

EQUITY ASSESSMENT EXCERPTS

ASSESSMENT OF EDUCATIONAL EQUITY

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COLLEGE STUDENTS' LABOR PARTICIPATION

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Introduction and Purpose

By definition, investment implies the use of resources in the present with the expectation of future returns in the form of higher income and satisfaction. Investment in human capital, hence, is the commitment of resources in "those activities that influence future monetary and psychic income by increasing the resources in people . . . [that will] improve skills, knowledge or health" (Becker, 1975:37). Some of the activities that contribute to the acquisition of human capital are work experience and schooling. Schools specialize in the "production of training" while firms offer "training in conjunction with the production of goods" (Becker, 1975:37). It can be argued, following the human capital theory, that work experience will be beneficial for students and, in fact, will contribute to their human capital. In theory this is true, unless we consider schooling and work as two activities competing for limited resources — time and energy. The dilemma is clear: how can college students contribute monetary resources toward their education with work experience that will enhance, not decrease, their human capital and, hence, their earning potential and well-being? Before this question can be empirically explored, the situation of conflicting use of resources and its effect, if any, on students needs to be documented. It is also necessary to have a clear profile of the college student worker.

The purpose or objectives of this study were: a) to identify those college students that tend to participate more than others in the labor force and b) to identify the net effect of hours of work on the school performance of college students.

Procedure

The data analyzed came from an undergraduate student survey conducted by the Assessment of the Status of Minorities in Education (ASME) project at the Illinois State University Center for Higher Education. These data were collected from over 10,000 students attending eleven institutions of higher education in the state of Illinois during the spring of 1990. A selected number of variables were included in descriptive and multivariable analyses. Two empirical models were calculated, one to determine the factors that affect students labor force participation (dependent variable = hours of work per week) and another to determine the effect of work on students' school performance (dependent variable = current GPA). The analyses were performed first using the total sample of students and second using only student workers.

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SELECTED CHARACTERISTICS OF THE SAMPLE

FINDINGS

<u>Independent Variables</u>	<u>% (All) n=8,304</u>	<u>% (Workers) n=4,939</u>
Hours of Work per Week		
none	40.5	—
<10 hours	14.0	23.5
10 - 14	15.6	26.2
15 - 19	9.1	15.4
20 - 24	7.5	12.6
25 - 29	3.3	5.5
30 or more	10.0	16.8
Current GPA		
below 1.5	1.1	.8
1.50 - 1.99	4.2	3.4
2.00 - 2.49	18.2	17.0
2.50 - 2.99	30.6	30.0
3.00 - 3.49	29.2	30.8
3.50 - 4.00	16.7	18.0
Race / Ethnicity		
Black (non-Hispanic)	8.6	10.4
White (non-Hispanic)	83.3	80.1
Hispanic	3.6	4.4
Others	4.5	5.1
Living at Home		
yes	16.3	22.7
no	83.7	77.3
Female-Headed Family		
yes	12.8	14.0
no	87.2	86.0
Married		
yes	7.2	8.9
no	92.8	91.1
Enrollment Status		
full-time	91.4	87.0
part-time	8.6	13.0
Gender		
female	65.3	66.5
male	34.7	33.5
Children		
yes	7.1	8.6
no	92.9	91.4
Financial Aid		
yes	49.3	53.9
no	50.7	46.1

- The students that devote more hours per week to work tend to be male, married, older, part-time students and from minority groups (Black, Latino).
- The presence of children tends to decrease the number of hours of work per week.
- There is a negative relationship between hours of work and parents' income.
- There is a positive correlation between current GPA and hours of work. However, when other variables are controlled for, labor force participation has no statistically significant effect on school performance.

IMPLICATIONS FOR POLICY AND PRACTICE

- The results of this study indicate student workers' school performance was not affected by employment. However, it appears time devoted to employment may contribute to longer time required to complete degrees and to receive the returns from their investment in human capital.
- Student workers appear to be able to manage their time in such a way that their worker status does not conflict with their academic duties. Nonworkers may benefit from workers time management strategies.

RESEARCH QUESTIONS TO BE EXPLORED IN FUTURE RESEARCH

- How does labor force participation affect the number of years students need for degree completion?
- How does labor force participation affect the retention of minority students?
- How do time management strategies compare between student workers and nonworkers?

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