Maintaining Inequality & College Pathways

AERA 2016 Annual Conference Paper Presentation

Maintaining Inequality: An Analysis of College Pathways Among Women at Large Public Institutions

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Armstrong & Hamilton (2013)

- Five-year ethnographic study
- Large Public Research University
- 47 female students
- Three college pathways
  - Party
  - Mobility
  - Professional
- Socioeconomic status
- Disparities by educational outcomes

Study Purpose

- Test Armstrong & Hamilton’s (2013) findings on a broader scale
- Quantitative, multi-institutional study
- Expand the study to include student engagement in effective educational practices

Research Questions

1. To what extent do women’s college pathways affect future potential earnings of a bachelor’s degree (quantitative outcome)?
2. To what extent do women’s college pathways affect academic engagement in reflective and integrative learning, learning strategies, and student-faculty interaction (qualitative outcome)?
3. To what extent does the effect of college pathways on the educational outcomes of interests vary by parental education?

Data

- 2014 administration of the National Survey of Student Engagement (NSSE)
  - Measures the time and energy that students invest in activities known to relate to student learning and development
- 42,504 women seniors, enrolled full-time
- 183 four-year, large public institutions

Sample Characteristics

- 47% first-generation
- 75% 23 or younger
- 65% White
- 9% Hispanic/Latino
- 8% Black/African Am.
- 7% Asian
- 6% multiracial
- 2% other
- 71% aspire to graduate degree
- 18% STEM
- 51% mostly As, 44% Bs

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Independent Measures

- Pathways
  - Party pathway: spent 20+ hrs/week relaxing and socializing, less than 11 hrs/week working and preparing for class (2%)
  - Mobility pathway: spent 20+ hrs/week working for pay, less than 11 hrs/week socializing and preparing for class (5%)
  - Professional pathway: spent 20+ hrs/week on preparing for class, less than 11 hrs/week socializing and working (13%)
  - Balanced: did not meet other criteria (80%)

First-generation status
- Controls: degree expectations, college grades, majoring in STEM, racial/ethnic identification, age

Dependent Measures

- Future earning potential of a bachelor’s degree
  - (What’s it Worth?: The Economic Value of College Majors by Carnevale et al., 2011)
- Academic engagement in:
  - Reflective & Integrative Learning (α = .89)
  - Learning Strategies (α = .79)
  - Student-Faculty Interaction (α = .86)

Analyses

- OLS regression blocks: potential income
  - I: socio-demographic characteristics
  - II: college pathways
  - III: major choice, grades
  - IV: interaction terms for potential income and first-generation status
- OLS regression models: engagement outcomes
  - I: parental education, pathways, interaction terms, controls

Findings: Potential Earnings

- Women on the Professional pathway had higher potential income than Mobility pathway students
- Party pathway students had a lower potential income than Mobility pathway students
- Balanced pathway students had a similar potential income to Mobility pathway students

Findings: Potential Earnings

Adjusted Potential Earnings by First-Generation Status and Pathways

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Findings: Engagement

- RIL: *Party* students are less engaged than *Mobility*
- LS: *Party* students are less engaged than *Mobility; Professional* students are more engaged than *Mobility*
- SFI: *Party* students are less engaged than *Mobility; Professional* students are more engaged than *Mobility*

Findings: Engagement

- First-generation women are more engaged in RIL and LS than non-first-gen women; however, they were less engaged in SFI
- Compared to the parental education gap of those on the *Mobility* pathway (interaction terms), we found:
  - First-gen women on *Professional* and *Balanced* pathways engaged more in RIL than non-first-gen students
  - First-gen women on *Party* pathway engaged more in SFI than non-first-gen students

Discussion

- Corroboration of Paying for the Party
- First-generation women on all pathways choose less lucrative careers
- *Party* students are least engaged, *Professional* students were more engaged
- Further research:
  - Women seeking graduate degrees had majors with lower earning potential
  - Minority students tend to major in fields with higher earning potential than White students
  - How do these trends compare among men?

Thank you.

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NSS National Survey of Student Engagement

Paper & presentation available at:
nsse.indiana.edu/html/recent_presentations.cfm