

## ROLE OF CORE SELF-EVALUATIONS

Timothy Judge & Charlice Hurst

University of Florida

(To be published in Journal of Applied Psychology)

### ABSTRACT

The researchers examined, first, whether core self-evaluations in adolescence and young adulthood predict income at mid-life and, second, whether people with positive core self-evaluations are more likely to capitalize on advantages resulting from family socioeconomic status and academic achievement, resulting in even higher levels of income at mid-career. The study began with about 7,000 young people and followed up 25 years later.

They found that those with high opinions of themselves as young people earned more in middle age than those with less self-confidence. The core self-evaluations and family socioeconomic status and academic achievement were found to predict income and that, furthermore, high core self-evaluations enhance the benefits derived from these factors. Their research found that self-esteem plays an important role in whether individuals capitalize on their socioeconomic status and academic achievement. Where previous studies have tended to focus on responses to relatively minor, everyday events and their short-term affective and health outcomes, in this study they focused on how positive self-esteem may lead individuals to draw greater long-term material rewards from those aspects of youthful privilege and attainment that are typically associated with career success.

They defined core self-evaluations as composed of four personality traits—self-esteem, generalized self-efficacy, emotional stability, and locus of control. They believed this provides a more effective method of predicting work-related outcomes as distinct from personality. In their results they found that higher socioeconomic status, strong academic performance, and educational attainment in adolescence all had more positive effects on income later in life among those with high core self-evaluations than those with low core self-evaluations. Even with the advantage of high socioeconomic family background these resources barely seemed to make a difference for individuals with low core self-evaluations. They concluded that resources such as family advantage AND positive self-evaluations together are necessary to attain above average levels of income. Even those with high academic achievement as adolescents who had low core self-evaluations did not achieve higher levels of income.

It is worth noting that among individuals without early advantages, positive core self-evaluations seem to do little to enhance future earnings, so interventions that attempt to alter core self-evaluations among disadvantaged youth without changing their circumstances may

not have the desired impact on their long-term material success. Just as it is not enough to change self-views only, so too is it not enough to change people's behaviors and life circumstances only without changing self-views.