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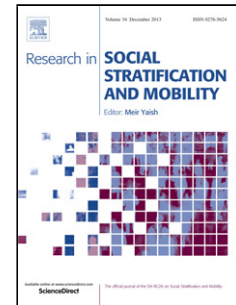
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New dimensions of educational inequality: Changing patterns of combining college and work in the U.S. over time

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Abstract

Expansion of an educational system is often accompanied by differentiation. In the U.S., expansion of higher education included an increasing reliance on work. For a growing proportion of students, including those of traditional college-going age, going to college also involved going to work. This raises a crucial question of whether this form of differentiation has altered the patterns of inequality in higher education. While growing proportions of disadvantaged students are entering higher education, are they increasingly depending on work during their studies? We address this question using data from two waves of the National Longitudinal Survey of Youth (NLSY79 and NLSY97). We begin by presenting longitudinal profiles of engagement in school and work for young adults in the 1980s and 2000s. Following, we conduct multivariate analyses predicting the number of hours students are working while enrolled in college in two time periods. Presented analyses reveal a substantial amount of stability in social class inequality over time, with a modest increase in inequality among students attending four-year institutions full-time. Implications of these findings for policy and research on social stratification are discussed.

Keywords

Social Mobility, Social Class, Higher Education, Employment, Effectively Maintained Inequality.

Highlights

Employment has increased among college students from all social class origins over time. Differentiated pathways including employment do not substantially increase inequality over time.

The number of hours students work similarly shows small or no increase in inequality across cohorts.

Modest increase in inequality is observed among full-time four-year students.

1 Introduction

The twentieth century was the century of educational expansion. Higher education in the U.S. expanded notably to accommodate ever growing numbers of students seeking postsecondary credentials. The expansion continued even toward the century's end. Between 1980 and 2010, the total number of students enrolled in postsecondary institutions almost doubled (NCES 2012). While some of that growth reflected non-traditional age students entering college years after high

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