Adolescence

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Chapter 7

Adolescents and schooling: Differences by race, ethnicity, and immigrant status

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There is little debate that educational experiences and outcomes during adolescence lay the foundation for one's social, economic, and psychological well-being during adulthood (Dornbusch, 1989). For adolescents, school integration, strong friendships, high levels of self-esteem, positive educational outcomes, and high aspirations are independently associated with future socioeconomic (SES) outcomes, and researchers also find these domains to be inextricably linked to each other. Adolescents who have friends at school, for example, are more likely to feel they belong at school, and they earn higher test scores and grades (Corsaro & Eder, 1990; Ryan, 2000, 2001).

However, much of what social scientists know about the educational experiences of adolescents is based on studies of White native-born youth. Mostly because of data limitations, it is not entirely clear how school experiences of racial, ethnic, and immigrant adolescents may differ from those experiences of White native-born youth. This is particularly important because minorities, as well as immigrants and children of immigrants, comprise an increasingly large demographic in the United States. Currently, more than one-third of the school-age population in the United States is African American, Hispanic, or Asian American. Further, the Census Bureau estimates that the percentage of school-aged children in

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the United States who are racial and ethnic minorities will grow to 62% by 2050 (U.S. Census Bureau, 2008). In addition, nationally, almost one in four children is an immigrant or child of an immigrant (O'Hare, 2004). In diverse cities such as New York, immigrant children already account for almost half of the student body (Suarez-Orozco & Suarez-Orozco, 2001). Immigrant status is especially important for minorities, as approximately 60% of Hispanic and 90% of Asian American youth have at least one immigrant parent. Among immigrant adolescents, compared with adolescents from native-born families, structural opportunities and cultural preferences may interact to produce very different experiences and outcomes.

This chapter presents a broad overview of sociological and psychological research on the educational experiences of adolescents and how these experiences are related to the transition to adulthood, a distinct period in the life course where one becomes emotionally and, often, financially independent from one's family of origin (Arnett, 2000). We begin by reviewing how parental SES translates into differences in educational opportunities for youth. In particular, we examine how differences in parental SES and race may work together to affect adolescents' educational opportunities. We then move to explore the direct influence of schools in shaping educational opportunities for adolescents. Next, we examine both the academic and social experiences of youth in school and specifically examine peer relations, students' sense of belonging at school, self-esteem, self-concept, and, importantly, academic achievement. With respect to academic performance, we review the literature on variation in educational aspirations, educational achievement in terms of test scores and grades, and, finally, the odds of transitioning to postsecondary education. Throughout the chapter, we closely examine how these experiences may vary by race, ethnicity, and foreign-born status. Some of our discussion is based on newer empirical work, although much of the time, we rely on theoretical hypotheses simply because these populations are still relatively understudied.

7.1. DEFINITIONS OF RACE, ETHNICITY, AND IMMIGRANT STATUS

Throughout this chapter, we refer mainly to Whites, African Americans (or Blacks), Hispanics, and Asian Americans. Although race and ethnicity are complex and overlapping concepts, brevity requires that we rely on their normative definitions in social science research. It is important to note that the U.S. Census does not consider Hispanics to comprise a separate racial group; Hispanics can be of any race (White, Black, Asian, or

other race). Hence, when we refer to Whites, we are actually referring to non-Hispanic Whites. Likewise, African Americans, or Blacks, refer to non-Hispanic African Americans or Blacks, and Asian Americans refer to non-Hispanic Asians.

In addition, the panethnic categories of White, African American, Hispanic, and Asian American encompass a wide variety of ethnic groups. Because Whites are predominately native-born and ethnic differences within this broad category have mostly dissipated (and are usually not measured), ethnic demarcations are not noted (Alba, 1990). African Americans are predominately (94%) native-born. The remaining 6% of the African American population, who are foreign-born, largely come to the United States from the Caribbean (60% of foreign-born African Americans) and Africa (24% of foreign-born African Americans) (U.S. Census Bureau, 2005). Due to the small sizes of immigrant populations, many large-scale studies do not differentiate by ethnicity or national origin of African Americans.

As noted earlier, though Hispanics can be of any race, they are also composed of many diverse national-origin and ethnic groups. Most typically, they include Mexicans, Puerto Ricans, Cubans, Dominicans, Central Americans (e.g., Costa Rican, Guatemalan, Honduran), South Americans (e.g., Argentinean, Bolivian, Colombian), Spaniards, and other Hispanics (U.S. Census Bureau, 2004a,b). Mexicans are by far the largest Hispanic ethnic group, accounting for 60% of Hispanics in 2000. In comparison, about 10% of Hispanics are Puerto Rican, 4% are Cubans, 5% are Central Americans, 4% are South Americans, 2% are Dominicans, and 16% are other Hispanics (U.S. Census Bureau, 2004b, Figure 1).

Asian Americans are an even more complex population. Approximately 4.2% of the U.S. population (11.9 million people) reported that they were Asian in the 2000 Census. This figure includes those who chose more than one racial group. The 11 largest Asian groups are Chinese (23.8%), Filipino (18.3%), Asian Indian (16.2%), Vietnamese (10.9%), Korean (10.5%), Japanese (7.8%), Cambodian (1.8%), Hmong (1.7%), Laotian (1.6%), Pakistani (1.5%), and Thai (1.1%). The remaining groups (Malaysian, Burmese, etc.) comprise 4.7% of the Asian population (U.S. Census Bureau, 2004a, Figure 1). Often, Southeast Asians are considered together, as they share the experience of entry to the United States as refugees and migrated to the United States primarily after the fall of Saigon in 1975.

Immigrants are individuals who were born outside of the United States and migrated to the United States. Because this chapter examines youth, we often use the phrase immigrant youth to refer to individuals who have

immigrant parents regardless of whether they themselves were born in the United States. Although some of these youth are native-born and others are foreign-born, household dynamics and parent-child interactions are driven by parental characteristics (see Zhou, 1997). Individuals who are foreign-born and migrate to the United States are known as first-generation immigrants, their native-born children are considered second-generation immigrants, and so forth. Some researchers use the term 1.5 generation for those who are foreign-born but migrated as children. Following this terminology, some scholars use 1.75 generation for those who migrated as very young children, or 1.25 generation for those who migrated near the end of adolescence.

7.2. RACE, ETHNIC, AND IMMIGRANT DIFFERENCES IN PARENTAL BACKGROUND

Although popular portrayals of educational experiences tend to focus on how differences in school quality produce unequal opportunities for children, children come from vastly different parental backgrounds. Recent research, for example, shows that children enter the school system with extremely different social and material resources (Farkas, 2003; Lee & Burkam, 2002). Their parents' SES—which often includes by educational attainment, income, occupational prestige, and wealth—lays the groundwork for future patterns of educational stratification. What further complicates matters is that race, ethnicity, and immigrant status are correlated with SES. Thus, part of the race differences in educational outcomes can be accounted for by SES differences. Still, in most cases, differences in SES do not completely account for racial disparities in educational outcomes (Cosa & Alexander, 2007).

From sociological research, we know that there is probably no greater single predictor of one's future education and career trajectories than parental SES (Campbell, 1983; Hallinan, 1988; Kao & Thompson, 2003; Sewell, Haller, & Portes, 1969; Sewell & Shah, 1968). Parental SES is associated with educational differences starting in early childhood, and these early differences generally increase over time (Duncan, Yeung, Brooks-Gunn, & Smith, 1998; Entwisle, Alexander, & Olson, 1997; Lee & Burkam, 2002). By adolescence, youth with highly educated parents have schooling experiences that are in alarming contrast to their counterparts with less educated parents. Children from more advantaged backgrounds not only have the opportunity to attend schools with more resources, but also their parents have greater knowledge about how to successfully navigate their children through the schooling process. High-SES youth are also more likely to have friends who stay in school and plan to attend college.

When thinking about racial, ethnic, and immigrant minority children, it is crucial to keep in mind that these demographic factors are strongly correlated with SES. In social science research, differences attributable to social class are often described as *structural*. In other words, these are differences that result from class stratification in U.S. society and exist outside of individuals and families. African American, Hispanic, and Asian American parents have different educational profiles relative to their White native-born counterparts. On average, Asian American parents have higher educational attainment than White parents, and African American and Hispanic parents have lower educational attainment. In 1990, among individuals aged 25 and older, 37% of Asian Americans, 22% of Whites, 11% of Blacks, and 9% of Hispanics had a Bachelor's degree or higher (National Center for Education Statistics, 1997). According to the 2000 Census, the percentage of individuals aged 25 and older who had a Bachelor's degree or higher was 44% for Asians, 26% for Whites, 14% for Blacks, and 10% for Hispanics (U.S. Census Bureau, 2004c).[1] Thus, the educational differences among parents account for some of the racial and ethnic disparities in educational outcomes of youth.

For Hispanics and Asian Americans, broad panethnic categorizations mask the great ethnic diversity in parental SES. For instance, approximately 70% of Indians, 67% of Taiwanese, more than 40% of Chinese, and 36% of Filipino immigrants aged 25 and above had a college degree in 2000 (Portes & Rumbaut, 2006). However, only 10% of Cambodian and 8% of Laotian foreign-born over the age of 25 had at least a college degree. Still, these percentages far surpass those of Mexican immigrants, of whom only 4% had at least a college degree (Portes & Rumbaut, 2006). Approximately 33% of Brazilian, 22% of Colombian, and 19% of Cuban immigrants aged 25 and older had at least a Bachelor's degree.

Because of the stark variation in parental educational attainment by race, ethnicity, and immigrant status, youth begin schooling with very different levels of parental SES and social and cultural capital. Moreover, these class differences somewhat overlap with their race and ethnic backgrounds. Overall, Asian American youth are advantaged because their parents are largely foreign-born, and those Asians who are able to immigrate are disproportionately from more advantaged backgrounds.

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[1]Note that the numbers are not directly comparable as individuals were allowed to choose more than one race in the 2000 Census. The numbers we report above are for single-race individuals. Twenty percent of multiracials aged 25 and over had at least a Bachelor's degree.

The barriers to entry to the United States are high for immigrants, and this is especially true of those coming from countries that are geographically distant from the United States. Immigration laws favor skilled workers. In addition, the financial costs associated with immigration to the United States from outside North America are extremely high. In contrast, because most Mexicans migrate to work in agricultural or other low-skilled jobs, these parents are much less likely to have high levels of education.

It is clear that these differences may account for race and ethnic disparities in educational outcomes (i.e., structural explanations), but some researchers have also argued that *cultural* preferences may be important predictors of these disparities. The cultural explanation is most often used to explain the higher educational performance of Asian Americans, who are often seen as the model minority (Kao, 1995; Lee, 1996). For instance, Caplan, Choy, and Whitmore's (1997) study of Vietnamese youth found that because older children were expected to tutor their younger siblings, this reinforced the importance of learning and helped them review basic skills. Zhou and Bankston (1998), in their study of Vietnamese youth in New Orleans, argued that youth whose cultural tastes were more similar to their parents were less likely to be delinquent. Similarly, Valenzuela and Dornbusch (1994) reported that youth who valued close ties to their family also had higher grades in school. And, in a study of nearly 400 recently arrived children of immigrants, Suarez-Orozco and Suarez-Orozco (2001) found that immigrant children face a distinct set of challenges in adapting to life in the United States. These children often had to deal with leaving family members behind in their home country, learning a new language, and the tension inherent in adapting to a new culture more quickly than their parents.

In some ways, the arguments supporting the positive influences of proximity to parents' cultural values are in direct contrast and opposition to notions of the *culture of poverty* (Lewis, 1966). The phrase *culture of poverty* was coined by Oscar Lewis in *Five Families: Mexican Case Studies in the Culture of Poverty* (1959) and *La Vida: A Puerto Rican Family in the Culture of Poverty* (1966). In essence, Lewis argued that, along with poverty over many generations, comes a pathology of values that work to keep individuals in poverty. Among other things, the culture of poverty includes feelings of helplessness and the inability to defer gratification. In other words, to bring individuals out of poverty, one must not only provide them with financial resources but also reorient their values. Anthropologist John Ogbu later noted that some minorities were better equipped for attaining socioeconomic success due to the paths through which they

migrated to the United States (Ogbu, 1991). He differentiated between *voluntary* (sometimes he called them immigrant) minorities and *involuntary* minorities, those who did not choose to come to the United States. Most notably, his description of involuntary minorities suited his early studies of African American youth in school (Ogbu, 1978), while the notion of immigrant minorities helped to explain the relative educational success of Asian Americans. He argued that immigrant and involuntary minorities differ in five ways: (1) frame or reference for evaluating their status and future possibilities; (2) folk theory of how to attain socioeconomic mobility; (3) sense of collective identity; (4) cultural frame for judging their own behavior and affirming their group membership; and (5) the extent to which, as members of their group, they can trust the dominant groups and institutions (Ogbu, 1991). Simply put, involuntary minorities compare themselves to the dominant group (Whites), and immigrants have lower expectations, for their own SES attainment because they compare themselves to people in their country of origin. Moreover, immigrant minorities are more likely to believe that any discrimination they face stems from their immigrant status (lack of English proficiency, less knowledge of U.S. cultural norms, etc.) rather than their racial status. Hence, they feel their children will overcome these obstacles and be treated fairly (Kao & Tienda, 1995). Because immigrant minorities believe in the American Dream, they are more likely to believe that academic achievement leads to socioeconomic mobility; moreover, they would not equate their own success to somehow becoming a sell-out or as a sign of disloyalty to their group. Ogbu argued that involuntary minorities (i.e., Blacks) did not believe that mainstream institutions would treat them fairly; thus, Black students perceive fewer occupational returns to school success. Moreover, he argued elsewhere that *acting Black* was associated with not doing well in school because it was defined in opposition to *acting White* (Fordham & Ogbu, 1986). Black students therefore resist traditional markers of academic success and are sanctioned by their peers if they experience such success. In other words, being Black is an *oppositional identity* to being White.

Although theoretically appealing to some researchers, other scholars have argued against Ogbu's thesis, with many finding no empirical evidence for his hypotheses (Ainsworth-Darnell & Downey, 1998; Carter, 2005; Cook & Ludwig, 1998; Tyson, Darity, & Castellino, 2005). Ainsworth-Darnell and Downey (1998), for example, examined these hypotheses with a longitudinal and nationally representative sample of adolescents. They found that Black students were actually more optimistic about their career prospects and held more positive views of school than White students. They

also discovered that these attitudes and beliefs cannot explain racial differences in school performance. Thus, the authors found no support for the idea that Black students achieve at lower levels than White students because of a resistant cultural orientation. Similarly, Tyson et al. (2005) found no evidence of oppositional culture among Black high school students in North Carolina; instead, these students generally embraced academic achievement, although the school context played an important role in students' attitudes toward schooling. They found that Black oppositional culture only exists when there are distinct class differences between Black and White students within a single school and that, in other contexts, economically disadvantaged White youth can also experience an oppositional culture. Moreover, others criticize Ogbu's argument as a variant of theories that blame the victims for their outcomes (Gould, 2002).

Alternatively, individuals can internalize perceived stereotypes of their own group. Research from psychologist Claude Steele and his colleagues suggests that test subjects perform less well when they are given negative feedback about individual performance that is consistent with stereotypes (Steele, 1997; Steele & Aronson, 1995). In other words, if one is a member of a group that is stereotyped to be less skilled in a particular activity, with the right prompt, that individual will also score lower on a test of that activity. Stereotype threat might be particularly detrimental to the outcomes of high-achieving Black youth, as those who strongly identify with achievement and have invested in schooling may be more likely to be influenced by stereotypical beliefs about themselves (Steele & Aronson, 1998).

7.3. THE ROLE OF PARENTS IN AFFECTING EDUCATIONAL TRAJECTORIES

Although popular literature portrays adolescence as a time when youth move away from their parents, there is considerable evidence that parents play a crucial role during this period (Dornbusch, 1989; Giordano, 2003; Vandell, 2000). Furthermore, though adolescence is typically associated with rebelliousness (think of the films *Rebel Without a Cause* or *American Graffiti*, which today has spawned an entire genre of teen films, or even prominent sociologist James Coleman's landmark study in *The Adolescent Society*, 1961), research consistently finds that peers and parents jointly influence students and, that more often than not, peers reinforce a similar set of norms as parents (Brown, 1990; Dornbusch, 1989). Space limitations prevent us from a thorough discussion of the consequences of parenting for educational outcomes, but it is important to highlight some of this

literature. For the purposes of this chapter, we summarize research on parenting styles and parent-school interactions.

Bronfenbrenner (1979) was an early advocate of understanding the process of adolescent development in context, encouraging both psychologists and sociologists to think jointly about this key period of the life course. His conceptual model emphasized not only interpersonal relationships but also the role of families and schools in influencing adolescent development (Bronfenbrenner, 1979; Dornbusch, 1989). The period in which he worked also marked the movement away from the emphasis on the biological changes that come with adolescence but instead toward the pathways through which societal norms and the expectations of others influence youth (Bronfenbrenner & Morris, 1998).

Sociologists emphasize the importance of the home environment (which we address below), but also the influence of historical circumstances. The concepts of age, cohort, and period that are major underpinnings of demographic research argue for the interaction between age and historical period (i.e., cohort effects). For example, teenagers born in the 1950s and the 1990s may share some similar experiences due to their age (age effects), but they are situated in very different historical circumstances (period effects); together, these age and period influences form cohort effects. Thus, social pathways are age-graded; timing of events, beginning early in one's development, have lasting implications on subsequent development (Elder, Johnson, & Crosnoe, 2003). In the developmental literature, this is more commonly known as the *life course* perspective. This approach is widely credited to Elder's landmark study of the children born during the Great Depression (Elder, 1974). Another guiding principle of life course theory is the concept of linked lives, the idea that individuals live their lives interdependently of one another. Thus, in accordance with life course theory, parents' attitudes and behaviors influence children's outcomes from early childhood through adulthood.

Researchers in the 1970s also emphasized that though adolescence marked a period during which friends take a more central position in the lives of youth, parents continue to have a strong influence on youth. Studies beginning in the late 1960s found that *authoritative* parenting (where parents and children share in decision-making processes) led to more positive child outcomes (such as grades) than either *permissive* (where children have considerable decision-making power) or *authoritarian* (where parents unequivocally make decisions for their children) decision-making styles (Dornbusch, 1989; Kao & Thompson, 2003). Some researchers maintain that these styles of decision making, correlated with parental

social class, are much more important than parental SES in determining children's educational outcomes. This perspective is exemplified by Clark's (1983) landmark study of poor African American children who were successful despite the odds against them. He found that these parents had warm and close relationships with their children, and consistently monitored them. In other words, social class may be an important predictor of educational outcomes, but disadvantages can be overcome through parenting behavior. These arguments are convincing because though social class accounts for some disparities in educational outcomes, it by no means determines one's life chances.

Sociologists have always maintained that parents are crucial determinants of children's educational and social psychological outcomes. Beginning with the Wisconsin School, sociologists emphasized the transmission of class advantage from parents to children in a model also known as *status attainment*. Sewell and his colleagues (e.g., see Campbell, 1983; Sewell, Haller, & Portes, 1969; Sewell & Shah, 1968) argued that parents' educational attainment leads to their occupational status and these jointly affect children's educational aspirations, educational attainment, and future occupational status. Part of the process focused on modeling behavior, but they also argued for the social psychological benefits of college plans that stem from parental SES.

Though there is no doubt that educational aspirations in high school are highly correlated with later educational attainment, it is not clear whether aspirations actually represent the level of motivation children have toward future outcomes or if they simply reflect future plans. Recent empirical evidence further suggests that the vast majority of high school sophomores expect to graduate from college. In fact, only 8% of high school sophomores expected to receive a high school diploma or less. On the other hand, 72% of students expected to receive a Bachelor's degree or higher (36% of students reported expecting to graduate from a 4-year college program, 20% expected to receive a Master's degree, and 16% expected to receive an advanced or doctoral degree such as a Ph.D. or an M.D.). Of course, it is important to note that many youth drop out before their sophomore year and thus are not represented in these reports on educational expectations. Though differences in expectations vary slightly among race and class lines, the majority of students report high expectations (NCES, 2002).

However, we know that even among adults aged 25-29 in 2005, only 28% attained at least a Bachelor's degree (NCES, 2007a). The discrepancy between aspirations and attainment suggests that some youth have higher expectations than they achieve. The discrepancy also suggests that some

youth may answer questions about educational aspirations with socially desirable responses. According to the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES), in 2004, 60.3% of Asians, 41.7% of Whites, 31.8% of Blacks, and 24.7% of Hispanics aged 18-24 were enrolled in colleges and universities (NCES, 2007a). Hence, it is likely that there is substantial variation in the meaning of aspirations among respondents.

Sociologists also emphasize other pathways through which parents transmit their class advantages to their children. For example, Baker and Stevenson (1986) found that highly educated mothers, compared to their counterparts with less education, were more likely to manage their high school children's academic careers. Additionally, in her study of young children, Lareau (2000) argued that mothers with more education are more likely to feel empowered to challenge their children's teachers and to more actively engage in educational activities at school. In another study, Lareau found the relationship between upper middle-class parents and their children's schools to be one of *interconnectedness*, where parents see themselves as responsible for their children's education. The relationship between working-class parents and their children's schools, on the other hand, is one of *separateness*, where the parents are more inclined to put responsibility of their children's education in the hands of the schools. Thus, socioeconomic advantage provides different cultural resources, which include symbolic access to the world of educated people, social status, confidence, income and other material resources, work relationships that mirror teachers' preferred school-family relations, and social networks that provide more access to educators and general information about schooling (Lareau, 2003).

Additionally, research finds that parents' SES is positively associated with parental involvement in school. Parental involvement in school is usually measured, among other things, by participation in Parent-Teacher Organizations, parental attendance at school events, and parental conversations with teachers. Parents with higher income and greater educational attainment are more involved than parents with lower SES (Baker & Stevenson, 1986; Crosnoe, 2001; Desimone, 1999; Hoover-Dempsey, Bassler, & Brissie, 1987; Lareau, 2000; for contradictory findings, see Sui-Chi & Willms, 1996). Class differences in parental involvement are particularly important, as parental involvement is linked to academic success across the life course (Domina, 2005; Englund, Luckner, Whaley, & Egeland, 2004; Falbo, Lein, & Amador, 2001; Hoover-Dempsey & Sandler, 1995; Jeynes, 2007; Muller, 1993; Sui-Chi & Willms, 1996). Elsewhere, we found that minority immigrant parents face particular challenges (such as a lack of English language proficiency or the inability to take time off from work) in getting involved with their children's schools (Turney & Kao, 2009a).

It is important to note that many examinations of parental influence are based on predominately White samples or predominantly White and African American samples. We know much less about how parents influence Asian, Hispanic, and immigrant children, though the research that does exist suggests that parent-child interactions may be different in these households. For instance, Dornbusch and his colleagues (Dornbusch, Ritter, Leiderman, Roberts, & Fraleigh, 1987; Steinberg, Lamborn, Dornbusch, & Darling, 1992) and Kao (1999) found that for Asian youth, *authoritarian* parenting style is associated with better educational outcomes than either *authoritative* or *permissive* styles; this is in direct contrast to the findings for White children.

Similarly, there are race and immigrant status differences in parental involvement, and some evidence that the consequences of this involvement vary by race and immigrant group (McNeal, 1999). For example, Black and Hispanic parents are more likely to be involved with Parent-Teacher Organizations than White parents, and Asian parents are less likely to be involved (Muller & Kerbow, 1993). More recent research, however, found that race differences in parental involvement are mediated by students' academic performance (Crosnoe, 2001). According to Crosnoe (2001), White parents are more likely to reduce their involvement as their children experience better outcomes. Black parents with children in the remedial track have higher participation rates than their White counterparts; however, they are more likely to reduce their level of participation if their children persistently achieve at lower levels. Additionally, immigrant parents may be less involved in their children's elementary and high school experiences (Kao, 2004; Nord & Griffin, 1999), perhaps because they face unique barriers, such as language barriers, to such involvement (Turney & Kao, 2009a). Immigrant families also face additional challenges, as parents sometimes have difficulty keeping up with their children, who have assimilated more quickly to American culture. Additionally, language barriers often force these parents to be dependent on their children, which affects parental authority, and immigrant families often lack social support from extended kin members (Tse, 1996; Turney & Kao, 2009b; Zhou, 1997).

7.4. SCHOOL EXPERIENCES

7.4.1. School segregation and other structural differences

In addition to the home environment, youth spend a considerable amount of time at school. However, schools vary not only in their organizational styles, but also in terms of the composition of their student bodies.

Because the vast majority of public schools in the United States are linked to residential neighborhoods and because neighborhoods tend to be segregated by race and class, schools mirror and sometimes further intensify neighborhood segregation (Charles, 2003; Massey & Denton, 1993). Holding their parents' income constant, White children are more likely to grow up in affluent neighborhoods with substantial resources and good schools, and Black and Hispanic children are likely to grow up in socioeconomically disadvantaged neighborhoods and attend overcrowded schools with limited and strained resources (Charles, 2003). Although racial segregation among Blacks declined slightly from 1980 to 2000, segregation among Hispanics and Asians increased during this time (Charles, 2003). Neighborhoods, and the resources associated with place of residence, may play a crucial role in both child and adolescent development. Having affluent neighbors, as opposed to disadvantaged neighbors, is strongly related to developmental outcomes. Although both White and Black youth benefit from affluent neighbors, White adolescents tend to benefit more than their Black adolescent counterparts. Specifically, the positive effect of neighborhood SES on a youth's odds of dropping out of high school only persists for White youth and not for Black youth (Brooks-Gunn, Duncan, Klebanov, & Sealand, 1993). However, methodological pitfalls characterize much research on neighborhood effects. Most importantly, it is difficult to estimate the causal effect of neighborhood characteristics on individual outcomes as families have some degree of choice in choosing a neighborhood and how long to stay there (Duncan & Raudenbush, 1999; Sampson, Morenoff, & Gannon-Rowley, 2002).

According to NCES, in 2004, 65% of Whites attended schools that were less than 25% minority, compared to 9% of Blacks, 8% of Hispanics, and 20% of Asians. On the other end of the spectrum, 3% of Whites, 52% of Blacks, 58% of Hispanics, and 34% of Asians attended schools that were at least 75% minority (NCES, 2007a). In addition, minority children are more likely to attend schools where many of their peers live in poverty. For instance, in 2005, 5% of Whites, 48% of Blacks, 49% of Hispanics, and 16% of Asians attended school where more than 75% of children received free lunch (NCES, 2007a).

Approximately 4% of all public schools are designated as charter schools, schools that parents can choose and that are usually governed by a group or organization under a charter or contract from the state. They are exempt from some local and state regulations, although they are regularly reviewed and must meet basic accountability standards (NCES, 2007c). Charter schools, compared to their public school counterparts, are more likely to enroll minority children. Although charter schools have been

touted by some as a way to improve public schools, their effects on academic performance are somewhat mixed. The average math and reading test scores of fourth graders in charter and conventional public schools in 2003, for example, were no different from one another. However, given that minority children, on average, have lower test scores, this might be seen as evidence that charter schools are more effective. It is nevertheless difficult to disentangle the effects of charter schools versus the effects of selection into charter schools, as parents who choose to place their children in charter schools are likely to be different from parents of children in regular public schools (Goldhaber, 1999).

Studies also suggest that the opportunities and experiences of students vastly differ between public and private schools. Coleman and his colleagues (Coleman & Hoffer, 1987; Hallinan, 1988), for example, found that students in private schools had higher educational gains in test scores compared with their counterparts in public schools. Moreover, empirical evidence suggests that religious and secular private schools may also offer different educational experiences in addition to differences that stem from socioeconomic disparities. Hallinan, in her 1988 review, calls this the *value climate* perspective (Hallinan, 1988). For example, Bryk, Lee, and Holland (1993) argued that Catholic schools emphasize values of community and personal responsibility as well as a general curriculum for all students, all of which lead to higher test scores. They argued that this orientation is particularly important because Catholic schools increasingly serve a minority and lower-SES student population, yet students who attend these schools maintain high academic achievement.

Prep schools and boarding schools may also offer unique experiences for students. Cookson and Persell (1985), in their study of elite preparatory schools, argued that these schools teach and reinforce values that maintain the elite status of their students. Boarding schools, in particular, serve as total institutions so that they can better regulate norms and prevent contact with lower socioeconomic groups. These authors argued that schools teach children that life is difficult and that winning is essential for survival. Prep schools regulate the daily schedules of their students and thus help to prepare youth for their future membership in the power elite. Prep schools also give all students a common identity and outlook. Of course, they also work to build friendship networks that are essential as individuals enter the workforce.

7.4.2. **Peer relations at school**

Psychologists and sociologists have also examined friendships and peer relationships at school. Adolescents, like adults, have friends who are similar in terms of race, ethnicity, class, and interests (Clark & Ayers, 1992; Crosnoe,

2001; Giordano, 2003; McPherson, Smith-Lovin, & Cool, 2001). Part of the sorting that comes with friendship formation is a result of choice, but what is often overlooked is how the opportunity to interact with different groups may influence who becomes friends with whom (Joyner & Kao, 2000). Beginning with Coleman's (1961) study, earlier work by sociologists focused on the negative influence of peers. These studies, for example, find that youth whose friends use illegal drugs are also more likely to use drugs themselves (Cook, Deng, & Morgano, 2007; Kandel, 1978). Additionally, friends' delinquency is an important predictor of one's own delinquency (Haynie, 2001; Kandel, 1978, 1980). However, psychologists argue for the positive influences of peers and friendships. At a most fundamental level, youth who are able to forge meaningful and deep relationships are better equipped to do so later in life (Giordano, 2003). Early relationships can serve as a testing ground for learning how to interact with others. Moreover, friends can provide important psychological support to youth.

Students' educational aspirations and orientations toward schooling are also influenced by peers (Duncan, Haller, & Portes, 1968; Kandel, 1978). Specifically, Ryan (2001) found that peers are associated with students' liking and enjoyment of school and their achievement over the school year. However, peers do not influence students' beliefs about the importance of school or their expectations for academic success (Ryan, 2001). Additionally, others have found that adolescents' peers play an important role in their course selection during high school (Crosnoe, Riegle-Crumb, Frank, Field, & Muller, 2008). It is clear that friends and peers can provide either positive or negative influences on youth and it is likely that the influence of friends is mostly intensely felt during adolescence. Research shows that adolescent peer groups are often homophilous with respect to race, though the development of interracial friendships may be influenced by school or neighborhood context (Joyner & Kao, 2000; Moody, 2001). Additionally, some have found that the positive influence of peers on academic performance may not vary by race (Crosnoe, Cavanaugh, & Elder, 2003; Giordano, 2003), though other contextual characteristics such as school composition might matter (Crosnoe et al., 2003). Among Vietnamese immigrants in New Orleans, variation in friendship networks led to variation in delinquency, though this study lacks a comparison to other race groups or nonimmigrant children (Zhou & Bankston, 1998). Aside from these few studies, discussions of how the influence of peers may vary by race, ethnicity, and immigrant status are largely absent from the literature (Giordano, 2003).

Gender is also an important stratifying characteristic in developing peer relationships during adolescence. Although same-sex peer groups are more common in childhood and early adolescence, later adolescence is marked

with more mixed-sex peer groups and the development of adolescent romantic relationships (Adler & Adler, 1998; Giordano, 2003; Joyner & Laumann, 2000). In fact, experiences with peers and romantic partners are linked. According to one study, having social networks with more opposite-sex friends is associated with an increased likelihood of being in a romantic relationship. Additionally, the quality of one's friendship network is associated with the quality of one's romantic relationship (Connolly, Furman, & Konarski, 2000). Gender is also important in determining the nature of friendship. Girls are more emotionally close to their friends, and boys are more likely to spend time with large groups of friends (Dornbusch, 1989).

7.5. OUTCOMES IN ADOLESCENCE

7.5.1. Educational outcomes

Because educational outcomes (such as grades and test scores) serve as a gatekeeper of future postsecondary educational and occupational attainment, those who study youth in schools are particularly interested in these outcomes. Studies consistently find large and persistent racial disparities in test scores throughout the life course, with Asians and Whites at the top and Blacks and Hispanics at the bottom (Kao & Thompson, 2003). Differences in SAT scores in the 2005-2006 academic year exemplify test score differences by race and ethnicity. In SAT-Critical Reading, the average score for Whites was 527, compared to 434 for Blacks, 458 for Hispanics, and 510 for Asians. Asians earned higher scores than other groups in SAT-Mathematics, with an average score of 578, compared with 536 for Whites, 429 for Blacks, and 463 for Hispanics (NCES, 2007a).[2] These differences are even more apparent at the highest achievement levels. Among high school graduates in 2005, 24.6% of Asians, 10.1% of Whites, 2.9% of Blacks, and 5.0% of Hispanics had taken AP Calculus, and the figures for AP Chemistry, Physics, and Biology reveal the same pattern (NCES, 2007b).

Though grades may be arguably a less standard measure of performance than standardized test scores, due to vast differences in criteria across teachers, classes, and schools, they are important because they provide consistent and primary feedback to students and parents about their educational progress (DiMaggio, 1982; Kao & Thompson, 2003). Grades are correlated with test scores, but they are also more susceptible to student

[2]These numbers exclude Mexicans and Puerto Ricans. The means of these groups are no more than 5 points different from those of Hispanics, but because the source does not provide sample sizes, the authors are unable to compute an overall average for Hispanics.

input. Not surprisingly, race and ethnic disparities in grades mirror race and ethnic disparities in test scores (e.g., see Fuligni, 1997; Kao, 1995).

Educational outcomes are particularly important for immigrant children, as education is a crucial step toward adaptation to the United States (Zhou, 1997). There are also important differences in educational outcomes by immigrant status. Children of immigrants generally follow a pattern of segmented assimilation. Segmented assimilation directly challenges the traditional concept of assimilation often used to describe the process of the first wave of immigrants' incorporation into American society (i.e., Gordon, 1964). Instead, assimilation is not a linear process, and outcomes vary across immigrant minorities; upward mobility and assimilation into the American mainstream is just one possibility experienced by second and subsequent generations. Thus, some groups, on average, have better educational outcomes than their native-born White counterparts, and other groups fare much worse (Portes & Rumbaut, 2001). Cubans, for example, have relative success in school, though Mexican children tend to have worse outcomes than their White or Cuban counterparts (Rumbaut & Portes, 2001). Other work supports the idea that national origin plays an important role in adolescents' educational outcomes (Portes & MacLeod, 1996; Portes & Rumbaut, 2001; Rumbaut & Portes, 2001).

Other factors also play a role in how immigrant children do in terms of educational outcomes. Kao and Tienda (1995), for example, found that generation status is associated with middle school grades, standardized math and reading test scores, and aspirations to graduate from college among eighth graders. First-generation immigrants, compared with their native-born counterparts, have better educational outcomes, but second-generation immigrants and native-born adolescents have similar outcomes. They also found that ethnicity is important; parental nativity is most crucial for Asians and less crucial for Hispanics (Kao & Tienda, 1995). Additionally, Glick and White (2003) found that generational status is more important for academic performance (test scores) than academic trajectories (the probability of dropping out of high school), with first-generation students doing worse than third-generation students in 1980 and better in 1990. When looking at academic performance, generational status is more important for later cohorts than for earlier cohorts.

7.5.2. **Social and emotional outcomes**

Another important dimension of adolescent well-being includes social and emotional adjustment, both in school and out of school. Self-efficacy, generally regarded as the sense of control one has over planning and

implementing life options, is an outcome that matters for adolescents (Gecas, 1989). On a related note, students with higher self-esteem generally perform better in school than their counterparts with low self-esteem (D'Amico & Cardaci, 2003; Ross & Broh, 2000). Emotional adjustment of adolescents is also associated with stronger friendship networks, less delinquency, and robust ties to the labor market (Rosenberg, Schooler, & Schoenbach, 1989).

Similar to measures of educational attainment and achievement, adolescent social and emotional well-being varies by race and immigrant status. This variation in social and emotional outcomes, however, does not follow the same pattern as differences in educational outcomes. For example, Asian American youth have comparable or higher academic outcomes than White, Black, or Hispanic youth, but they have lower levels of self-esteem and self-efficacy (Kao, 1999). Moreover, though African American students have lower levels of academic performance than their White counterparts, studies consistently show them as having relatively high levels of self-esteem.

There are few examinations of differences in well-being between native- and foreign-born adolescents, though research on adults finds that immigrants have lower levels of psychological functioning than their native-born counterparts, and existing theoretical frameworks and empirical analyses suggest that these findings are applicable to their children (Aronowitz, 1984; Kao, 1999). The experience of immigration itself can be challenging, particularly for those individuals without material or social resources (Suarez-Orozco & Suarez-Orozco, 2001). National origin and generation status may also matter in predicting adolescent well-being. Filipino adolescents who come to the United States, for example, are especially likely to suffer from depression (Rumbaut & Portes, 2001). Additionally, first-generation immigrants may experience lower levels of depression and more positive well-being than their native-born counterparts, but second-generation immigrants and native-born adolescents experience similar levels of positive well-being (Harker, 2001). These findings suggest that schools should more closely examine the particular mental health challenges that face immigrant youth, especially in light of cultural norms that prevent discussing these problems with outsiders.

7.6. THE TRANSITION TO ADULTHOOD

Similar to other outcomes discussed, SES plays a particularly important role in the transition to adulthood, a process within one's life course that is associated with the following transitions: leaving school, starting a

full-time job, leaving the home of origin, getting married, and becoming a parent (Shanahan, 2000). The timing and sequencing of these five markers have changed over time, mostly as a result of the major demographic transitions of the past 50 years, and many scholars suggest that the transition to adulthood today is more prolonged than it has been in the past (Arnett, 2000; Buchmann, 1989; Shanahan, 2000). Individuals now take more time to transition to adult status, and these transition years are characterized by change and exploration of possible life directions. Recently, research suggests that the transition to adulthood is less marked by these five transitions mentioned above, but is instead subjective and more related to psychological factors such as how much independence and autonomy one feels over one's life. The more sense of independence a youth has, the more likely he or she is to feel like an adult (Arnett, 2000).

Not surprisingly, there is substantial heterogeneity in how individuals experience these years of their lives (Arnett, 2000). The transition to adulthood may be particularly prolonged for individuals from high-SES families, as these families may have the resources to pay for not only a college education but often education beyond college such as medical school or graduate school. On the other hand, those from lower-SES families may have a more difficult transition (Furstenberg, 2008; Osgood, Foster, Flanagan, & Ruth, 2005). One study, for example, found that the process of transitioning into adulthood varies across social groups. The most vulnerable populations—for example, those with mental health issues or experience with the criminal justice system—face a particularly difficult transition to adulthood (Osgood et al., 2005). Research on race, ethnic, and immigrant differences in the transition to adulthood is particularly scarce. Mostly due to data limitations, researchers know very little about how different non-White groups experience the transition to adulthood and the various challenges that each group faces (Osgood et al., 2005; Shanahan, 2000). There are several exceptions. Some research, for example, finds that Blacks and Asians are less likely to leave home than Whites, though the mechanisms underlying these differences are less understood (White, 1994). Additionally, Blacks and foreign-born individuals are less likely to be employed than native-born Whites, though this gap has decreased over time (Fussell & Furstenberg, 2007).

What these patterns suggest is that youth who directly transition to a 4-year university straight out of high school do not need to depend on the educational system to help them make the transition to adulthood. These youth are more likely to receive continued assistance from their parents and are not seen by others (and do not see themselves) as independent adults. They are also most likely to delay marriage, childbearing, and

full-time employment. Youth who transition from high school to work (or to childbearing or other markers of adulthood) need the most help from high schools to successfully make the transition to adulthood, but these youth are often those who are the least integrated into the school environment. Along with education, marriage is one aspect of the transition to adulthood that has been studied more extensively among non-White groups (though research in this domain is still relatively scant). A majority of men and women do end up marrying, but individuals are approaching the institution with greater hesitancy and delaying marriage (Cherlin, 1992; Coontz, 2005; Goldscheider & Waite, 1991; Spain & Bianchi, 1996; Wu & Li, 2005). In the past, marriage and school attendance were seen as mutually exclusive; thus, adults who stay in school are likely to delay marriage. Although marriage rates have declined across the board, Blacks and lower-SES individuals are much less likely than their White and higher-SES counterparts to marry (Ellwood & Jencks, 2004). These disparities, along with the SES differences in educational attainment and achievement, ultimately end up reproducing class stratification.

7.7. CONCLUSION

Educational achievement (often measured as grades or test scores), educational attainment, and social and behavioral outcomes are not equally distributed across the population, with minority and immigrant groups generally having less favorable outcomes than their native-born White counterparts. Though the educational disadvantages faced by minority immigrant adolescents can be traced to many factors, parental SES plays a key role in the intergenerational transmission of disadvantage. When families have few economic resources, for example, parents are less likely to get involved in their children's schools, children are more likely to live in resource-poor neighborhoods and attend disadvantaged schools. In addition to the influence of families and schools in predicting outcomes in adolescence, youth's peers are also linked to their success or failure in the educational system.

Taken together, the literature reviewed in this chapter suggests that minority and immigrant adolescents experience the U.S. educational system very differently from their native-born White counterparts. Although research that considers race, ethnic, and immigrant status variation in educational experiences and outcomes has been increasing in recent years, there are at least two noteworthy gaps in this literature. First, very little research examines the schooling experiences of minority and immigrant adolescents. This is mostly a result of data limitations, as it is difficult

to obtain a large, representative sample of adolescents who migrated from a particular country. Additionally, there is very little research that looks at how the transition to adulthood may be different for minority and immigrant youth, as compared to White youth. It is particularly important to understand the mechanisms underlying these divergent trajectories, as educational experiences in adolescence lay an important foundation for how individuals experience the transition to adulthood. These educational experiences, as well as how individuals make the transition to adulthood, have crucial implications for social, economic, and psychological well-being during adulthood.

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