Part-Time Employment in High School Years: Educational, Social, and Psychological Effects

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(ABSTRACT)

This study focuses on the effects of part-time employment of high school students during the school year. While there are many benefits to be derived from part-time employment, many researchers have concluded that working intensely (over 20 hours per week) during the school year has deleterious academic, social, and psychological effects on high school students’ achievement (Bachman & Schulenberg, 1983; Mortimer & Finch, 1986; Steinberg & Dornbusch, 1991; Wright, Cullen, & Williams, 2002). This study alluded to the theory of social embeddedness (Granovetter, 1985) and the primary orientation model (Warren, 2002) which suggested that high intensity work reduces time to focus on and become involved in other activities. There is also application to the ecological theory of human development (Bronfenbrenner, 1986) which stated that social contexts such as school, family, and work should all have connections to provide significant influences on adolescents’ development.

In this study, it was hypothesized that intense work involvement would be related to less engagement in school and school activities. It was further hypothesized that intensity of work will be negatively related to family and peer relationships.

The data for the study were obtained from three school divisions in southwest Virginia. A sample of N=1,402 high school students in grades 9-12 was used. Students completed the Work, School, and Social Experiences of High School Students Survey, which was adapted for the study by the researcher. The data were analyzed using SPSS 14.0. The researcher employed descriptive and regression based analysis procedures to answer the research questions, and to determine the relationships among variables of interest.
The results indicated that intense part-time employment by high school students has negative
effects on grades, family relationships, and peer relationship and often contributes to increased
stress in the lives of these students. Part-time employment affects all aspects of students’ lives
and is far nuanced and needs continued attention and supervision from parents, educators, and
teachers.

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Graduate Student Assembly at Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University (Virginia
Tech).
DEDICATION

This dissertation is dedicated to my family, dear friends, the Ministry of Education and all the students of Trinidad and Tobago. I especially dedicate this research project to my late parents; Abraham and Marjorie Ransome, my aunt and uncle, Jean and Hezekiah Kennedy and their children, and my colleagues: Dr. Joan Pedro, Dr. Launcelot Brown, and Dr. Dennis Conrad.
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Feeling gratitude and not expressing it is like wrapping a present and not giving it. - William Arthur Ward

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# TABLE OF CONTENTS

Abstract ................................................................................................................................ii  
Dedication...........................................................................................................................iv  
Acknowledgements ..............................................................................................................v  
Table of Contents...........................................................................................................vii  
List of Tables ...................................................................................................................xi  

## CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION ..................................................................................1  
Adolescent Development and Values ..................................................................................2  
Adolescent Psychosocial Moratorium .................................................................................3  
Conceptual Framework ........................................................................................................4  

* The Nature of Adolescents’ Work .................................................................................4  
* Adolescent Work Related Theories and Models ..........................................................6  
  * Theory of Social Embeddedness .................................................................................6  
  * Ecological Theory .......................................................................................................6  
  * Developmental/Socialization Model ..........................................................................7  
  * Zero–sum Model .........................................................................................................7  
  * The Primary Orientation Model .................................................................................8  

The Problem.........................................................................................................................9  
Purpose and Significance of the Study ..............................................................................10  
Research Questions ...........................................................................................................10  
Hypotheses .........................................................................................................................11  
School Family and Community Connections ....................................................................11  
Community Information ....................................................................................................12  
  * Franklin County .........................................................................................................12  
  * Martinsville City .........................................................................................................13  
  * Salem City ..................................................................................................................14  
Delimitations .......................................................................................................................14  
Limitations ..........................................................................................................................15  
Definition of terms .............................................................................................................15  
Summary ............................................................................................................................16  

## CHAPTER TWO: REVIEW OF THE RELATED LITERATURE ..................................17  
Strategy for Selection of Articles.......................................................................................19  
Historical and Cultural Context of Work ...........................................................................19  
Work and School Engagement ...........................................................................................20  
Academic, Social Identity and Work Experiences .............................................................22  
Outcomes Related to Part-time Work .................................................................................23  

* Achievement related outcomes of Part-time Work ......................................................23  
* The Relationship of Work to Other School Outcomes ................................................26  
* The Relationship of Part-time Work Variables to Family and Social Effects .............28  
* Adolescent Spending in Rural and Urban Areas ..........................................................29  
* Work and Gender .........................................................................................................29
The Effects of Work Variables on Psycho-Social Development ........................................30
Some Critical Issues in the Research on Employment of Students and its Correlates ....31
Who Works and Why? ........................................................................................................32
Summary............................................................................................................................34

CHAPTER THREE: METHODOLOGY .................................................................35
Introduction........................................................................................................................35
Research Design................................................................................................................35
Instrumentation and Sampling .........................................................................................35
Survey Instrument.............................................................................................................35
Population and Sample ....................................................................................................36
Procedures ........................................................................................................................37
Pilot Studies.......................................................................................................................37
Survey Responses..............................................................................................................40
Generalization of the study...............................................................................................41
Analysis Procedures.........................................................................................................41
Summary............................................................................................................................43

CHAPTER FOUR: ANALYSIS AND RESULTS .................................................44
Introduction........................................................................................................................44
Research Question One ....................................................................................................44
Descriptive Statistics.......................................................................................................50
Work Intensity of Students..............................................................................................51
Work Intensity by Gender..............................................................................................51
Work Intensity by Age.....................................................................................................52
Work Intensity and Ethnicity..........................................................................................52
Work Intensity and School Program.............................................................................53
Work Intensity and Grade..............................................................................................53
Type of Work Done by Students....................................................................................54
Analysis of Work Type by Age ....................................................................................54
Analysis of Work Type by Grade..................................................................................55
Analysis of Work Type by Gender...............................................................................56
Analysis of Work Type by Ethnicity............................................................................56
Influences on Students’ Decision to Work and Student’s Spending Preferences ....56
Alternatives to Working .................................................................................................57
Coping in the Workplace.................................................................................................58
Scale Development..........................................................................................................60
Dependent Variables.......................................................................................................61
School Engagement Variables.......................................................................................63
Parent and Family Relationship Variables.....................................................................64
Peer Relationships...........................................................................................................65
Research Question Two.................................................................................................71
Part-time employment

T-tests and ANOVAs on study variables ................................................................. 71
ANOVA on Differences Among Workers Based on Study Variables .................. 72
Correlations among Variables ............................................................................ 77
Correlation of Work Intensity and Co- and Extracurricular Activities .............. 79
Correlation of Work Intensity and Classroom Behavior Variables .................. 79
Correlation of Work Intensity and Work Variables .......................................... 80
Research Question Three .................................................................................. 80
Correlation among Work Intensity and Peer Relationships ............................. 81
Regression Analyses ......................................................................................... 88
Effect of Work Intensity on Grades .................................................................... 88
Effect of Working on School Attendance Problems ............................................ 88
Effect of Working on Unpreparedness for Class .................................................. 89
Effect of working on Parent and Family Relationships ....................................... 91
Effect of Working on Peer Activity ..................................................................... 92
Effect of Working on Peer Interaction ............................................................... 93
Summary ........................................................................................................... 95

CHAPTER FIVE: SUMMARY, DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS ..................... 96
Introduction ......................................................................................................... 96
Summary of Research Findings .......................................................................... 96
The Current Nature of High School Students’ Employment .............................. 96
The Relationship of School Related Factors with Part-time Employment .......... 99
Differences among Workers and non-workers on Study Variables .................. 99
Differences among Working Students Based on Intensity of Work ................. 99
The Relationship of Work to School Engagement .............................................. 100
Relationship of Work to Other Work Related Variables .................................. 100
The Relationship of Part-time Employment with Family and Social Life .......... 101
The relationship of Work Intensity to Parent and Family Relationships and Peer
Relationships .................................................................................................... 101
The Effect of Work Intensity on Co-curricular Activities .................................. 101
Discussion and Implications ............................................................................. 102
School Engagement and High School Students ................................................. 103
Contributions of the Study ................................................................................ 104
Directions for Future Research ......................................................................... 105
Conclusion ......................................................................................................... 106

REFERENCES .................................................................................................. 108
APPENDIX A - Community Profiles and School Demographics ...................... 123
APPENDIX B - IRB Approval ........................................................................... 129
APPENDIX C - Survey Instrument .................................................................... 131
APPENDIX D - Letter to Parents or Guardians ................................................ 148
APPENDIX E - Students’ Assent Form .............................................................. 150
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Appendix</th>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>F</td>
<td>Letter to Superintendent</td>
<td>153</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>G</td>
<td>Letter to Principals</td>
<td>155</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>H</td>
<td>Letter to Teachers</td>
<td>157</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I</td>
<td>Survey Construct Guide &amp; Study Timeline</td>
<td>159</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>VITA</td>
<td>162</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
LIST OF TABLES

Chapter 4

Table 1  Variables Used in Descriptive Statistics ................................. 44
Table 2  Major Work Types by Age ....................................................... 55
Table 3  Major Work Types by Grade .................................................... 56
Table 4  Influences on Students’ Decisions to Work ................................. 57
Table 5  Results of Exploratory Factor Analysis ..................................... 61
Table 6  Constructs and Items for Variables ........................................... 67
Table 7  T-tests Between Workers and Non-workers on Study Variables ...... 75
Table 8  Mean Comparisons among Groups Based on Intensity of Work Hours .... 76
Table 9  Correlations between Work and School Engagement .................... 82
Table 10 Correlations between Work and Co and Extra Curricular Activities ... 83
Table 11 Correlations between Work and “Extrawk” .................................. 84
Table 12 Correlations between Work and Work Variables .......................... 85
Table 13 Correlations between Work and Parent/Family Relations ................. 86
Table 14 Correlations between Work and Peer Relations ............................ 87
Table 15 Hierarchical Regression for the Effect of Work on Grades ................. 89
Table 16 Hierarchical Regression for the Effect of Work on Unpreparedness for Class ............................................................. 90
Table 17 Hierarchical Regression for the Effect of Work on School Attendance Problems .......................................................... 90
Table 18 Hierarchical Regression for the Effect of Work on Preparedness for Class ................................................................. 91
Table 19 Hierarchical Regression for the Effect of Work on Parent & Family Relationships .............................................................. 92
Table 20 Hierarchical Regression for the Effect of Work on Peer Relationships .... 92
Table 21 Hierarchical Regression for the Effect of Work on Peer Activity ....... 93
Table 22 Hierarchical Regression for the Effect of Work on Intercollegiate Sports ................................................................. 93
Table 23 Hierarchical Regression for the Effect of Work on Intercollegiate Sports..... 94