of 18.39, the same is true for the females in this study. (See Table 4.).

Even though there are no normative data for 7th graders on the CDS, means and sd's are available for 9th through 12th grade. Also, Osipow et al. (1976) do not break down CDS scores by sex and grade. The mean and sd in one study for the Certainty Scale for males is 5.38 and 1.62, and 5.68 and 1.49, for females. (See Table 6.).

Accordingly, the means of 5.56 and sd of 1.69 of the present 12th grade sample of

males appears to be close to the normative sample on the Certainty Scale, and the mean of 6.08 and sd of 1.56 is higher than the normative sample. The mean of 5.62 and sd of 1.51 for 9th grade females was similar to the normative sample mean of 5.68 and sd of 1.49. However, females in the 12th grade had higher mean scores than did the normative sample, ($\bar{x}$ =6.30, sd=1.88).

The ANOVA for the CDS Certainty scores indicates a significant sex by grade interaction effect, F (2, 256)=3.21, p =.09, which accounted for 2% of the variance. (See Table 5.) There were no significant main effects. Table 6 shows that males had higher mean Certainty scores in 9th grade, but had lower mean scores in 12th grade. On the other hand, females had higher mean scores in 12th grade than they did in 9th grade.

The ANOVA for CDS Indecision scores indicates a significant main effect for grade, F (2, 256)= 8.31, p <.001, which accounted for 6% of the variance (See Table 7.) There were no other significant main nor interaction effects. Table 8 shows that 7th graders had higher Indecision scores than did 9th or 12th graders.

The means and sd's on the Indecision Scale are 32.11 and 8.81, respectively for 9th graders, and 27.89 and 8.41, respectively for 12 graders. The mean of 34.36 and sd of 8.55 is similar to the 9th grade normative sample on the Indecision Scale. However, the mean of 32.63 and sd of 9.68 for the 12th graders is higher than the normative sample.

According to Osipow et al., (1976), CDS1 scores which are at the 15th percentile or lower suggest that the student is uncertain about a major or career choice. A score of 6 would place 9th grade boys at the 80th percentile and 12th grade boys at the 68th percentile. For girls, a score of 6 would place 9th graders at the 79th percentile and 12th graders at the

68th percentile. Thus, it appears that the present sample has some idea about a career or major.

CDS2 scores which are at the 85th percentile or higher indicate that the student is indecisive about a major or career choice. An Indecision Scale score of 36 would place 9th and 12th grade boys at the 69th and 80th percentiles, respectively. This same score would place 9th and 12th grade girls at the 66th and 82nd percentiles, respectively. Thus, it appears that the present sample is as indecisive about a career as the 9th grade normative sample.

Discussion

The present study was an attempt to determine whether the sex difference for fear of success reported for urban youth is also true for rural youth, and to explore the differences in sex and grade for FOS, self-concept, and career decision making.

This sample of rural youth demonstrated a higher fear of success than previous studies on urban youth. Also of note is that, contrary to previous studies which found females had a higher FOS (Horner, 1968; Horner, 1972; Ishiyama & Chabassol, 1985) or found no sex differences (Tresemer, 1974), the present study found males to have a higher FOS than females. Students in the present study scored below the average of the normative group on self-esteem and demonstrated greater variability in their scores.

As might be expected, the older a student was, the lower their indecision regarding career choices. This supports Ishiyama and Chabasol's (1985) finding that older adolescents are more self-confident and self-directed in developing occupational identities.

If Condry and Dyer (1976) are correct that FOS is a situational variable, the present results suggest important questions about the situational variables existent in rural Appalachia

that could cause males to have a higher FOS than females, when the opposite appears true in more urban settings. Do females in rural Appalachia have lower FOS than males because they have little expectation or desire for a career, or, on the contrary, do females have more career opportunities than males and more confidence in their success? Also, why do rural youth have a greater FOS in general than urban youth? Possibilities which need to be explored include lack of economic diversity of the community, unemployment rates, student achievement orientation and attainment, availability of higher education and vocational training programs, and rate of dependence on public assistance.

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Table 1.

ANOVA of Self-Esteem scores by Sex and Grade

Source	SS	DF	MS	F	eta^2
Sex (S)	1536.305	1	1536.305	3.98*	.02
Grade (G)	79.311	2	39.656	.10	—
SXG	1475.711	2	737.855	1.91	.01
Error	98731.702	256	385.671	—	
TOTAL	101844.336	261	390.208	—	

Note: * p=.05

Table 2.

Means and Standard Deviations of Self-Esteem scores by Sex.

Sex	n	$\bar{x}$	SD
Male	129	67.16	19.93
Female	133	62.29	19.35

Table 3.

ANOVA of FOSS by Sex and Grade

Source	SS	DF	MS	F	eta^2
Sex (S)	1549.732	1	1549.732	4.67*	.02
Grade (G)	40.703	2	20.352	.06	___
SXG	845.408	2	422.704	1.27	.01
Error	85007.089	256	332.059	___	
TOTAL	87445.195	261	335.039	___	

Note: * **p= .03**

Table 4.

Means and Standard Deviations of Fear of Success Scores by Sex.

Sex	n	$\bar{x}$	SD
Male	129	115.62	17.96
Female	133	110.75	18.39

Table 5.

ANOVA of Certainty Scores by Sex and Grade.

Source	SS	DF	MS	F	eta^2
Sex (S)	5.012	1	5.012	1.78	.007
Grade (G)	9.198	2	4.599	1.64	.01
SXG	18.053	2	9.026	3.21*	.02
ERROR	719.682	256	2.811	—	
TOTAL	751.424	261	2.879	—	

Note: * p =.04

Table 6.

Mean and Standard Deviations of Certainty Scores by Sex and Grade

	Grade					
	7th		9th		12th	
SEX	$\bar{x}$	SD	$\bar{x}$	SD	$\bar{x}$	SD
Male	5.14	1.83	6.08	1.56	5.56	1.69
Female	5.74	1.64	5.62	1.51	6.30	1.88

Table 7.

ANOVA of Indecision Scores by Sex and Grade

Source	SS	DF	MS	F	eta^2
SEX (S)	210.758	1	210.78	2.23	.008
Grade (G)	1573.430	2	786.715	8.31*	.06
SXG	293.703	2	146.852	1.55	.01
ERROR	24224.005	256	94.625	—	
TOTAL	26233.118	261	100.510	—	

Note: * $p < .001$

Table 8.

Means and Standard Deviations of Indecision Scores by Grade.

Grade	n	$\bar{x}$	SD
7th	104	38.30	10.75
9th	88	34.36	8.55
12th	70	32.63	9.68

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