Division D. Self Sufficiency

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This Division will address outcomes related to the development of self-sufficiency in youth. These outcomes include aspects of self-sufficiency within the context of work and family. Work self-sufficiency is composed of employment, disconnectedness with work, and a sense of work ethic. Family self-sufficiency is comprised of responsible childbearing and the responsible management of finances.

Since most of this division is still being completed, a summary across work and family self-sufficiency of the types of measures used and the effectiveness of programs is not possible.

For the subdomain of work self-sufficiency, the best measure for employment is a detailed questionnaire used in the Current Population Survey conducted by the Bureau of Labor Statistics and the Census Bureau. Although the measure is of high quality, it may be overly time-consuming for programs to administer. Additional measures are provided from national surveys of youth that also measures employment and earnings.

To date, the experimental evaluations of programs with the goal of improving employment outcomes for youth have not provided evidence that these outcomes can be changed.

Chapter 11. Work

Chapter 11, Part a. Work as an Element of Self-Sufficiency

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(1) What is Work Self-Sufficiency and why is it important?

For the purposes of this compendium, we define self-sufficiency as the capacity to support oneself (and any dependents) above the threshold of poverty. This threshold can be achieved through personal employment, income, personal savings, or attachment to a spouse or parent, and is a function of one's human capital, such as educational background and skills, and one's social capital (the social resources one can tap into, such as bank credit, social networks that leas to jobs or lucrative contracts, etc.).[a] Here we highlight the *work of the individual* as an element of self-sufficiency; human capital, skills, and assets are discussed in other parts of this compendium. Moreover, for our purposes self-sufficient work excludes work in illegal activities; and finally almost by definition, in discussing work self-sufficiency we will assume that earnings should ensure independence from welfare:[b]

> A family is dependent on welfare if more than 50 percent of its total income in a one-year period comes from AFDC/TANF, Food Stamps and/or SSI, and this welfare income is not associated with work activities.[1]

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[a] Education and job-related skills help make up one's *human capital* – that is to say, they help make up the resources that promote one's capacity to secure gainful employment. While we mention their relevance to self-sufficiency in this section, more detailed discussions of education and skills can be found in other sections of this compendium: Educational Attainment, Basic Cognitive skills, Data Collection and Analysis Skills, Oral Communication Skills, Good Study Skills, and Technology Skills.

[b] We adopt this threshold from previously published reports. We want to acknowledge however, that we do not view public assistance as deficient, per se. Even those in good jobs who are well off benefit from public funds that are not commonly recognized as 'welfare,' such as tax-free salary dollars allotted for child and health care. Nonetheless, most would agree that it is optimal not to be *dependent* on public assistance.

This particular definition, however, is most relevant to young adults 18 and older. Children and teens normally are dependent upon parental resources; and as we saw in Chapter 6 part a., for young people working too many hours may actually do more harm than good in building youth's capacity to be self-sufficient as adults. Below we will discuss them further.

Are we successfully preparing our youth for self-sufficiency in adulthood? Murnane and Levy argue that "during the past 20 years, the skills required to succeed in the economy have changed radically, but the skills taught in most schools have changed very little."[2] As a result, there is a growing mismatch between the skills required by high-wage employers and the skills learned through earning a high school diploma.

Young people need to learn the 'new basic skills' to secure a middle-class income. Murnane and Levy believe that these skills include 'hard-skills' such as problem solving and reading and math abilities, and 'soft skills' such as the ability to work in groups and make effective presentations, and the ability to use personal computers. They advocate for the integration of these skills into high school curricula, arguing that they are necessary for high school and college graduates alike.

People in our society widely believe that direct work experience is important for youth because it helps young people become personally, interpersonally and socially mature. Parents themselves hold that jobs will teach their adolescents to be dependable, punctual, and responsible,[3] and working adolescents also describe themselves in this manner to a greater degree than those who are not employed.[4] Indeed, the experience of employment in youth is common: recent estimates indicate that 57 percent of 14 year

olds and 64 percent of 15 year olds have worked in some way or another - though not in commercial jobs.[5]

Youth employment (or at least working during the senior year in high school) is associated with positive outcomes 6 to 9 years later, particularly for females working moderate hours.[6] The benefits include higher annual earnings, a greater likelihood of receiving fringe benefits, and higher status occupations.

While many support the notion that employment can be good for young people, there is far less agreement on what are appropriate conditions of employment for youth. As we discussed the evidence on the effects of working while young is mixed, with much controversy about how much employment is enough to benefit youth without jeopardizing their education and rounded development. Thus, the National Research Council reports that "the developmental consequences of employment for youth provides substantial evidence that working long hours is not good for them."[7] The NRC reports that long hours of work (defined as 20 or more hours) are associated with an increased likelihood that youngsters will engage in behaviors such as substance use, minor deviance, and diminished good health habits, increased alcohol use,[8] and spend less time with their families while earning lower school grades.[9] Conversely, employment that is limited in intensity (less than 20 hours during high school) is associated with higher post-secondary educational attainment,[10] and higher grades than both nonworkers and students who worked more hours per week.[11] Interestingly, young people who work (even those working long hours) do not necessarily do less homework; instead they spend less time watching television than youth who don't work.[12]

However, some studies contradict the conclusions of the National Research Council. A recent longitudinal study of a randomly selected group of 14-15 year olds does not find that work of high intensity has deleterious effects on academic achievement,[13] and recent studies using data from the National Longitudinal Survey of Youth show that long hours of work during high school (especially in the senior year), are associated with higher wages and steadier employment many years after high school.[14] However, these disparate findings may mean only that students who work during the tenth grade are different in important ways from those who do not work, and that those differences (such as differences in curriculum, eighth-grade standardized scores, grades, absences and type of work experience, etc.) exist prior to employment.[15] In fact, the research of Chaplin and Hannaway indicates that working during high school appears to be especially advantageous for youth who are at risk of not securing employment.[16]

In summary, it does appear that moderate employment benefits young people both in the short- and long-run. The value of higher intensity employment, however, is more questionable, and its effects may vary greatly for different groups of youth. Higher intensity employment may deter derail students from another path towards economic self-sufficiency—education. Research still needs to account for selection effects, and elucidate whether the effects of youth employment may dissipate at older ages.

Education affects the likelihood of being unemployed, the kind of job a person can gain, and one's income. Further, changes in the economy necessitate that education, training, and employment experiences be rethought and revised to teach young people the

‘new basic skills’ to secure what we might call the “gold standard” of economic self sufficiency - a middle-class income.

(2) The measurement of Work Self-Sufficiency

Many of the stronger studies referred to in this review use data from national surveys employing intensive measures of employment participation, including the National Longitudinal Surveys of Youth (http://www.bls.gov/nlshome.htm) and the Current Population Survey (CPS) (http://www.bls.census.gov/cps/bqestair.htm). The recommended measure of employment status for adults age 16 and older comes from the CPS, whose employment measures are high-quality. However, a notable disadvantage of the module is that it is time-consuming to administer. Therefore, we also recommend a simpler measure of employment status and hours worked.

The articles reviewed here suggest that special attention be paid to the number of hours that young people work, especially contrasting less than 20 hours and 20 hours or more per week. However, the U.S. Department of Labor states that this 20 hour 'cutoff' is somewhat arbitrary, and it seems wise to obtain more detailed information on the specific hours of work. The articles also suggest that attention be paid to the timing of employment within the year, e.g., whether the employment occurs during the school year or during the summer vacation.

The measure of work self-sufficiency in terms of wages that allow for independent living, is adopted from the recommended definition for welfare dependence/non-dependence set forth by the Department of Health and Human Services that we quoted at the beginning of this discussion. The questions for this measure are modified from the Job Opportunities and Basic Skills (JOBS) Training Program Survey.

The reader is also referred to other parts of this compendium for measures reflecting the 'new basic skills': Basic Cognitive skills, Data Collection and Analysis Skills, Oral Communication Skills, Good Study Skills, and Technology Skills. Also, the element on Educational Attainment can be referenced for measures of education.

Recommended Measures

Measure Name:	Employment Status Measure for Young Adults
Survey:	Current Population Survey (CPS)
Funder:	Bureau of Labor Statistics and Bureau of the Census
Date:	Survey administered nationally, on a monthly basis
Survey Description:	The CPS is the primary source of information on the labor force characteristics of the U.S. population. The sample is scientifically selected to represent the civilian noninstitutional population. Respondents are interviewed to obtain information about the employment status of each member of the household 15 years of age and older. However, published data focus on those ages 16 and over. The sample provides estimates for the nation as a whole and serves as part of model-based estimates for individual states and other geographic areas.
Where Available:	http://www.bls.census.gov/cps/bqestair.htm
Literature Reference:	None
Cost:	Free
Respondents:	The employment measures are appropriate for all adults' aged 16 and older, regardless of school or work status. This is the source of U.S. labor force statistics.
Subscales:	N/A
Psychometrics:	N/A **Benchmarking**: Participation rate of in the civilian labor force for youth aged 16-19. • Male – 52.9 • Female – 51.0
Advantage/Disadvantage:	**Advantages** • Data can be compared to this national study, which is the premier measure of the employment status in the United States • Questions asked about actual experience, as well as estimates of employment experience **Disadvantages** • The measures are high-quality, but may be overly time-consuming to administer.
Measure:	See website listed above

Recommended Measure:

Measure Name:	Employment Status Measure for Adolescents
Survey:	National Longitudinal Study of Adolescent Health (Add Health)
Funder:	Funded by the National Institute of Child Health and Human Development (NICHD) and 17 other federal agencies.
Date:	Survey Year, 1995, 1996, and 1997, continues to be conducted
Survey Description:	Add Health is a survey designed to measure a wide variety of health-related factors among adolescents in grades 7-12. It is an in-home survey. It has been designed to explore the causes of these behaviors, with an emphasis on the influence of social context. That is, Add Health postulates that families, friends, schools and communities play roles in the lives of adolescents that may encourage healthy choices of activities or may lead to unhealthy, self-destructive behaviors. Data to support or refute this theory are collected in surveys of students, parents, and school administrators.
Where Available:	Online, at: http://www.cpc.unc.edu/projects/addhealth/
Literature Reference:	Sieving, R.E., Beuhring, T., Resnick, M.D,, Bearinger, L.H., Shew, M., Ireland, M., and R. Blum. Development of Adolescent Self-Report Measures from the National Longitudinal Study of Adolescent Health. *Journal of Adolescent Health, 28*, 73-81.
Cost:	Free
Respondents:	The employment measures are appropriate for youth in the 7^{th} – 12^{th} grades
Subscales:	N/A
Psychometrics:	

Benchmarking:

Wave 2

- 58.86 % of respondents worked in the past 4 weeks
- Non-summer average 9.62 hours per week
- Non-summer average $88.44 per week
- Summer average 18.02 hours per week
- Summer average $136.96 per week

Advantage/Disadvantage:

Advantages

- Data can be compared to this national study, which will be re-administered in 2001
- Questions cover hours of work in both summer and academic months
- Questions are inclusive of younger adolescents, and not just those 16 or older (this is rare)
- Questions are simple, facilitating administration

Disadvantages

- Questions are not targeted towards school dropouts
- Questions do not differentiate between hours worked on weekdays and weekends, which may be important in the academic year
- Respondent asked to 'estimate' hours worked in a typical week, which is a less direct measure than asking how many hours s/he worked last week

Measure:

1. In the last four weeks, did you work—for pay—for anyone outside your home? This includes both regular jobs and things like baby-sitting or yard work.

A no
B yes
C refused
D don't know

2. How many hours do you spend working for pay in a typical non-summer week?

A 0 hours [skip to Q.6]
B range 1 to 110 hours
C refused [skip to Q.6]
D don't know *[skip to Q.6]*

3. How much money do you earn in a typical non-summer week from all your jobs combined?

A range $0 to $900
B refused
C legitimate skip [does not work during non-summer weeks]
D don't know

4. How many hours do you spend working for pay in a typical summer week?

A 0 hours [skip to Q.8]
B Range 1 to 168 hours
C refused [skip to Q.8]
D don't know *[skip to Q.8]*

5. How much money do you earn in a typical summer week from all your jobs combined?

A range $0 to $990
B refused
C legitimate skip [does not work during summer]
D don't know

Recommended Measures

Measure Name:	Earnings Measure for Young Adults
Survey:	Job Opportunities and Basic Skills Training Program
Funder:	U.S. Department of Health and Human Services U.S. Department of Education
Date:	Surveys administered at baseline with a two-year follow-up between 1991 and 1996 for 11 programs
Survey Description:	Evaluation of welfare to work strategies
Where Available:	Will be publicly available from the Dept. of Health and Human Services in the future
Literature Reference:	None
Cost:	Free
Respondents:	Welfare recipients
Subscales:	N/A
Psychometrics:	N/A
Advantage/Disadvantage:	**Advantages** • Questions asked of previous month, which makes the measure 'current' for young adults whose employment likely fluctuates • Relatively easy to administer • Income questions tap into welfare receipt **Disadvantages** • Questions specified for a narrow sample--welfare recipients • Sample of welfare recipients, therefore benchmarking is not available

Measure:

If [total of 4b/(total of 4a + total of 4b)] < 50%, then respondent is work self sufficient.

1. In (prior month) , did you have a job or do any work for pay?

2. A lot of people have additional jobs or do other work on the side to make ends meet. In (prior month), did you do anything like this on the side?

3. In (prior month) , did you receive any income or benefits from…?

(a) Food stamps
(b) TANF cash aid – not counting any child support money or child care payments received from the welfare department
(c) Child support—including any child support that you, your child [or other household member received directly from the father or through the welfare or child support agency
(d) Supplemental Security Income – that is, SSI or aid for the disabled
(e) General Assistance or General Relief, which is also known as welfare for individuals with no dependent children

For each income category with a "yes" on questions 1-2, Ask Question 4.

4a. How much did you earn in (prior month) in total before taxes and other deductions were taken out?

Was that before or after taxes?
For each income category with a "yes" on questions 3, Ask Question 4.

4b. How much did (you) receive in (prior month)?

If respondent answers "don't know" for amounts, probe with: Do you think it was closer to $100, $200, $400, $800, $1,000, or $1,500 or more?"

(3) Programs designed to influence Work Self-Sufficiency

Information on several evaluated programs is presented below. These programs had stated program goals of improving the employment outcomes of the young people who participate in them, and all evaluations employed an experimental design. While other youth outcomes may also have been evaluated, this table addresses the question of whether programs have successfully improved youth employment and earnings outcomes.

In general, the programs listed below do not improve participants' employment. The JobStart program (which was open to economically disadvantaged school dropouts with poor reading skills) did manage to improve employment rates for women living with their children at the time of random assignment. But in a number of local programs program participants were not more likely to be employed than control group members; moreover, in two instances program participants were *less likely* to be employed. The authors of the Career Beginnings evaluation attribute this finding to a greater percentage of program participants trading work for participation in higher education.

An exception to this pattern can be found in the Career Academies study. In this school-based program, participants were more likely to work and have high quality work-based learning experiences during high school, compared to a control group.

There do not seem to be clear patterns of program impacts for earnings. Thus, among out-of-school youth aged 16-21 in the Job Training and Partnership Act evaluation, mean earnings for program participants were significantly higher than the

control group 30 months after random assignment, but not before then. Among economically disadvantaged school dropouts in the JobStart program, on average participation did not significantly improve earnings. However, program participation did significantly improve the earnings of young men who had been arrested before program entry, and who had dropped out of school due to educational difficulties.

Finally, in the Job Corps, an intensive residential-based program for disadvantaged youth aged 16-24, program participants gained $18 in average weekly earnings by the end of a 30-month follow-up survey. Very young students, females with children, and older youth who did not possess a high school credential at enrollment all had the greatest gains from program participation.

Programs located in the neighborhoods where people live do not improve employment, with the exception of women living with their children who participated in JobStart. However, an intensive program conducted in schools, Career Academies, was successful in improving youth employment during high school. For earnings, as opposed to employment, findings are more optimistic, albeit mixed: some evaluations of programs located in residential neighborhoods demonstrated an earnings impact for some subgroups, while an intensive residential program was successful in improving youth earnings for the average program participant.

Experimentally Studied Programs		
Program*	**Activities**	**Impacts**
Career Academies (Youth in 8th or 9th grade at implementation, followed through the end of their 12th grade yr)	Structure of a school within a school Integrated academic and vocational curriculum Business partnerships	Compared to control group, program participants: were more likely to work, were more likely to have high quality work-based learning experiences during high school Earnings for year 4 after assignment were significant and positive for those young men who had been arrested before program entry, and in year 3 for young men who dropped out of school because of educational difficulties
Career Beginnings	Goals: Increase high school graduation rates; increase college attendance or technical training rates; increase employment after high school. Content: Provide activities with mentors and academic support. Also, provide a summer workforce training	**Increase**: college attendance; **Decrease**: unexcused absences; program participants worked significantly less than the control group during the year after high school (attributed to a greater percentage of program participants trading work for participation in higher education).

Experimentally Studied Programs		
Program*	**Activities**	**Impacts**
Summer Training & Education (STEP)	Goals: Prevent the problems resulting from "gap period" during summer when school is not in session. Approach: They implemented a highly organized program that combined paid summer work and instruction (the control group only received summer employment) in the hopes of helping disadvantaged youth retain current knowledge and increase it through remedial education classes. The 4 components: Remediation – 90 hours of group and individually-paced remedial reading and math during the summer. 2) Life Skills and Opportunities – stressed responsible social and sexual decisions; 3) Work experience; 4) School-year support	Short-term: **Increases**: math and reading test scores, knowledge of birth control Inconsistent results on likelihood of future contraceptive use (for sexually experienced group) **Decreases**: alcohol consumption; Long-term: **No impact**: employment, pregnancy rates (after year one); educational outcomes (high school dropout rate or likelihood to attend college), or self-reported drug use
Job Training Partnership Act (JTPA) (out of school youth aged 16 to 21 and economically disadvantaged adults 22 years and older at assignment)	Occupational Skills On-The-Job Training Job Search Assistance Basic Education Work Experience	**Increased**: employment and training services; female youth were more likely to obtain a high school or GED (by 11 percentage points) No Impact: short-term earnings; longer-term earnings; AFBC and food stamps; arrest rates (except male youth non-arrestees experienced a 10.5 percent increase in their arrest rates)

Experimentally Studied Programs		
Program*	**Activities**	**Impacts**
Job Corps (Disadvantaged youth aged 16-24 at assignment)	Academic Education Vocational Training Residential living Health care/education Counseling Job placement assistance	**Increase:** Earnings – in the last quarter of a 30-month follow-up, participants gained $18 avg. weekly earnings; hours spent in educational and training (by 1000 hrs.); receipt of GED and vocational certificate (35% vs. 17%); higher paying jobs (avg. hourly rate = $7.07 vs. $6.82); jobs with fringe benefits; employment rates by 2 percentage points in the long-term follow-up. **Decrease:** Arrest and convictions (27.7% vs. 23.3% were arrested during 30 mos. follow-up); time spent in jail; public assistance (by $300); poor health (18% vs. 15%); short term employment and earnings; receipt of high school diploma **No impact:** Family formation, tobacco, alcohol, illegal drug use; mobility; college attendance

Experimentally Studied Programs		
Program*	**Activities**	**Impacts**
JobStart (Economically disadvantaged school dropouts with poor reading skills, ages 17-21 at assignment)	Basic education Occupational Skills Training Training-related support services Job development and placement assistance	**Increase:** 33.1% vs. 16.5% (experimental vs. control) received a GED or high school degree at 2-year follow-up. 42% vs. 28.6% at 4-year follow-up. **Decrease:** arrests during 1st year of follow-up (10.1% vs. 12.6%); lower use of drugs in year 4 (4.1% vs. 5.8%) **No impact:** In the first 24 months of follow-up no impact on: • most public benefits • childbearing • fathering of children • provision of support • arrests In follow-up years 2, 3, and 4 there was no significant difference in employment; however, more youth in control group worked during the first year of follow-up. Earnings significantly below control group in years 1 and 2. No impact in years 3 and 4.

Experimentally Studied Programs		
Program*	**Activities**	**Impacts**
Children's Aid Society-Carrera	Goal: To reduce adolescent pregnancies and births, and improve life options. Content: Holistic long-term approach with a parallel family system (staff treating children as if their own) philosophy. Provides five activities and two services: • academic support • job club • family life and sex education • self expression through the arts • lifetime individual sports • medical care • mental health services	**Increase:** <u>Females</u> Preparation for and participation in employment; use of a very effective method of birth control at last intercourse (Depo Provera); sexuality and reproductive knowledge; health care usage, including greater likelihood of having Hepatitis B vaccines and having made a reproductive health care visit; computer use; making college visits. <u>Males</u> Preparation for and participation in employment; sexuality and reproductive knowledge; health care usage; computer use; making college visits **Decrease:** <u>Females</u> Number of pregnancies and births <u>Males</u> Initiation of marijuana use **No impact:** Measures of violence and delinquency

*Programs are located in residential neighborhoods, with the exception of Career Academies, a school-based program, and Job Corps, a residential program

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