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Socioeconomic Status and Ethnicity as Predictors of Childhood Career Aspirations

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Abstract

Beginning at an early age, children discuss what they want to be when they grow up. This is known as their career aspirations. There are multiple factors that influence the career aspirations of children. Some of which includes familial income level, grade level and ethnicity. Although studies suggest that there is a relationship between income level and career aspirations, there is a gap in the literature when examining the relationships between socioeconomic status, ethnicity, grade level, and their effects on the career aspirations of children. This study explores this multi-level relationship on what a child wants to be when they grow up, by surveying students in grades 3, 6, 9, and 11, from diverse socioeconomic and ethnic backgrounds. In addition, it aims to differentiate if social class, ethnicity, or a combination of these factors, predicts the career aspirations of children. Although the results of this study suggest that ethnicity, socioeconomic status and grade level do not have a significant effect on what a child wants to be when they grow up, the trend of the findings suggest that minority students were twice as likely to choose unskilled and semiskilled careers. Also, the trend in the results showed that middle school and high-school students had a higher percentage of students who aspired to unskilled and semi-skilled careers than third grade students. This suggests that as children become older, they are aware of their skill levels and aspire to more personal and realistic careers. Researching factors that influence the career aspirations of children, allows parents and institutions to gain insight on the career goals of their students. This also allows them to provide any support that children need, to gain access to social mobility that education should provide.

Keywords: career aspirations, ethnicity, grade-level, social class, socioeconomic status

Introduction

Growing up in various environments, children come in contact with circumstances that inevitably influence crucial life decisions. These circumstances and experiences include a child's skills, societal and cultural influences on behaviors, familial income level, and access to educational resources---Each have a substantial impact on a child's future. One important aspect that circumstances and life experiences influence are career aspirations. Research indicates that external factors such as job accessibility, familial influence and income level or socioeconomic status (Akosah-Twumasi, 2018) greatly influences an individual's future career. Socioeconomic status, which is the total measure of one's economic and social position, is the variable of importance in predicting a child's career aspirations. This has unfortunate implications for individuals who live in low-income areas. As 18.8% of Black Americans and 15% of Hispanic or Latino individuals live in poverty, there are disparities when the educational attainment of minority students are compared with White Americans (U.S. Census Bureau, 2020). This disparity results from many factors, including a lack of resources, and less rigorous curriculums (Azzam, 2008). Furthermore, socioeconomic status limits the ability of minority children who live and go to school in low-income areas, to achieve as much as those in high income and predominantly White areas. This project seeks to examine the multi-level relationships between socioeconomic status, income level, grade level, ethnicity, and its effects on the career aspirations of students. Since parents have a large impact on their child's future career choices (Jodl et al., 2001), their occupation and income level, as well as the income level of the area they reside in, will allow us to discover the effect it has on the career aspirations of students. In

addition, we will uncover the effect of race and ethnicity on career goals by surveying a diverse population of students who live in or attend schools in diverse socioeconomic status areas. By examining the relationship between these variables, we may determine if the socioeconomic status, grade-level and ethnicity of a student, have an effect on the prestige of the student's career choice.

Literature Review

Childhood Career Aspirations

The early years of life are the most crucial in the development of a future career, as a child's ability to dream is essential in preparing for adulthood (Nurmi, 2005). This characteristic of childhood is known through multiple theories on the development of career aspirations. According to Gottfredson's theory of development, between the ages of three and five is where children become oriented to size and power. During this stage, children progress from aspirations in fictitious careers, to adult roles (Nelson, 1978). Although children do not have a concrete meaning of adulthood, they are able to classify adults based on their size, and recognize the careers they perform (Gottfredson, 1981). The second stage of development takes place between the ages of six and eight, where children become oriented to sex roles. According to research on second graders, young children display sex differences in their career preferences (Tibbets, 1975). This has an effect on their career aspirations, as young boys and girls display noticeable differences in the careers they aspire to. In the third stage of career development, children become aware of their level of prestige, and aspire to careers that match their status. Taking place between the ages of nine and thirteen, children during this time recognize that their future occupational expectations, must complement their social class. Children in a higher social class recognize that they can aspire to prestigious careers, while lower class children recognize

different careers to match their status (Gottfredson, 1981). Beginning at age fourteen, children enter the fourth stage of development and become oriented to their internal, unique self. Van den Daele's research on this stage, explains that a child's experiences is organized into definitive roles (1968). The career aspirations of children within this stage are critical, as research indicates that teenage career aspirations are associated with eventual occupational attainment. In this study, students who created ambitious career goals often show persistence in achieving them. This suggests that a child's career aspirations are accurate predictors of future occupational attainment (Schoon&Polek, 2011). Although these intrinsic factors such as self-motivation and interests in careers can influence the future career choices of students, differences in gender, ethnicity, grade-level and socioeconomic status influences their career aspirations.

Gender and Career Aspirations

As children become oriented to sex roles when entering Gottfredson's second stage of development, they recognize that men and women pursue different careers within the scope of their gender. In today's society, there are widely shared beliefs about the expectations of men and women, and the roles they are expected to accomplish. The assumption that men possess greater leadership and commitment qualities, while women possess care-giving qualities, causes gender disparities within many careers, specifically the STEM field (Lubinski, 2000). This influences the vocational interests of children. To further investigate this matter, Su, Rounds and Armstrong (2009) performed research on sex differences in vocational interests by sampling men and women from ages 12 to 42. They found that there are substantial differences between men and women in their occupational interests. Men showed investigative interests in math, physical and social sciences, as well as realistic interests in outdoor work. Women showed greater interests socially through helping others, artistically through creativity, and conventionally by

working in structured environments (Holland, 1959). A follow up study conducted to analyze these sex differences in career aspirations, concluded similar findings to Su and colleagues. Researchers determined that there are large sex differences in vocational interests, but they differ greatly in younger subjects. Men tend to find more interest in realistic and investigative careers, while women gravitate towards artistic and social careers (Morris, 2016). The consistency between these findings suggests that gender plays a significant role in a child's career aspirations.

Additional research on vocational interests surveyed 24,599 students from middle schools and high school and measured career aspirations by asking "What occupation do you expect to have when you are 30 years old" (Mau & Bikos, 2000). Results revealed that women aspired to higher careers than men. Similar research found that although there were no aspirational differences between men and women, women expressed higher career aspirations (Apostal & Bilden, 1991). They suggest that there may be higher occupational opportunities for women or that women are more aware of high-status careers.

Despite research on sex differences in career aspirations arriving at different conclusions, what remains consistent is that men and women have differences in their career aspirations. Regardless of women aspiring to higher careers than men, or men gravitating towards careers in the STEM field, men and women are most likely going to show differences in the careers they aspire to.

Ethnicity and Career Aspirations

Previous research suggests that students in varying socioeconomic backgrounds have unequal access to educational resources. As a result, this may have implications for students in various ethnic groups. In a study performed on college students on their career aspirations and

expectations, researchers found that minority students differ in their career aspirations from non-minority students. Minority students aspire to enterprising, social and conventional occupations more than their counterparts (Metz et al., 2009). This is similar to the findings of Arbona and Novy (1991), who found differences in the career aspirations of college students within different ethnic groups. They found that the aspirations of Black, Mexican American and European American college students aspire to realistic, enterprising careers. Mau (1995) and his colleagues also reported a difference in career aspirations within ethnic groups. His research found that Asian students have higher aspirations than other groups. Specifically, in the field of STEM, research found that Black and Hispanic students were less interested and were least likely to aspire to careers in the STEM field, compared to White, Asian and multiracial students (Saw et al., 2018). Although careers in the STEM field have considerable amounts prestige, we are not able to conclude from this study that minority students who are less interested in this field, aspire to lower careers than non-minority students. This research suggests that as a result of Black and Hispanic students having a lack of interest in the field of STEM, that they are likely to aspire to lower careers than their colleagues.

Grade-Level and Career Aspirations

From a young age, children aspire to careers based on a variety of factors. As children become older, these careers become increasingly personal and realistic. This begs the question of at what age and grade level does a child's career become realistic. Although there is little research done on the career aspirations of elementary-aged children, researchers are able to rely on theories such as Gottfredson's theory of development, to determine when a child's career aspirations become realistic.

Researcher's looked into this phenomenon and studied the career aspirations of adolescent girls and how their grade level influences their aspirations. They discovered that as they become older, their career aspirations become more realistic. This pattern is seen in Gottfredson's theory of development. Girls in 10th through 12th grade grew in maturity and self-awareness, creating a drop in their career aspirations compared to younger girls (Watson et al., 2002). In research performed on the aspirations of middle school students, researchers compared their aspirations to the occupation of their parents. They found that middle school children aspired to higher, more prestigious careers than their parents (Schuette et al., 2012). This suggests that middle school children have an idea of what realistic career aspirations are, and have moved beyond fictitious careers. An additional study on the career aspirations of seventh grade students in Switzerland determined that occupations such as artists and professional athletes are considered fictitious. Although less than 20% of students did not have realistic aspirations, a majority of the students aspired to realistic careers (Hirschi, 2010). As students become older, they are more aware of their abilities, and tend to pursue careers based on this. In a study on high school students in Appalachia, the findings suggest that student's performance and accomplishments have a powerful influence on their career aspirations and pursuit of further education (Rasheed & Saunders, 2009).

Socioeconomic Status and Career Aspirations

History has indicated that individuals from lower socioeconomic backgrounds have lower career aspirations than students from high socioeconomic backgrounds. This can be a result of lower socioeconomic students having less access to resources and occupational disadvantages, (Bound & Freeman, 1992), and therefore, less access to social mobility. Although there is not a large amount of literature on socioeconomic status and the career aspirations of children,

research has found that social class is a predictor of career aspirations. In this study (Schoon & Parsons, 2002), teenagers who come from a lower social class, or a household where they did not receive their own room, are more likely to aspire to lower careers than their peers who come from a high social class. Particularly during early childhood, researchers found that children from lower socioeconomic backgrounds were not as interested in aspiring to high status occupations that they believed were typically performed by White individuals. Children who came from higher socioeconomic backgrounds only were interested in performing prestigious jobs, as opposed to children from lower socioeconomic backgrounds (Bigler, 2003). This trend is also seen in Australian students, where researchers found that higher socioeconomic status were more interested in higher careers (Gore et al., 2015). Although the differences by socioeconomic status were small, this indicates that socioeconomic status is a predictor of childhood career aspirations.

Current Study

The current study examines the relationship between socioeconomic status, ethnicity, and grade level, and the career aspirations of students from third, sixth, ninth and eleventh grade. The hypothesis examined in this study includes:

1. Socioeconomic status has a significant effect on the career aspirations of students—students who attend schools in high income areas, and have parents from higher socioeconomic backgrounds will aspire to higher careers, compared to students from low socioeconomic backgrounds.
2. The ethnicity of students will have a moderate effect on their career aspirations – Black, non-White Hispanic, and Asian students will aspire to lower careers, in comparison to White students.

3. A student's grade level will have an effect on the career aspiration of students—As students move from fictitious to realistic career aspirations, their career aspirations will become more prestigious as they become older.

Methodology

Participants

Participants for this study (N=61) were recruited from various schools across the United states. These included: Republic High School, Ruth Merdoch Elementary School, Andrews Academy, Smilow Collegiate, Berrien Springs Public Schools, Timothy Christian School and Village Elementary School. Students who were homeschooled were also included in this study. The setting for this survey included participants from the United States from third, sixth, ninth and eleventh grade. Each student was under the age of 18 years old. After receiving institutional consent from each school and parent, the principals were sent out an email with the link to Lime Survey to send out to the parents of these students. The principals then forwarded the emails to the parents of the students, who then determined their participation in this study. A power analysis indicated that approximately 160 subjects were needed for this study.

Demographics

In total, 61 subjects completed this survey. Out of the 61 subjects, 54.1% were Male, 44.3% were female. 45.9% of these participants attended 3rd grade, 16.4% were in 6th grade, 18% were in 9th grade, and 19.7% were in 11th grade. A majority of students in this study identified as White (45.9%), while the remaining participants identified as Black (41%) and Asian (11.5%). Most of the students identified as non-Hispanic/Latino (70.5%), while 29.5% of participants identified as Hispanic or Latino. Regarding the income level of these participants, the majority of individuals (32.8%) resided in families who made less than \$45,000, while 23% of the subject's

parents made \$45,000 to \$70,000, 24.6% made \$70,000 to \$130,000 and 19.7% of participants parents made \$130,000 to more than \$200,000.

Measures

Third Grade Career Aspirations Survey

The Third Grade Career Aspirations Survey is a self-created questionnaire that contain 16 items that are used to assess the career aspirations, ethnicity, grade-level and familial socioeconomic status. All of the items (e.g. “What do you want to be when you grow up” or “If you had the choice to be a doctor, or an actor, which would you choose) pertain to the subjects career aspirations. In this survey, third graders were also asked about their understanding of the word career (e.g. “Do you know what the word career means” and “What does the word career mean.”), to confirm their understanding of the research question. Although the third-grade students were asked about the salary of their parents, if they were unsure, they were able to provide the name of the work their parents performed.

Career Aspirations Survey

The Career Aspirations Survey is a self-created survey created for students in 6th, 9th, and 11th grade. This questionnaire contains 13 items that were used to assess the career aspirations, ethnicity, grade-level and familial socioeconomic status. All of the items (e.g., “What do you want to be when you grow up” or “If you had the choice to be a doctor, or an actor, which would you choose) pertain to the subjects career aspirations. In this survey, students were not asked about their understanding of the word career, as it was assumed that they were proficient in understanding this word. Students were also asked about their parental income (e.g., “How much money do your parents make”) and not given the choice to input their parent’s careers, as it was assumed that they had an understanding of the amount of money their parents made.

Procedure

This study utilized a quantitative, non-experimental survey design. After receiving IRB approval (IRB #21-001), the Career Aspirations Surveys on LimeSurvey was activated in a 3.25.20 installation. Once the students from 3rd, 6th, 9th, and 11th grade selected their respective surveys, themselves and parents read a parental consent form and a child verbal assent form. These forms outlined the nature of the survey; this included the purpose of this study, the type of questions this study included, the time it took to complete this survey, and any potential risks or benefits this study contained. This consent form also assured that the responses to this survey were completely confidential, and that the child's identity would not be revealed in the research. After the parents read the informed consent, the children were then able to decide whether they wanted to participate in this study by consenting verbally. The child verbal assent outlined the meaning of research and what this study was about. This assent form assured the children that their participation is completely voluntary and anonymous. After the parent and child consented to this study, 3rd grade students completed the 16 question career aspirations survey, while 6th, 9th and 11th grade students completed the 10 question career aspirations survey through LimeSurvey. Once participants completed all measures, they submitted the survey that took approximately 10 minutes to complete.

Analytical Approach

As stated, this study aims to determine if socioeconomic status and ethnicity are accurate predictors of childhood career aspirations. Before analyzing the data, the variables for parental career and childhood career aspirations were coded numerically to allow for easier interpretation. Each career was classified based on the O*NET specific vocational preparation or SVP (Oswald et al.,1999). This determined whether each job was unskilled, semi-skilled or skilled. If a career

was classified as unskilled with an SVP of less than four, it was coded as “1”. If the career had an SVP of four to six, it was considered semi-skilled and would receive a 2. If the career had an SVP of greater than six, it was considered skilled and would receive a number 3. All undecided or vague careers were grouped with unskilled careers and would also receive a 1. (put the blue-collar coding here). The parental and child careers were also classified based on whether they were considered white collar, blue collar, or fantasy/undecided. Careers such as doctors, teachers and lawyers were considered white collar jobs, mechanical jobs were considered blue collar, and professional athletes and zookeepers were considered fantasy careers.

When grouping the variables for grade level, elementary students contained 3rd grade students, while middle and high school students contains 6th, 9th and 11th grade students. To determine the effect of ethnicity on the career aspirations of students, minority and nonminority students were compared. Minority students included Black, Hispanic/Latino and Asian students, while non-minority students included White students.

Results

Predicting the Effects on Childhood Career Aspirations

When determining the effects of ethnicity on the skill level of a child’s career aspirations (Table 1), the contingency table revealed that 23.3% of students who aspired to unskilled or semi-skilled careers were minorities, while 76.7% of minority students aspired to skilled careers. On the other hand, 11.5% of nonminority students aspired to unskilled careers, while 88.5% of nonminority students aspired to skilled careers. This suggests that minority students are approximately twice as likely to aspire to unskilled or semi-skilled careers, as opposed to non-minority students. Although the Pearson chi-square test (Table 2) indicates that ethnicity does

not have a significant impact on the skill level of a child's career aspirations ($p=0.250$), results depict that there is a slight difference in the skill level of the careers minority and nonminority students aspire to.

After determining the effect of ethnicity on the collar color of a student's career aspirations (Table 3), 53.3% of minority students aspired to white collar careers, while 16.7% of minority students aspired to blue collar careers. The remaining 30% of minority students were undecided or aspired to fictitious careers. For non-minority students, 57.7% aspired to white collar careers, while 19.2% of non-minority students aspired to blue collar careers. The remaining 23.1% of non-minority students aspired to fantasy careers or were undecided on what they wanted to be when they grow up. Although this indicates that minority and non-minority students are equally as likely to aspire to white- and blue-collar careers, it also suggests that minority students are slightly more likely to aspire to fantasy careers, or are undecided on their future career. The Pearson chi-square test (Table 4) indicates the effect that ethnicity has on the collar color of the student's career aspirations was not significant ($p=0.840$).

When discovering the effect of grade-level on the skill level of student's career aspirations (Table 5), the contingency table revealed that 7.7% of elementary students aspired to unskilled or semi-skilled careers, while 92.3% of elementary students aspired to skilled careers. In comparison, the majority of middle school and high school students aspired to skilled careers (73.3%), while the remaining middle and high school students aspired to unskilled or semi-skilled careers (26.7%); The results depicted an insignificant relationship with a p value of 0.064 (Table 6). Although there is an insignificant effect on a student's grade level and the skill level of a child's career aspirations, this data suggests that middle school and high school students are

three times as likely to aspire to unskilled or semiskilled careers, as opposed to elementary students.

When looking at the effect of grade level on the collar color of a student's career aspirations (Table 7), the contingency table showed that 53.8% of elementary students aspired to white collar careers, and 26.9% of elementary students aspired to blue collar careers. The remaining percentage of elementary students (19.2%) aspired to fictitious careers, or were undecided in their career choice. For middle school and high school students, 56.7% of students aspired to white collar careers, 10% aspired to Blue collar careers, and 33.3% of students aspired to fantasy careers, or were undecided. This trend in the results did reveal that elementary students are twice as likely to aspire to blue collar careers, as opposed to middle and high school students. The results also indicated that middle school and high school students are more likely to be undecided, and aspire to fantasy careers, than third grade students. According to the chi-square test (Table 8), the p value ($p=0.193$) of the effect of grade level on the collar color of a student's aspirations, was insignificant.

After examining the effect of a parent's career on the skill level of a 3rd grade student's career aspirations (Table 9), 11.1% of children who aspire to unskilled or semiskilled careers, have parents who have a job classified as unskilled or semiskilled. 88.9% of children who aspire to skilled careers, have parents with a career classified as unskilled or semi-skilled. For parents with skilled jobs, 10.5% of students aspired to unskilled or semiskilled careers, and 89.5% of children aspired to skilled careers. These results show that skilled and unskilled parents are equally likely to have children who aspire to skilled careers, and unskilled or semiskilled careers. When determining the significance of the parent's occupational skill level on the skill level of a

child's career aspiration (Table 10), the Pearson chi-square test determined that it was insignificant ($p=0.963$).

The skill level of the second parent's job on the skill level of a child's career aspiration (Table 12) produced a p value of 0.421, which indicates insignificance. 100% of parents who worked unskilled or semiskilled jobs, had children who aspired to skilled jobs (Table 11). On the other hand, 92.3% of parents with a skilled job have children who also aspired to skilled jobs. Although a greater percentage of skilled parents were more likely to have a child aspire to a skilled job, both parental skill levels were likely to produce children who aspire to skilled careers.

When analyzing the effect of the parent's collar color on the collar color of the child's career aspirations (Tables 13 and 15), the majority of parents in white collar jobs (69.2% for parent 1 and 2) have children who aspire to white collar jobs, while 23.1% of children aspire to blue collar careers. The remaining percentage of children (7.7%) aspire to fantasy careers, or are also undecided (parent 1). For parent two (Table 15), 23.1% of children with parents in white collar careers, aspire to blue collar jobs. 7.7% of children with white collar parents aspire to fantasy careers, or are undecided. In Table 13 for the first parent, parents who have blue collar careers, have 54.5% of children who also aspire to those careers, while 45.5% of children's careers categorize as blue collar or fantasy/undecided. For parent two (Table 25), parents in blue collar careers have 50% of children who aspire to blue collar careers, while 50% of children aspire to white collar careers. For parent one and two in white collar careers, they are more likely to have a child who also aspires to white collar careers. For parent one, students are more likely to aspire to blue collar careers, if their parents work in blue collar jobs. This trend can show that the collar color of a parent's jobs may influence the collar color of the child's career aspiration.

The relationship between these variables did not prove to be significant for parent one with a p value of 0.070 (Table 14), or parent two, having a p value of 0.022 (Table 16).

The salary of third grade parents were compared to the skill level of their career aspirations, as well as the collar color of their career aspirations. For parents in lower and middle class (Table 17), 16.1% of parents had children who aspired to unskilled careers, while 83.9% had children who aspired to skilled careers. 20% of high-class parents had children who aspired to unskilled or unskilled careers, while 80% aspired to skilled careers. According to the chi-square test (Table 18), the relationship between these variables is not significant ($p=0.707$). Instead, the contingency table indicates that regardless of social class, parents are equally likely to have children who aspire to skilled careers. When analyzing the effect of parental salary on whether a child's career aspiration is white collar, blue collar or fantasy (Table 19), results indicated that lower- and middle-class parents had 54.8% of children aspire to white collar careers, while 16.1% aspired to blue collar careers. The remainder of the students (29%) aspired to fantasy careers or were undecided in their aspirations. High-class parents had 56% of children aspire to white collar careers, while 20% aspired to blue collar careers. The remaining 24% of students aspired to fantasy or undecided careers. The relationship between these variables produced a p value of 0.882 (Table 20). Since the percentage of students who aspire to white collar careers are similar across parental social class, this suggests that regardless of the parental social class, third grade students are equally likely to aspire to white collar careers, more often than blue collar and fantasy careers.

Discussion

This study investigated the effect of grade level, ethnicity, and parental socioeconomic status on the prestige and skill level of a child's career aspirations. According to this data,

statistical results did not support the hypothesis that socioeconomic status, ethnicity, and grade level had a significant effect on the career aspirations of students. Even when controlling for other factors such as occupational certainty and occupational motivation, results did not support socioeconomic status, ethnicity or grade level being a significant predictor of childhood career aspirations. Current results suggest that regardless of these variables, students strive for prestigious careers.

Although having a small sample size, results indicated that minority students were twice as likely to aspire to unskilled or semiskilled careers than non minority students. This trend affirms previous research, which states minority students aspire to less prestigious and more working-class careers than non-minority students (Metz et al., 2009; Arbona & Novy, 1991). Results indicate that minority and non-minority students aspire to skilled careers, more than unskilled or semiskilled careers. When analyzing the relationship between ethnicity and the collar color of the career students aspire to, results show that minority and non-minority students are more likely to aspire to white collar careers, rather than blue collar careers. Although literature notes that non-minority students often aspire white collar careers in the STEM field, making their career aspirations higher than non-minority students (Saw et al., 2018), these findings show that minority and nonminority students are equally likely to aspire to prestigious careers. The results also indicate that minority students are slightly more likely to aspire to fantasy careers or are undecided about their future careers than non-minority students. This can suggest that minority students are less likely to be occupationally certain, than nonminority students.

The relationship between grade-level and career aspirations suggests that as children become older, they are more likely to aspire to realistic careers, as opposed to younger children.

The results of this study show that middle school and high school students are three times as likely to aspire to unskilled careers, then elementary students. According to Gottfredson's theory of development, as students become older, their career aspirations become more personal and realistic. The results of this data suggests that as students become older, their careers are more likely to become realistic, thus causing more middle and high school students to aspire to unskilled or semi-skilled careers (Gottfredson, 1981). Previous research also indicates that as girls move to 12th grade, their aspirations become less fictitious and more personal (Watson et al., 2002). The results in this study indicates that a higher percentage of elementary students aspired to skilled careers, while middle school and high school students are more likely to aspire to unskilled and semi-skilled careers than third grade students.

The effect of socioeconomic status on career aspirations, is a relationship that has not been carefully examined within literature, but generally states that students of high socioeconomic status are more likely to aspire to white collar, and skilled careers than students from a lower socioeconomic background (Schoon & Parsons, 2002). When looking at the relationship between socioeconomic status and career aspirations, it is important to investigate the prestige and salary of the parent's job, and how it effects the student's career aspirations. After comparing the relationship between the salary of the parents and the skill level of the child's career aspirations, we found that the majority of students who come from low- and middle-class families aspire to skilled careers, while students from high-class families also aspire to skilled careers more than unskilled and semi-skilled careers. This trend is also seen when comparing salary and the collar jobs the children aspire to. Children from lower-, middle- and high-class families are more likely to aspire to white collar jobs, than blue collar or fantasy careers. This shows that regardless of parental income level, students across various income

levels are equally likely to aspire to white collar and skilled careers. Although literature shows that parents have the ability to influence their child's career aspirations (Tillman, 2015), results did show a similar trend with the other variables on the career aspirations of children. In this study, the majority of children aspired to skilled careers, despite the skill level of their parents' career. This suggests that a child's career aspirations are not dependent on the skill level or collar color of their parent's careers. Though the relationship between these variables were insignificant, we can propose the conclusion that parents minimally influence their child's career aspirations.

Limitations

Although the design of this study was carefully constructed, potential limitations occur. First, this study utilized students across four grade levels from 3rd, 6th, 9th and 11th grade. Since the majority of these students were under 18 years old and needed parental consent prior to taking the survey, there is an assumed proportion of people who are completing the surveys with parents. This has the potential to influence the answers to the career aspirations of students.

Second, the power analysis suggested that approximately 160 students should participate in this study. Only 61 individuals participated in this study, making results less likely to be significant. It is also assumed that the trend in the results may result from chance, rather than by an accurate, experimental determination of childhood career aspirations, due to the small sample size.

Third, the participants in this study came from private, public and home schools, some with a high religious influence. The characteristics of these schools can have an impact on the career aspirations of student's. Although there is not a large body of literature on these students, the child attending private school can create the assumption that they come from higher class

backgrounds. This can have the potential to influence the career aspirations of the students, making them more likely to choose higher class and white-collar jobs.

Lastly, as a result of COVID-19, many schools were not allowing research to be performed on their students. While conducting research, there have been many school closure-related changes, making it difficult for research to be conducted on students. Although this research was performed remotely, the additional stress of a research project in a school, would overload many students and teachers.

Implications

This study revealed an insignificant effect of socioeconomic status, ethnicity, and grade level on a child's career aspirations. Although this does not agree with previous literature performed on this topic, further research may show that there is an effect of these variables on what a child wants to be when they grow up.

As unequal household income distributions become prevalent, there becomes an increased lack of funding and lack of resources to those areas. According to the United States department of Education, individuals in low-income communities do not receive an equal share of state and local funds, which leaves children in low-income areas with little educational resources and support. This research aimed to determine whether socioeconomic status, ethnicity and grade level are accurate predictors of their future career choice. This research indicated that there is not a significant effect of these variables on a child's career aspirations.

Although this study does not agree with previous literature performed on this topic, it contributed to the small body of literature on the role race plays in career aspirations and educational inequalities. Performing and obtaining results for this research was able to show insight for how race in addition to socioeconomic status, does not significantly have an effect on

the career aspirations of students. These results are also beneficial for the schools as they can gain insight into what can and cannot influence their career aspirations. It is important to note that due to the small sample size, these results cannot be generalized to a larger population. In addition, this study allows students to discover their passion for a certain career as they answer questions about their career aspirations. Though the results of this study did not prove to be significant, this research can add insightful information for why individuals from low or high socioeconomic statuses do not have a difference in career aspirations.

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Table 1. This table depicts the effect a student’s ethnicity has on the skill level of their career aspirations within a Contingency Table.

ETHNICITY * CHILDCAREERGROUP Crosstabulation

		CHILDCAREERGROUP		Total	
		UNSKILLED/S EMISKILED	SKILLED		
Ethnicity	MINORITY	Count	7	23	30
		% within 1	23.3%	76.7%	100.0%
	NONMINORITY	Count	3	23	26
		% within 1	11.5%	88.5%	100.0%
Total		Count	10	46	56
		% within 1	17.9%	82.1%	100.0%

Table 2. This table depicts the effect a student’s ethnicity has on the skill level of their career aspirations within a Chi-Square Table.

Chi-Square Tests

	Value	df	Asymptotic Significance (2-sided)	Exact Sig. (2-sided)	Exact Sig. (1-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	3.419 ^a	1	.064		
Continuity Correction ^b	2.247	1	.134		
Likelihood Ratio	3.656	1	.056		
Fisher's Exact Test				.087	.065
Linear-by-Linear Association	3.358	1	.067		
N of Valid Cases	56				

a. 1 cells (25.0%) have expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is 4.64.

b. Computed only for a 2x2 table

Table 3. This table depicts the effects of ethnicity on the collar color of child’s career aspiration within a contingency table

1 * CHILDCOLLARCOLOR Crosstabulation

		Chi-Square Tests			Total
		Value	df	Asymptotic Significance (2-sided)	
1	MINOR				30
		Pearson Chi-Square	.348 ^a	2	.840
	NONM				26
		Likelihood Ratio	.350	2	.839
Total					56
		Linear-by-Linear Association	.235	1	.628
		N of Valid Cases	56		100.0%

REER ASPIRATIONS

a. 1 cells (16.7%) have expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is 4.64.

Table 4. This table depicts the effects of ethnicity on the collar color of child’s career aspiration within a chi-square table

Chi-Square Tests					
	Value	df	Asymptotic Significance (2-sided)	Exact Sig. (2-sided)	Exact Sig. (1-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	3.419 ^a	1	.064		
Continuity Correction ^b	2.247	1	.134		
Likelihood Ratio	3.656	1	.056		
Fisher’s Exact Test				.087	.065
Linear-by-Linear Association	3.358	1	.067		
N of Valid Cases	56				

a. 1 cells (25.0%) have expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is 4.64.

b. Computed only for a 2x2 table

Table 5. This table depicts the effect of a student’s grade level on the skill level of their career aspirations within a contingency table.

GRADE LEVEL * CHILDCAREERGROUP Crosstabulation

		CHILDCAREERGROUP			Total
			UNSKILLED/S EMISKILED	SKILLED	
Grade Level	ELEMENTARY	Count	2	24	26
		% within GRADE1NEW	7.7%	92.3%	100.0%
	MIDDLE/HIGHSCHOOL	Count	8	22	30
		% within GRADE1NEW	26.7%	73.3%	100.0%
Total		Count	10	46	56
		% within GRADE1NEW	17.9%	82.1%	100.0%

Table 6. This table depicts the effect of a student’s grade level on the skill level of their career aspirations within a Chi-square test

Chi-Square Tests					
	Value	df	Asymptotic Significance (2-sided)	Exact Sig. (2-sided)	Exact Sig. (1-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	3.419 ^a	1	.064		
Continuity Correction ^b	2.247	1	.134		
Likelihood Ratio	3.656	1	.056		
Fisher’s Exact Test				.087	.065
Linear-by-Linear Association	3.358	1	.067		
N of Valid Cases	56				

a. 1 cells (25.0%) have expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is 4.64.

b. Computed only for a 2x2 table

Chi-Square Tests

ation

GRADE1NEW	ELEA		Value	df	Asymptotic Significance (2-sided)	ARCOLOR		Total
						LLAR	FANTASY/UNDECIDED	
	MIDI	Pearson Chi-Square	3.288 ^a	2	.193	7	5	26
		Likelihood Ratio	3.349	2	.187	6.9%	19.2%	100.0%
Total		Linear-by-Linear Association	.235	1	.628	3	10	30
		N of Valid Cases	56			0.0%	33.3%	100.0%
a. 1 cells (16.7%) have expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is 4.64.						10	15	56
						7.9%	26.8%	100.0%

PIRATIONS

Table 7. This table depicts the effects of grade level on the collar color of child’s career aspiration within a contingency table

Table 8. This table depicts the effects of grade level on the collar color of child’s career aspiration within a chi-square table

Table 9. This table depicts the effect of a parent’s career on the skill level of their 3rd grade child’s career aspirations within a Contingency Table

PARENT1JOB * CHILDCAREERGROUP Crosstabulation

PARENT1JOB	CHILDCAREERGROUP		UNSKILLED/SEMISKILLED	SKILLED	Total
			Count	Count	
UNSKILLED/SEMISKILLED		Count	1	8	9
		% within PARENT1JOB	11.1%	88.9%	100.0%
SKILLED		Count	2	17	19
		% within PARENT1JOB	10.5%	89.5%	100.0%
Total		Count	3	25	28
		% within PARENT1JOB	10.7%	89.3%	100.0%

Table 10. This table depicts the effect of a parent’s career on the skill level of their 3rd grade child’s career aspirations within a Chi-square test

Chi-Square Tests

	Value	df	Asymptotic Significance (2-sided)	Exact Sig. (2-sided)	Exact Sig. (1-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	3.419 ^a	1	.064		
Continuity Correction ^b	2.247	1	.134		
Likelihood Ratio	3.656	1	.056		
Fisher's Exact Test				.087	.065
Linear-by-Linear Association	3.358	1	.067		
N of Valid Cases	56				

Table effect

a. 1 cells (25.0%) have expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is 4.64.
 b. Computed only for a 2x2 table

II. This table depicts the of the second parent’s career on the skill level of their 3rd grade child’s career aspirations within a Contingency Table

PARENT1JOB * CHILDCAREERGROUP Crosstabulation

PARENT1JOB	UNSKILLED/SEMISKILLED	Count	CHILDCAREERGROUP		Total
			UNSKILLED/S EMISKILLED	SKILLED	
		Count	1	8	9
		% within PARENT1JOB	11.1%	88.9%	100.0%
	SKILLED	Count	2	17	19
		% within PARENT1JOB	10.5%	89.5%	100.0%
Total		Count	3	25	28
		% within PARENT1JOB	10.7%	89.3%	100.0%

Table 12. This table depicts the effect of the second parent’s career on the skill level of their 3rd grade child’s career aspirations within a Chi-square test

Chi-Square Tests

	Value	df	Asymptotic Significance (2-sided)	Exact Sig. (2-sided)	Exact Sig. (1-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	3.419 ^a	1	.064		
Continuity Correction ^b	2.247	1	.134		
Likelihood Ratio	3.656	1	.056		
Fisher's Exact Test				.087	.065
Linear-by-Linear Association	3.358	1	.067		
N of Valid Cases	56				

a. 1 cells (25.0%) have expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is 4.64.
 b. Computed only for a 2x2 table

Table 13. This table depicts the effects of parental job collar color on the collar color of child’s career aspiration within a contingency table

PARENT1COLLARCODE * CHILDCOLLARCOLOR Crosstabulation

Chi-Square Tests

		Value	df	Asymptotic Significance (2-sided)	CHILD COLLAR COLOR			
					WHITE COLLAR	BLUE COLLAR	FANTASY/UNDECIDED	
PARENT1COLLARCODE	WHIT	Pearson Chi-Square	11.415 ^a	4	.022	3	1	13
		Likelihood Ratio	10.457	4	.033	1%	7.7%	100.0%
	BLUE	Linear-by-Linear Association	5.074	1	.024	3	2	11
		N of Valid Cases	21			3%	18.2%	100.0%
	NEIT	a. 8 cells (88.9%) have expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is .76.				0	3	4
						0%	75.0%	100.0%
Total		Count	16			6	6	28
		% within PARENT1COLLARCODE	57.1%		21.4%	21.4%		100.0%

CAREER ASPIRATIONS

Table 14. This table depicts the effects of parental job collar color on the collar color of child's career aspiration within a chi-square table

Chi-Square Tests

	Value	df	Asymptotic Significance (2-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	3.288 ^a	2	.193
Likelihood Ratio	3.349	2	.187
Linear-by-Linear Association	.235	1	.628
N of Valid Cases	56		

a. 1 cells (16.7%) have expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is 4.64.

Table 15. This table depicts the effects of parental 2 job collar color on the collar color of child's career aspiration within a contingency table

PARENT2COLLARCODE * CHILDCOLLARCOLOR Crosstabulation

			CHILDCOLLARCOLOR			Total
			WHITE COLLAR	BLUE COLLAR	FANTASY/UNDECIDED	
PARENT2COLLARCODE	WHITE COLLAR	Count	9	3	1	13
		% within PARENT2COLLARCODE	69.2%	23.1%	7.7%	100.0%
	BLUE COLLAR	Count	2	2	0	4
% within PARENT2COLLARCODE		50.0%	50.0%	0.0%	100.0%	
NEITHER/VAGUE	Count	1	0	3	4	
	% within PARENT2COLLARCODE	25.0%	0.0%	75.0%	100.0%	
Total		Count	12	5	4	21
		% within PARENT2COLLARCODE	57.1%	23.8%	19.0%	100.0%

Table 16. This table depicts the effects of parental job collar color on the collar color of child's career aspiration within a chi-square table

Chi-Square Tests

	Value	df	Asymptotic Significance (2-sided)	Exact Sig. (2-sided)	Exact Sig. (1-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	3.419 ^a	1	.064		
Continuity Correction ^b	2.247	1	.134		
Likelihood Ratio	3.656	1	.056		
Fisher's Exact Test				.087	.065
Linear-by-Linear Association	3.358	1	.067		
N of Valid Cases	56				

- a. 1 cells (25.0%) have expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is 4.64.
- b. Computed only for a 2x2 table

Table 17. This table depicts the effects of parental salary on the skill level of a child’s career aspiration within a contingency table.

SALARY1 * CHILDCAREERGROUP Crosstabulation

		CHILDCAREERGROUP		Total	
		UNSKILLED/SEMISKILLED	SKILLED		
SALARY1	LOWER/MIDDLECLASS	Count	5	26	31
		% within SALARY1	16.1%	83.9%	100.0%
	HIGHCLASS	Count	5	20	25
		% within SALARY1	20.0%	80.0%	100.0%
Total		Count	10	46	56
		% within SALARY1	17.9%	82.1%	100.0%

Table 18. This table depicts the effects of parental salary on the skill level of a child’s career aspiration within a chi-square table.

Table 19. This table depicts the effects of salary on the collar color of child’s career aspiration within a contingency table

SALARY1 * CHILDCOLLARCOLOR Crosstabulation

		CHILDCOLLARCOLOR			Total	
		WHITECOLLAR	BLUECOLLAR	FANTASY/UNDECIDED		
SALARY1	LOWER/MIDDLECLASS	Count	17	5	9	31
		% within SALARY1	54.8%	16.1%	29.0%	100.0%
	HIGHCLASS	Count	14	5	6	25
		% within SALARY1	56.0%	20.0%	24.0%	100.0%
Total		Count	31	10	15	56
		% within SALARY1	55.4%	17.9%	26.8%	100.0%

Table 20. This table depicts the effects of salary on the collar color of child’s career aspiration within a chi-square table

Chi-Square Tests

	Value	df	Asymptotic Significance (2-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	3.288 ^a	2	.193
Likelihood Ratio	3.349	2	.187
Linear-by-Linear Association	.235	1	.628
N of Valid Cases	56		

a. 1 cells (16.7%) have expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is 4.64.