

Social inequalities in self-esteem

(Some) Explanations and consequences

Results from the West Jutland Cohort Study

Claus D. Hansen, PhD (Sociology)

Department of Sociology and Social Work, Aalborg University

Department of Occupational Medicine, Regional Hospital Herning

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Background

Economic inequality and self-esteem

Two observations:

In sociology: 'Death of social class', 'End of class politics'

In society at large: Possible adverse consequences of recent welfare reforms (e.g. 'Kontanthjælpsreformen') for children and adolescents

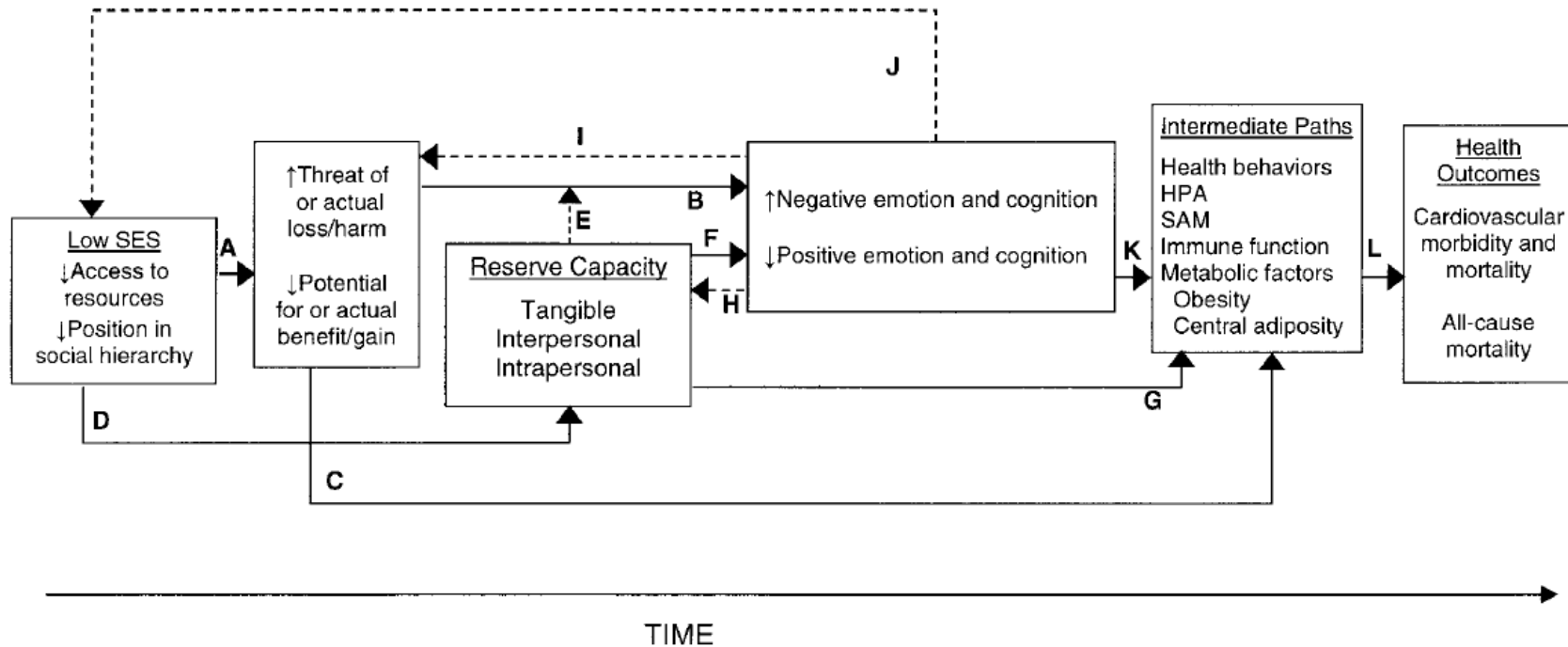
→ perception of economic inequalities as irrelevant

One 'soft' outcome of relative poverty would be lower levels of self-esteem caused in part by experiences of not having access to the same activities and opportunities for consumption as that of peers.

In this presentation self-esteem is interpreted as the participant's perception of their own identity's successfulness.

Background

Theoretical model of West Jutland Cohort Study



Focus on pathways A and B – where low levels of economic capital, lack of consumption capabilities and unemployment result in negative emotions or cognition, e.g. self-esteem

Gallo, L.C. & Matthews, K.A. 2003 'Understanding the association between socioeconomic status and physical health: do negative emotions play a role?', *Psychological Bulletin*, Vol. 129, No. 1, pp. 10-51

Background

Aim of the presentation

- 1) To describe inequalities in self-esteem at age 15, 18 and 21 in adolescents from West Jutland (former Ringkjøbing County)
- 2) To examine antecedents to low self-esteem that has to do with economic conditions during childhood/adolescent (e.g. parental unemployment, low income or consumption possibilities)

Data & Methods

Data from the birth cohort study West Jutland Cohort Study (VestLiv) – all adolescents born in 1989, living in Ringkjøbing County in april 2004 (N = 3681)

Three rounds of data:

2004	age 14/15	n = 2977 (81%)
2007	age 17/18	n = 2370 (64%)
2010	age 20/21	n = 1910 (52%)

Linked to register data on parental income, education and labour market participation (during their entire life)

Self reported information on:

- a) self-esteem
- b) episodes of not being able to participate in spare time activities because of financial difficulties

Results

Inequality in self-esteem

	Self Esteem 2004	Self Esteem 2007	Self Esteem 2010
Parents' highest educational level (2003)			
Compulsory school	18.43	18.97	19.28
Vocational training	18.97	19.60	19.99
KVU + MVU	19.20	19.72	20.38
College/University or equivalent	19.71	20.17	20.45
Household income (2003)			
1. Tertile (< 460.894 kr)	18.81	19.36	19.69
2. Tertile (460.864-600.853 kr)	18.89	19.61	19.94
3. Tertile (> 600.853 kr)	19.30	19.76	20.44
Own social position (2007)			
Student w/o spare time job	%	19.40	%
Student w spare time job	%	19.69	%
Apprentice	%	19.94	%
In ordinary employment	%	18.81	%
Outside labour market	%	18.20	%

Results

Inequality in consumption possibilities

<i>During the last year how often has it happened that you could not afford to participate in the following? (several times, sometimes, once in a while or seldomly = 1 ; never = 0)</i>	Logistic regression. Odds Ratio (95% CI) (adjusted for gender and own income)			
		Activities with friends, that cost money (e.g. sports event, concert or similar)	Spare time activities you pay to participate in	Trips with sportsclub or other voluntary associations
Parents' highest educational level (2003)				
Compulsory school		1.68 (1.06-2.65)	1.97 (1.24-3.13)	1.55 (0.97-2.48)
Vocational training		1.20 (0.84-1.72)	1.37 (0.93-2.00)	1.42 (0.96-2.10)
KVU + MVU		1.07 (0.74-1.54)	1.11 (0.76-1.64)	1.08 (0.73-1.61)
College/University or equivalent	ref	1.00	1.00	1.00
Household income (2003)				
1. tertile (< 460.894 kr)		1.67 (1.31-2.11)	1.77 (1.40-2.23)	1.43 (1.12-1.81)
2. tertile (460.864-600.853 kr)		1.37 (1.11-1.68)	1.48 (1.20-1.82)	1.21 (0.98-1.49)
3. tertile (> 600-853 kr)	ref	1.00	1.00	1.00
Own social position (2007)				
Student w/o spare time job	ref	1.00	1.00	1.00
Student w spare time job		0.96 (0.76-1.22)	0.90 (0.71-1.13)	1.15 (0.91-1.47)
Apprentice		0.73 (0.52-1.02)	1.00 (0.71-1.41)	1.12 (0.79-1.59)
In ordinary employment		1.25 (0.77-2.03)	1.82 (1.13-2.92)	1.93 (1.21-3.09)
Outside labour market		1.63 (0.70-3.79)	2.02 (0.93-4.41)	2.04 (0.96-4.34)

Results

Predictors of self-esteem

Self-esteem – all years 2004-2010 (n = 4553)	OLS	Random effects	Fixed effect
Girls vs Boys	-1.14***	-1.15***	%
Highest parental education (2003)			
Compulsory school	Ref	Ref	%
Vocational training	0.36*	0.28	%
KVU + MVU	0.37*	0.29	%
College/University or equivalent	0.63**	0.52(*)	%
Household income (2003) in 1000 dKr	0.0003	0.0003	%
Have a job (Yes/No)	0.41***	0.32**	0.15
Parental unemployment (2002-2009)			
No unemployment	Ref	Ref	Ref
Max 21‰	0.01	0.00	0.02
21-125 ‰	-0.19	-0.20	-0.31(*)
> 125 ‰	-0.10	-0.22	-0.56*
Own unemployment (total after 2007)			
No unemployment	Ref	Ref	%
< 40 ‰	-0.49*	-0.56*	%
> 40 ‰	0.02	-0.02	%
Cannot afford to attend concert or similar	0.03	0.01	%
Cannot afford spare time activities you pay to participate in	-0.41**	-0.42**	%
Cannot afford trips with sportsclub or other voluntary associations	-0.42***	-0.41**	%

*** = p < 0.001, ** = p < 0.01, * = p < 0.05, (*) = p < 0.1

Adjusted for daily television use, body mass index, parental divorce, weekly hours of physical exercise, bullying

Conclusions

- 1) Self-esteem is distributed unequally among adolescents: adolescents with lowest levels of parental income also have lowest levels of self-esteem
- 2) Adolescents with lower income parents have more difficulties financing participating in leisure time activities
- 3) Financial situation and unemployment have adverse consequences on adolescents' self-esteem
- 4) Tentative results show that lower self-esteem is associated with higher levels of depression and less probability of being employed