



A CASE STUDY OF STUDENTS' SELF-ESTEEM AND SCHOOL UNIFORM OPINIONS IN AN URBAN MIDDLE SCHOOL

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School districts across the country have been implementing school uniform policies in response to reported improvements by schools with existing uniform policies in academic achievement, self-esteem, behavior, and school safety. This case study explored students' perspectives of school uniforms as they related to self-esteem. Focus group interviews were conducted with middle school students in grades six through eight to explore students' opinions of school uniforms. Transcripts of the interviews were content analyzed, and themes that emerged resulted in the development of 11 questions that measured students' opinions toward uniforms. The questions comprised the Uniform Opinion (UO) and Branded Label Salience (BLS) measures. A questionnaire including the UO measure, BLS measure, and Coopersmith Self-Esteem Inventory (SEI) was administered to 235 middle-school students of diverse ethnicities in a New York City public school with a uniform policy that had been in place for two years.

The findings in this case study do not support the claim that school uniforms have a positive effect on students' self-esteem (Board of Education, 1997). Due to the exploratory nature of this case study, it cannot be assumed that the same findings would result from similar research applied to different communities or grade levels. However, the possibility exists of similar results emerging from students in other schools and should be considered by school districts weighing the adoption of school uniform policies.

Board of Education of the City of New York (1997). Dressing for success: A survey of school uniform programs in New York City public schools. New York: Board of Education of the City of NY.