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## STUDENT DISENGAGEMENT IN UNIVERSITIES: AN EVALUATION OF EXPLANATIONS USING HISTORICAL AND COMPARATIVE DATA, ALONG WITH INDIVIDUAL-LEVEL ANALYSES

The results of various studies suggest that the study time necessary to earn a BA has declined over the past few decades to the point where full-time university students need only treat their studies as a part-time commitment, and they can still obtain high grades and graduate. Data obtained and analysed by the author from the National Survey on Student Engagement (NSSE) show that on average Canadian and American students now spend 12-13 hours in out-of-class study and assignment completion, regardless of institutional type or size. With an additional (maximum) 15 hours of in-class time, the average time spent on 'higher education' is less than 30 hours per week, not the 40 hours historically associated with a full-time commitment. These figures correspond with results from several European countries, most notably the UK, but other European countries still make greater study-time demands of their university students. The various explanations for the decline in student engagement are evaluated using the (above) NSSE data set, and other secondary analyses. It is concluded that the decline in student engagement is explainable in part in terms of the spread of mass higher education in a neoliberal era, whereby universities take on the characteristics of corporations that market themselves as vendors of credentials to student consumers, whose 'satisfaction' trumps educational standards. The further negative consequences of this trend are explored.

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