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SAMPLE CHAPTER 3 Sociological Perspectives on Students and Families

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CHAPTER 3

Sociological Perspectives on Students and Families

CASE STUDY

Culture Clash

By Mary Ann Zehr, *Education Week*, February 5, 2003

HARRISONBURG, VA.—Leonard Yavny believes Darwin's theory of evolution contradicts biblical truths. He also thinks youths shouldn't be taught about sex; if they learn about it, they might try it, he reasons. He requires his own children to be chaperoned on dates until they are married. And he doesn't want his children to be exposed to Halloween, which he believes is a holiday originating from the devil. Yavny, the 42-year-old father of five children between the ages of 10 and 19, finds that these particular beliefs conflict with those of many of the teachers or students at the public schools his children attend here. But he has never complained to school personnel.

Instead, he counteracts what his children face at school by pointing out to them what he believes to be false teaching, holding them to specific expectations, and occasionally pulling them out of school activities.

Last Halloween, for example, he and his wife, Galina, kept their children home from school.

Yavny is a conservative Christian and an immigrant from Ukraine who shares with many immigrants a critical view of the prevailing attitudes and beliefs that his children encounter in school.

Having received the largest number of immigrants ever in a single decade during the 1990s, the United States has become home to an increasing number of parents such as Yavny whose traditional values don't mesh well with the more liberal values that tend to permeate public schools.

Harrisonburg, a city of 42,000 set in a farming region of Virginia, has received an immigrant wave of its own as jobs in the poultry industry have drawn newcomers here. In five years, the population of language-minority children in the Harrisonburg schools has swelled from about 400 students, most of whom spoke Spanish, to 1,180 students who speak 39 different languages.

And so, it's not hard to find immigrant parents here who share Yavny's perspective. They resist assimilation and expect their children to follow their lead. "We are raising our kids in the United States," says Benita Castro, a native of Mexico who along with her husband recently threw an elaborate church ceremony and reception, or *quinceañera*, to celebrate her daughter Nancy's 15th birthday, "but we'll stick to our morals."

Aisha Rostem, a Kurdish Muslim who sends her two teenage daughters to schools here, says through an interpreter, "I'm praying that they will be safe—that they don't fight, that they don't get involved in bad things."

How these parents help their children make sense of the two worlds they live in—the world of school and the more traditional world of home and community—can have a huge effect on their children's academic success and school life. So also can schools' handling of this cultural clash make a difference in immigrant children's lives.

Questions for Reflection

1. What is your general reaction to this article by Mary Ann Zehr?
2. What is your perspective on the subject of sex education for school students? Give the rationale for your response.
3. What are some of the advantages and disadvantages of having immigrant students in a classroom?
4. List several ways that you believe schools should serve immigrant students.
5. What legislation do you believe is needed to deal with the high number of illegal immigrants who have school age children?
6. What is your perspective on the subject of bilingual education?

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INTASC

Learning Outcomes

After reading and studying this chapter, you should be able to:

1. Respect the differing family backgrounds from which students come and understand the importance of not stereotyping student behavior or academic potential on the basis of their family structure. (INTASC 3: Diverse Learners)
2. Identify some cultural differences based on where students and teachers live. (INTASC 3: Diverse Learners)
3. Understand that young people need caring adults to help them maneuver through the tribulations and challenges of childhood and the teenage years. (INTASC 5: Motivation and Behavior)
4. Identify the challenges that many students face as a result of being at risk because of societal factors, such as poverty, over which they have little or no control. (INTASC 2: Learning and Development and 10: Relationships)
5. Understand the role that prejudice and discrimination play in marginalizing many students. (INTASC 3: Diverse Learners and 10: Relationships)

A democratic society struggles with how to support individuality and yet develop a consciousness of shared concerns and actions that promote equity. This challenge is paramount in a society such as the United States, which includes many groups that affect and are affected by political, social, and economic systems. These societal influences have a great influence on young people and their teachers as they interact in school settings. The big ideas that help us understand the challenges of education for a society include the changing nature of families, differences as a result of where we live, the challenges of growing up, and prejudice and discrimination.

Families and their children face many challenges in today's society. Many children live in single-parent households with limited income. Children are sometimes left on their own, especially in the period after school. Teenagers struggle with figuring out who they are. Students from oppressed groups too often face **prejudice** from classmates and educators and overt discrimination in school policies and practices. They are usually assisted in this process by parents and other responsible and caring adults, but a number of them learn about sexuality, drugs, and violence from the media and their peers. Teachers and other educators play an important role in helping children and youth maneuver through these challenges toward the goal of becoming responsible adults.

prejudice

Preconceived negative attitude toward the members of a group.

Educators, families, and policymakers have varied perspectives on how schools and other institutions should support children and families as they deal with the challenges addressed in this chapter. Data about the population and how they are being served by institutions such as schools inform educational policies and practices. State and federal legislation sometimes reflects one perspective over another in the types of services and support that are available to students and their families.

Today's Families

Families in the United States have changed dramatically over the past fifty years. In the 1950s, the norm was a working father and a mother at home with two or more school-aged children. Today only 68 percent of children who are under eighteen years old live in families with two parents.¹ Seldom does a mother remain at home until her children finish high school. Families today include mothers working while fathers stay at home with the children, single-parent families, families with two working parents, remarried parents, childless marriages, families with adopted children, gay and lesbian parents, extended families, grandparents raising grandchildren, and unmarried couples with children.

Parents are older than in the past, in part, because they marry later. More than 85 percent of today's young people age eighteen to twenty-four years old have never been married.² Most men and women have worked for a number of years before marrying. Over one-third of first-time married couples have separated or divorced after ten years. Over half of divorced women remarry within five years and 75 percent of them by ten years.³ The average age of people of color is younger than that of whites; thus, a larger percentage of women of color are of childbearing age, leading to higher birthrates than white families.

Most children live with two parents, even though one of them may be a stepmother or stepfather. One of three children in the United States lives with a single mother, a single father, grandparents, or another guardian.⁴ Ideally, it would be an advantage for children to have two caring and loving parents to nurture children. However, children from all types of families are academically successful in school and become well-adjusted adults. It is not the type of family that disadvantages students or makes it difficult for them to adjust appropriately and achieve well in school. The factor that is most correlated to such disadvantage is the economic well-being of families. Those in poverty, who are more likely to be living with single mothers, are more likely than their better-off peers to have problems in school.

Educators should avoid labeling a child as dysfunctional because he or she does not live with both parents. Too often, teachers develop a self-fulfilling prophecy about students in nontraditional families not being able to achieve academically. Instead, they should have high expectations for their success in school, and do everything possible to help them learn.

Parenting

With the growing female influence in the family, the typical family structure is no longer as patriarchal as it once was. Many families are less autocratically controlled by adults and have become more egalitarian in the way they operate. In the past, nurturing children was the primary responsibility of mothers. Today many fathers are also actively involved in parenting.

Most parents want what's best for their children, but there is no simple guidebook for steering children through the complex terrain they will have to navigate as

What If He Has Two Mommies?

In the 1950s, most students came from families with both a mother and a father. In the subsequent fifty years, more and more students have been raised by single mothers and now by a growing number of single fathers. Some students do not live with either parent but stay instead with relatives or in a foster home. As society becomes more tolerant of a variety of family structures and as adults become more open about their sexual orientation, teachers will also be introduced to lesbian and gay parents who may be living with a partner or separated from a partner.

The curriculum in most schools, especially at the preprimary and elementary levels, is often developed around the family—a nuclear family with a mother, father, and siblings. But for decades now, schools have been populated with students whose families do not fit that model. The curriculum and instructional materials seldom mirror the diversity of families, which may include parents with special needs, interracial parents, single parents, gay and lesbian parents, and foster parents.

The dilemma for teachers extends beyond the curriculum. They must figure out how to value and respect

the diversity of families. Otherwise, both students and parents will feel ignored and isolated from the school setting. Teachers may also have to help other students develop an understanding of this diversity. Sometimes students respond to such differences in negative and hurtful ways. Teachers will need to develop strategies for confronting homophobic behavior from the outset.

Questions for Reflection

1. How could a primary teacher introduce gay and lesbian parents into a reading lesson?
2. What are different ways that teachers are likely to learn some of their students have gay or lesbian parents?
3. How should a teacher with strong views against homosexual relationships approach the reality of having the children of gays and lesbians in the classroom?
4. How can a school develop a climate of acceptance of all students regardless of the structure and nature of the families in which they live?

To answer these questions on-line and e-mail your answers to your professor, go to Chapter 3 of the companion website (www.ablongman.com/johnson14e) and click on Professional Dilemma.



Thirty percent of children under eighteen years of age live in nontraditional families who provide the love and support necessary to raise children.

they grow up. Often parents draw from their own experiences as children and adults, but they did not encounter the same pressures from peers and the mass culture faced by today's students. To increase students' chances of making it safely through childhood and adolescence, teachers and parents need to work together, setting high standards and helping young people meet them.

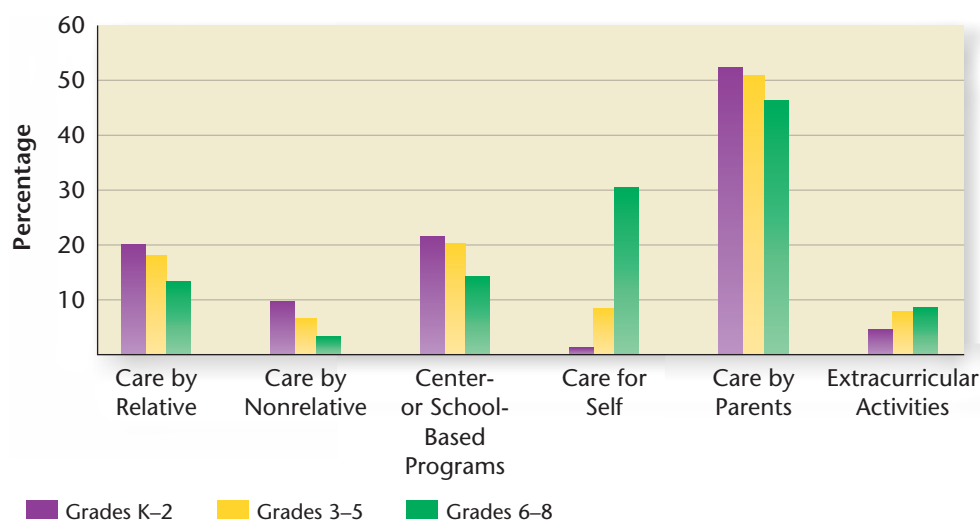
Children Alone

Most single parents work outside the home; in many two-parent families, both parents work. Unless working parents have been lucky enough to arrange a flexible schedule that allows them to be home when their children are not in school, they are not available to care for their children during the period immediately after school. The result is children of all ages being left alone or in the care of others.

Parents provide supervision after school for over half of the students in grades K–5. Older students are more likely to care for themselves after school, as shown in Figure 3.1. Other children stay with adults other than their parents, attend center-

FIGURE 3.1**Before- and After-School Care Received by U.S. Children**

Source: U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, *The Condition of Education 2004* (NCES 2004-077). Washington, DC: Author, 2004.



based programs, or participate in extracurricular activities such as sports, arts, or clubs. Children in poverty are slightly more likely to stay with relatives than other children.

Children who are responsible for their own care after school experience more accidents and injuries. They also are at risk of behavior problems, lower social competence, and poorer academic performance. Adolescents left on their own are more likely to engage in risk activities such as smoking, drinking alcohol, and using drugs. Self-care is more prevalent among children over ten than younger ones. It is also more prevalent among children in high-income families than low-income families. Families make these choices based, in part, on the safety of their neighborhoods and the health and maturity of their children.⁵

About half the students in kindergarten through eighth grade are under the care of their parents after school. Nearly one of five of them go to center- or school-based programs after school. Students in these programs are usually involved in specific activities such as sports, religion, and the arts. Some students are involved in the Scouts, academic activities, community services, and clubs. Parents of over 70 percent of these children pay a fee for their children's after-school care.⁶ Unfortunately, some families cannot afford the cost of such care.

Educators should be sensitive to the realities faced by children left alone after school. Children sometimes are frightened to be at home alone, especially when they have no siblings. The process of traveling from school to home can be dangerous and scary in neighborhoods where drugs are being sold and peers are tempting one another to misbehave. Adolescents may be tempted to experiment with drugs and sex while adults are not around. Television often becomes the babysitter, providing children with the opportunity to learn from educational programs—or from inappropriate programs. In most cases, children are thankful for caring adults who can provide supervision and assistance.

Journal for Reflection

1. What was the most common family structure in the community in which you grew up?
2. What experience do you have with single-parent families or gay families?
3. How do you think children are influenced by having to care for themselves after school?
4. What recommendations about child care would you make to families who are unable to be at home immediately after school?

Where Students Live

Communities and their schools differ from one region of the United States to another. People in different parts of the country sometimes speak, behave, and dress differently even if they are from the same religious and ethnic backgrounds. As a result, children and families may suffer culture shock when they move from one region to another and from urban to suburban to rural areas.

Over the past thirty years, many individuals and families have migrated from the Northeast and Midwest to the South and West. The aging of the population in the Northeast and Midwest has led to a decrease in school enrollment, resulting in a loss of revenues for schools and closings of many. By 2010, 60 percent of the U.S. population will live in the South and West, compared to 48 percent in 1970. One-fourth of the population will live in California, Florida, and Texas alone.⁷ The population in rural areas of the upper Midwest is older than in other parts of the country. By 2010, one of five Florida residents will be over sixty-five years old, and 15 percent of the population in Maine, Montana, Pennsylvania, and West Virginia will be retired.⁸

An examination of differences among rural, suburban, and urban communities captures some of the geographic variation. Differences also exist among communities in the Northwest, Southwest, Midwest, South, and Northeast. Within these regions, states have their own cultural uniqueness and differences. The geography of a state such as Colorado, for example, promotes the development of different cultural patterns among populations in the flat farmlands, urban centers, and mountains.

Rural Communities

Twenty-one percent of the population lives in the country or in communities with fewer than 2,500 residents.⁹ **Values** tend to be conservative, and the immediate family is a cohesive unit. Children may travel long distances to school. By urban and suburban standards, families live long distances from one another. To the rural family, however, the distances are not great, and a feeling of neighborliness exists. The social structure is less stratified than in more populous geographical areas, and everyone may appear to know everyone else.

Workers in rural areas generally are poorly paid for their work, earning about three-fourths of the wages paid in urban areas. Although housing costs may be lower, other expenses are not much different. As a result, 14 percent of the rural population live in poverty, which is slightly higher than the total population.¹⁰ Poverty is disproportionately high on Native American reservations but also exists on the midwestern plains, western ranches, and farms across the country. Some rural areas depend heavily on low-skilled immigrant labor, allowing large farm owners to prosper while workers earn such low wages they can hardly sustain themselves.

Employment in manufacturing is limited in rural areas. However, increasing numbers of urban and suburban dwellers are choosing to live in the country and commute to their employment in more populous metropolitan areas. These transplants are generally young and well educated. They are fleeing the complexities of city life to acquire self-reliance and self-confidence, to return to a physically healthier environment, or simply to be able to own an affordable home.

values

Principles, standards, or qualities that are considered worthwhile or desirable.



Children in farming communities experience aspects of life that are foreign to most city and suburban students.

In some instances, this exodus to the country has caused problems for schools because the newcomers' values have clashed with those of the more traditional rural community. Family living habits and expectations for school programs differ, and some newcomers demand increased social services. In many rural communities, it takes a considerable length of time for newcomers to be accepted into the social structure.

Eighteen percent of all U.S. students attend rural schools. These schools have a larger percentage of white and American Indian students than other ethnic and racial groups. The schools are smaller than ones in cities, and the student to teacher ratio is lower. Rural students perform better on national achievement tests than their central city peers but less well than students in most suburban schools.¹¹

Despite the pivotal role of schools in rural life, these schools face real difficulties. Too often there are teacher shortages that result in the staffing of schools by teachers without a license or with limited academic background in the subjects they teach. Not all courses (for example, art and foreign languages) can be offered because of the limited number of teachers. Principals may be assigned to several schools and support services limited because of the lack of funds. Teachers in rural areas sometimes feel isolated, especially if they are not from the area. As ethnic diversity increases in these areas, teachers will be confronted with cultures and languages to which they may have had little or no exposure.

Rural communities cherish their small schools where all students know each other, all of the teachers, and most community members. They usually fight proposals for consolidating schools because of the long historical traditions associated with a school. In addition, they worry about consolidated schools being so far away that they cannot actively participate in their children's and grandchildren's education. Some students end up riding a bus for one or two hours daily to reach a new school.

Suburban Communities

Nearly half the U.S. population now lives in the suburbs. The suburban population has become more diverse as middle-class families of color have moved from cities. It is becoming even more ethnically and linguistically diverse as new immigrants settle in the suburbs. The most dramatic change in the suburbs, however, is that poverty now exists there as well as in cities and rural areas. The National Center for Children in Poverty reports that 30 percent of suburban children under age eighteen live in families with incomes below the poverty level.¹²

Suburbs are characterized by single-family homes, shopping centers, and space for parks and recreation activities. Funding for schools has traditionally been better in the suburbs than in other areas. As a result, most suburban schools are in good condition; some boast sprawling, beautiful, and technologically advanced campuses. Most teachers are licensed and generally teach the subjects they are qualified to teach. Students outperform their rural and urban counterparts on achievement tests, and more suburban students than students from other areas attend college. Safety is less of a concern for students, parents, and teachers. With changing demographics in the suburbs, however, these conditions are beginning to change—particularly in suburban areas close to major cities.

Urban Communities

Urban areas are usually rich in educational and entertainment resources such as libraries, museums, theaters, professional sports, colleges, and universities. The urban population is ethnically and racially diverse, but many residential areas remain

Race in a White School

STUDY PURPOSE/QUESTION: This study explored the characteristics of two successful African American schools in St. Louis and Atlanta where nearly all of the students were eligible for free or reduced-price meals.

STUDY DESIGN: The researcher collected ethnographic data over a period of several years through observations of faculty and staff interactions with students and families in Fairmont Elementary School in St. Louis and Lincoln Elementary School in Atlanta. He also observed and kept field notes of community observations and interviewed fourth- and fifth-grade parents. Documents that had been shared with parents were analyzed, and archival information provided the historical context for the two schools.

STUDY FINDINGS: Educators and parents in these two communities worked together to meet the social and educational needs of students. Both schools were advantaged by some teachers actually living in the school neighborhood so that they interacted with and knew some of the parents. In a number of the African American families at least three generations had attended the school. Because they thought they had received a good education, they were loyal to the school and continued to support it when their children and grandchildren attended. The teachers and administrators at these two schools “did not wait for parents to initiate parental participation; they reached out and welcomed these parents into the school” (p. 89).

The teachers in both schools wanted to teach African American children, and most of them had been teaching in the schools for many years. They affirmed

the African American culture in their classrooms and the school. They enthusiastically celebrated African American historical and cultural celebrations. “The ambience in each school and the educators’ pedagogical and interaction styles created an environment in which African American children could see themselves and their culture within the schooling process” (p. 93). In addition, educators sometimes wore African clothing or accented their clothes with Kente cloth, which is traditional ceremonial cloth that is about 4 inches wide of various colors and designs from the Asante people of Ghana.

Lessons were related to the everyday experiences of students (for example, using hip hop to help them understand a concept). The curriculum emphasized development of skills necessary to perform well on required achievement tests, resulting in their schools being among the best performing on state tests. Finally, the teachers in these schools were experienced (average of 19.4 and 14.8 years), and the senior teachers modeled expectations for high academic performance.

IMPLICATIONS: Because teachers in urban schools with high academic performance relate better with families and students when they understand their cultures, teacher candidates should consider taking a course on or studying cultures with which they have no experience. Another way to gain experience with other cultures is to participate in their community or church activities.

Source: Jerome E. Morris, “Can Anything Good Come From Nazareth? Race, Class, and African American Schooling and Community in the Urban South and Midwest,” *American Educational Research Journal*, 41(1) (Spring 2004), pp. 69–112.

segregated. In many cities, people of color constitute the majority of the urban population. The majority of the foreign-born population live in cities. Those in which more than one in five of its residents are foreign-born include San Jose (41%), Los Angeles (40%), San Francisco (36%), New York City (36%), Boston (30%), Houston (27%), El Paso (27%), Dallas (26%), San Diego (25%), Chicago (22%), and Phoenix (22%). Twenty-two percent of elementary and high school students have at least one foreign-born parent.¹³

Class differences are evident across urban neighborhoods. Low-income families and families in poverty are often isolated in neighborhoods with few resources, inadequate police protection, and poorly maintained parks, schools, and public areas. Children who live in an underserved section of a city are often restricted by it,

having few contacts outside the area. Their opportunities to participate in the educational and entertainment resources of the city are limited.

Although there are many single-family homes in a city, many children live in multifamily condominiums, apartments, and projects. Some city residents live comfortably by U.S. standards, but a disproportionate number of urban residents are economically oppressed. One of the reasons for high poverty rates among most groups in cities is the lack of academic credentials that qualify workers for better-paying jobs. Jobs that teenagers hold in other communities are filled in urban areas by adults for whom no other options are available. The result is high unemployment among youth from oppressed groups. Crime rates in many low-income neighborhoods exceed the national average. There are higher infant mortality rates, lower access to adequate health care, dangerous housing, and inadequate nutrition—all factors that are common when people have inadequate incomes to support themselves and their families.¹⁴

Public funding for city schools may be similar to that in other areas, but families in many urban neighborhoods are unable to contribute to schools at the same level as many suburban parents. Parents have less time to volunteer for school and community involvement or fund-raising projects. They often have more than one job. In some cases, they are caught in their own addictions and maladies exacerbated by the stress of poverty, violence, and lack of community support.

Many urban middle-class and upper-middle-class families opt for private schools over public schools. Children and youth in central cities of metropolitan areas experience poverty at higher rates than children in rural and suburban areas. African Americans make up 33 percent of central city school populations, and Latino students constitute 22 percent.¹⁵ A disproportionately high percentage of students are foreign-born or first-generation immigrants with limited English proficiency. Bilingual education and federally funded programs such as Title I for students from low-income families help to meet the needs of urban schools.

Journal for Reflection

1. How would you describe the community in which you grew up?
2. How do your speech patterns and behavior differ from people who grew up in a different type of community?
3. In what community would you like to teach? Why?

Challenges of Childhood and Youth

Most U.S. teenagers are not the dangerous, drug-using, sexually promiscuous, non-productive adolescents of the common stereotypes. Young people might not always agree with the adults with whom they interact, and sometimes they even break the rules, but they finish high school and attend college at higher rates than ever. And in many other respects, today's teens are more like their counterparts of past generations than different from them.

Young people face numerous challenges as they mature to adulthood. Increased pressures to grow up quickly, peer pressures, and the media provide conflicting messages that contribute to the difficulty of this period. Many students are able to draw on the support of friends, family, religion, and inner strength to resist being drawn into negative responses. Others find their own ways of countering circumstances over which they appear to have no control.

The love and care of adults help children and young people make a safe passage through childhood and adolescence. Teenagers are trying to figure out who they are and how they fit into the family, neighborhood, school, and larger world. They are searching for answers but in their own ways. One of the challenges for parents, caretakers, educators, and youth workers is to encourage young people to make sound choices among the unlimited possibilities while avoiding excessive interference.

The test of the morality of a society is what it does for its children.

Dietrich Bonhoeffer

The number one thing young people in America—indeed young people around the world—have going for them is their sense of honesty, morality, and ethics. Young people refuse to accept the lies and rationalizations of the established order.

Dick Gregory

Adults usually regard teenagers as too young to deserve the benefits of adulthood. They expect teenagers to enjoy youth, begin dating, develop friendships, plan their future, and learn how to behave like responsible adults. Other adults see adolescents as teenage mothers, gang members, drug abusers, and troublemakers. Young people are bombarded by messages about themselves in music, movies, books, and television. Other potent influences are the circumstances in which teenagers live, which may include drugs, violence, and the lack of adult support. Young people must sort through all these influences as well as the messages given by significant peers and adults in their lives. This section explores some of the challenges with which most teens struggle and about which they make decisions, whether alone or with help from others.

Many teens, especially inner-city youths, report that the messages they receive about themselves in the media and schools are usually negative. They feel that adults and communities do not care about them. This feeling is validated by cuts in funding of schools, parks, and community centers needed to assist youths in many communities.

Respect from adults is critical in helping youths to develop self-esteem. Teenagers don't always have appropriate adult support at home; their parents may be too tired or too busy or have too many problems themselves to care adequately for their children. For many teens, schools and neighborhood organizations are their primary sources of adult supervision and guidance. They need a caring adult who recognizes a young person as an individual and who serves as a mentor, as a gentle but firm critic, and as a coach or advocate. However, many youth, especially those in central cities, feel that schools have rejected them and do not expect much of them. In this section we will examine some of the societal challenges that our children and youth face on the way to adulthood.

Increasing numbers of Americans are an illness, an accident, a natural disaster, or a paycheck away from becoming homeless.

Anonymous

Homelessness

The National Law Center on Homelessness and Poverty estimates that up to three million people in the United States are without shelter at some point during a year.¹⁶ Every night in the United States more than one million children have no home; many are staying with their families in shelters at night. The homeless include men and women, families, children, and persons with disabilities, as shown in Figure 3.2. One of every three homeless persons had run away from home. Just over one in four had lived in a foster care/group home. One of five had been homeless previously during childhood.¹⁷ Like the adult homeless, homeless young people live in shelters, in abandoned buildings, and on the street.

One of the reasons for an increase in homelessness since the late 1970s is a shortage of affordable rental housing. Another is the large number of persons and families in poverty. Forty-four percent of the homeless population are working,¹⁸ but employment is part-time or sporadic or they are earning wages too low to purchase necessary food, clothing, and housing. A full-time minimum-wage job often does not provide enough income for a family to rent a one-bedroom unit at fair market prices.

Homelessness is devastating to families. Only one of three homeless adults with minor children live with their child or children.¹⁹ Most of their children are placed in foster care or left with relatives or friends. Children who live in shelters and on the streets often

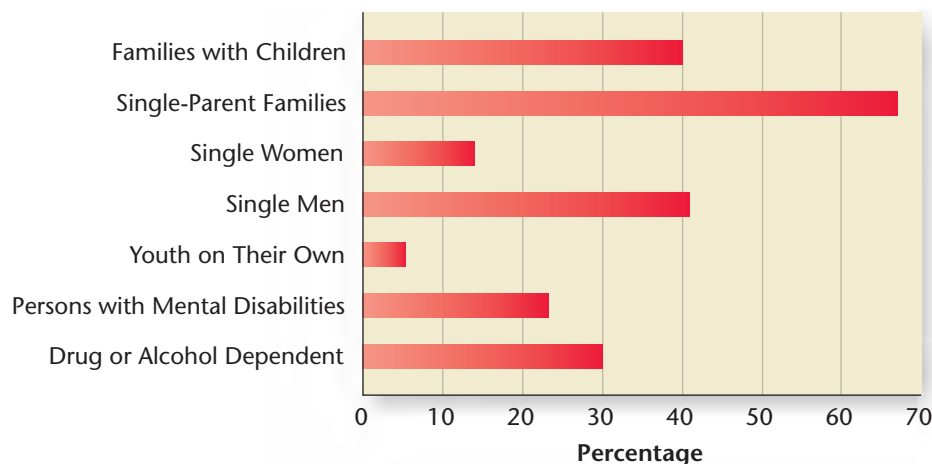


Poverty and the lack of affordable housing are the major reasons for the growing number of homeless adults, children, and families in both rural and urban areas.

FIGURE 3.2

The U.S. Homeless Population

Source: Based on data from National Law Center on Homelessness and Poverty, "Homelessness and Poverty in America: Overview." Retrieved on May 11, 2006, from www.nlchp.org/FA%5FHAPIA.



suffer from inadequate health care. They may be surrounded by diseases such as whooping cough and tuberculosis. They are not always inoculated against common childhood diseases, making them more susceptible to illness than most other children. They suffer from asthma and ear infections at disproportionately high rates. Children in homeless shelters also face hypothermia, hunger, and abuse by their parents or other adults.

Half of homeless students transfer from school each year; one of ten miss at least one month of school annually.²⁰ Although the McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act, which was passed in 1987, eliminated the residency requirement for students, homeless children sometimes are not allowed to attend the school that would best serve their needs. Provision of transportation back to the student's school of origin is not always deemed feasible by school systems. Homeless students are sometimes forced to wait to enroll in a school while personal records are collected. However, access to schools is less of a problem than it was in the past. Today's advocates focus on students' classroom success. A high-quality education offers homeless children a chance for academic and economic success. To ignore them because they do not have a home or are not well-groomed deprives them of the opportunity to rise above their current circumstances. They need more, not less, of our attention as educators.

Abuse

Domestic violence is often hidden or ignored by society. About one-third of the females murdered in this country are killed by a spouse, ex-spouse, or boyfriend, as contrasted to less than four percent of male murder victims being killed by someone they know intimately.²¹ Physical violence against women and girls is near epidemic levels in some countries. A report on domestic violence by UNICEF, the United Nation's Children's Fund, indicates that up to half the females in some countries have been abused by a family member or boyfriend. Over 60 million females

in these countries have been killed by their own families either deliberately or through neglect.²² Domestic violence has become the primary cause of homelessness for women with children. More than one in four homeless mothers in the United States are fleeing domestic violence.²³

Most children have probably been faced with angry parents who raise their voices or even spank them. But each year nationally one of every hundred children is the victim of serious abuse or neglect by parents, caretakers, or relatives. Nearly three million children are the subjects of investigations for abuse annually.²⁴ Parents or caretakers are the murderers of over half the children under age five who are killed every year.²⁵ Neglect is the cause in 61 percent of the reported abuse cases, 19 percent are the result of physical abuse, and sexual abuse is reported in 10 percent of the cases.²⁶ Males are more likely to be the perpetrators of physical and sexual abuse. Twelve percent of high school girls and 6 percent of boys have been sexually abused.²⁷ Sensational news stories report sexual abuse of children by strangers, but these represent less than one-fourth of the cases. The abuser usually is a parent or friend.

Children and youths who are abused or neglected may arrive at school hungry, bruised, and depressed. They may arrive early at school and seem to have little desire to leave the safety of the school. These children, like all others, need teachers who are caring, retain high expectations for them, and can provide hope for the future. School and other social service professionals may be the only adults available to support abused youngsters.

Teachers and other professionals are required by law to report signs of child abuse to authorities. Not reporting could lead to fines and/or prison terms. Most school districts have procedures for reporting suspected abuse, including to whom the abuse should be reported. Even though a teacher has told his or her supervisor about possible abuse, the teacher should check to ensure that the appropriate agency was notified.²⁸

When old enough, many abused youths run away from home, choosing to confront possible abuse on the streets rather than the known abuse at home. Abused children also make up a large proportion of the adults seeking psychological and mental health treatment. For many of these children, the negative experiences and conditions of their childhood become the foundation for mental health problems and delinquent behaviors. These young people have learned abuse from the adults who were closest to them.

Harassment and Bullying

Harassment by peers and teachers in schools is reported by students with disabilities and students who are female, LGBT, overweight, or different in ways that seem important to teenagers. Harassment is not rare in schools; it is a common occurrence for many students. Eighty percent of the students in a national survey indicated that they have been sexually harassed at school, with one in three experiencing it often. Sixteen percent of the students in this survey “said they avoided school or cut classes; 20 percent found it hard to pay attention; and 24 percent of students reported that they talked less in class.”²⁹ The harassment of girls and young women in the hallways, classrooms, and cafeterias of schools ranges from name-calling to touching and, in some cases, rape. LGBT students report verbal, sexual, and physical harassment that sometimes ends in physical assault.

The most common harassment experienced by LGBT students is in the form of verbal abuse. Almost all of them report hearing homophobic remarks such as “that’s so gay,” “faggot,” or “dyke” from other students. Nearly 20 percent indicated that faculty or school staff also sometimes make homophobic remarks. In many schools, these homophobic remarks are applied to both LGBT and non-LGBT students as

derogatory terms meant to call into question a student's masculinity or femininity. Students most often make these remarks when faculty and staff are not around. However, faculty do not always intervene when they hear students making homophobic remarks; students intervene even less often.³⁰

Another form of aggression in schools is bullying by bigger and stronger students to establish dominance over their victims. For younger students, the bully may be the student who pushes them out of the cafeteria line to get in front. The bully may be the student who forces others to turn over their money or do his or her homework. Such behavior cannot be excused as just "boys being boys." Bullying takes the form of belittling weaker students, calling them names, and harassing or threatening them. Sometimes the outcome of bullying is assault or murder. Bullies are 3.2 times more likely to carry weapons to school and be involved in fights in and out of school. In a survey of over 15,000 sixth to tenth graders, nearly a third of the males and 6 percent of the females reported that they had been bullies, victims, or both in the previous thirty days. The small group of children who begin bullying classmates early in elementary school are rated by their teachers as more aggressive than their peers as they progress through school.³¹ Psychologists report that victims of bullies experience anxiety, stress, and depression. Some wonder whether the males responsible for multiple shootings in schools are reacting violently to the students who bullied them. Other studies have found a link between bullying and violence later in life.³² Educators cannot afford to ignore the bullying that occurs in schools.

School should be a safe haven for children and youth. For many students, however, schools are not safe, and sometimes they are dangerous. Educators can assist in the elimination of harassment, bullying, and other youth violence. Among the strategies recommended by the Sexual Harassment Task Force of the American Association of University Women (AAUW) Foundation include modeling appropriate behavior with students by avoiding sexual references, innuendos, and jokes. Teachers should not be passive bystanders. Harassment that you witness directly or indirectly should be reported to the appropriate school official.³³

Sexuality

The defining of one's sexuality—one's nature as a sexual being—begins in the early teens and continues throughout life. Coming to terms with one's sexuality often involves turmoil both within oneself and with parents and caretakers during the teen years. Even while trying to develop intimate relations with young men, young women may be confronted with the danger of sexual assault. The development of a healthy sexual self is a complicated process.

Many teenagers associate sex with the freedom and sophistication of adulthood. The decision to have sex is one that causes much consternation among youths. Their uncertainty is fueled by the mixed messages they receive from parents, teenage friends, religious doctrines, the media, and older friends. At the same time



Motivated by the AIDS epidemic, many schools now offer programs that promote awareness of sexually transmitted diseases.

that one medium glamorizes sex, other voices tell teenagers that sex is sinful and that abstinence before marriage is the only moral option.

Girls and women often connect sex with being accepted, being attractive, and being loved. Many boys and men, by contrast, link sex with status, power, domination, and violence—a far cry from the loving relationship that many females have envisioned. Thus, ideal sexuality for men and women may differ.

Teenage sex is not as rampant as some believe. The sexual activity of both teenage females and teenage males decreased during the 1990s. In 1991 over half of our high school students had had sexual intercourse at least once; by 2003 the percentage had dropped to 47 percent, with males being slightly more sexually active than females. One of three high schoolers was sexually active (that is, had had sex in the past three months). Most sexually active teens report using contraceptives more often than in the past.³⁴

Teenage Pregnancy

Concurrently, the number of teenage pregnancies and births has declined, but they remain higher in the United States than any other industrialized nation. The data on all female teenagers show that one of twenty becomes pregnant, but of those nearly twice as many are older teens (eighteen- to nineteen-years-old). Only one of twenty-five female teenagers actually becomes a parent.³⁵ Eight of ten pregnant teenage girls indicate that they had not planned, nor intended, to become pregnant. Although 7 percent of students report having intercourse for the first time before they were thirteen,³⁶ 98 percent of middle-school girls reach the age of fifteen without becoming pregnant, and only about eight in 1,000 of ten- to fourteen-year-olds have a child.³⁷ Those who are more likely to become pregnant are young women who are sexually active and participate in other risk-taking behaviors such as smoking, drinking, and using drugs.³⁸ The fathers of the majority of these babies are not teenage males; they are in their twenties or older.³⁹

Poverty appears to be the most important factor in determining teenage mothers. It is a key risk factor for teen pregnancy, but its damaging impact can be buffered through strong social networks and supportive institutions.⁴⁰ Most unmarried teenage mothers continue to live with their parents, but their families are disproportionately low income. To reduce teenage pregnancy, family poverty may need to be reduced. Many teenage parents, especially mothers, are forced to take on adult responsibilities much earlier than society expects of its youth. Teenage mothers are sometimes forced to fend for themselves in impoverished conditions. Their own parents can provide little or no support, and the fathers of their children are often absent and either not contributing or unable to contribute financially. Nevertheless, over 60 percent of these mothers are enrolled in school, have graduated, or have obtained a General Educational Development (GED) credential.⁴¹ Staying involved in school is important. Otherwise, statistics show, “eight to twelve years after birth, a child born to an unmarried, teenage, high school dropout is ten times as likely to be living in poverty as a child born to a mother with none of these three characteristics.”⁴² Poverty also contributes to the births of babies with low birth weights, who are more likely than other children to experience health problems, developmental delays, abuse, neglect, and poor academic performance.⁴³

Overall, teenagers are becoming more responsible about their sexual activity and are using contraception to reduce the risk of pregnancy and the transmission of AIDS and other sexually transmitted diseases. School programs such as sex education and health clinics are helpful, but they are not always supported by families and communities. Educators should be aware that the teen years are traumatic for many young people as they struggle with the development of their sexuality. Teenagers’ apprehensions and activities related to sex may affect their school behavior and their ability to perform satisfactorily in school.



TEACHER PERSPECTIVES

Is Retention Better Than Social Promotion for Students?

Today's emphasis on academic achievement may lead to students not meeting state standards as measured by standardized tests. As a result, they may not be able to graduate on time or even be pushed out of school because they fail the required tests, lowering the pass rates for a school district. What are the appropriate strategies for ensuring that students meet standards? These two educators debate the effectiveness of retention as an effective approach to help students learn at an acceptable level before being promoted to the next grade.

YES

John Mohl teaches German and social studies at Cedarbrook Middle School in Wyncote, Pennsylvania.

When I first called on "Brendan," a recent transfer to the district, to read, he refused. His homework was copied from a friend if done at all and he failed to comprehend a passage after fumbling over words when I finally got him to read aloud. Despite his third-grade reading level, Brendan was allowed into eighth grade. He was a product of social promotion.

Social promotion has three detrimental effects on the educational system. It taxes both teachers and students. Promoting a student into a higher level of English when he lacks basic reading skills, as was the case with Brendan, places undue burden on future teachers and students. Socially promoted students monopolize teacher attention, and other students' learning opportunities are limited as a result.

Second, it sends a message to students that they can move on to the next level even if they lack the required knowledge or effort. I once taught a summer school class with two particularly unruly students who were unfazed by the threat of being held back for failing. They knew they'd be eighth graders regardless of their performance. They were right, and became burdens to their new teachers (that oversight, fortunately, was later rectified).

Social promotion also distances schools from their goals of fulfilling No Child Left Behind standards. How can anybody expect a student with elementary math skills to perform proficiently on an eighth-grade standardized math exam?

NO

Jennifer Slifer teaches sixth-grade language arts at Thomas Edison Magnet Middle School in Meriden, Connecticut.

Each year, we all have a "Brendan" or two and we are frustrated and angry that he advances with such evident skill deficiencies. But would Brendan be helped by retention, the traditional solution for struggling students?

Social promotion by itself is not a good practice. Retention does not, however, solve the problems of low-achieving students. Research shows that retained students do not improve their academic performance compared with similar counterparts who were promoted, and retained students struggle with self-esteem.

Social promotion isn't the answer if it means we send students on to the next grade ill-prepared for the workload. "Brendan" is failing, but so are we as educators if we don't provide the help he needs to keep up with his peers. So let's provide that help.

Is it time to review our centuries-old system of grouping students by age? Perhaps all students should be placed in multi-age classrooms. This arrangement would assist students who struggle to learn as quickly as their peers of the same age and would eliminate self-esteem issues caused by retention.

Another approach: Instead of retaining a student, why don't we promote struggling students with an individualized education plan (as we do for our special education students) to help them catch up to their peers? Most struggling students who are promoted do not meet the requirements for

(continued)

TEACHER PERSPECTIVES



(continued)

YES

Some argue that social promotion maintains the self-esteem of low-achieving students. I agree that humanism should be an important component in our teaching. But the “real world” has neither time nor regard for making sure every person feels worthwhile. Teachers have the responsibility to introduce, to some degree, the benefits of making the mark and the consequences of not doing so. Truth be told, I’d rather see Brendan held back in eighth than held back in life.

NO

special education but they do need assistance that, unfortunately, we are not mandated to provide.

Maybe it’s time to get serious about early intervention and provide funding for programs for struggling students *before* they reach middle and high school.

Our choices should not be just promoting students versus retaining them.

Passing struggling students to the next grade is a failure of the system if we don’t have a plan to help them catch up. But retention isn’t the answer, either.

Source: “Is Retention Better Than Social Promotion for Students?” NEA Today (March 2005), p. 48. Reprinted by permission of the National Education Association.

WHAT IS YOUR PERSPECTIVE ON THIS ISSUE?

Is retention better than social promotion for students?

To give your opinion, go to Chapter 3 of the companion website (www.ablongman.com/johnson14e) and click on Teacher Perspectives.

Dropping Out

Another challenge faced by some teenagers is the lack of engagement in school. Some do not see the value of finishing their education. Others do not see themselves as academically able students and find no reason to participate actively in their own learning. They are not meeting the minimal standards as determined on standardized tests, resulting in grade retention, which will prevent them from graduating with peers of the same age. They believe they can learn the lessons for survival more effectively outside school. As a result, they drop out of high school and college for different reasons, without realizing the harm it will cause them in the long term.

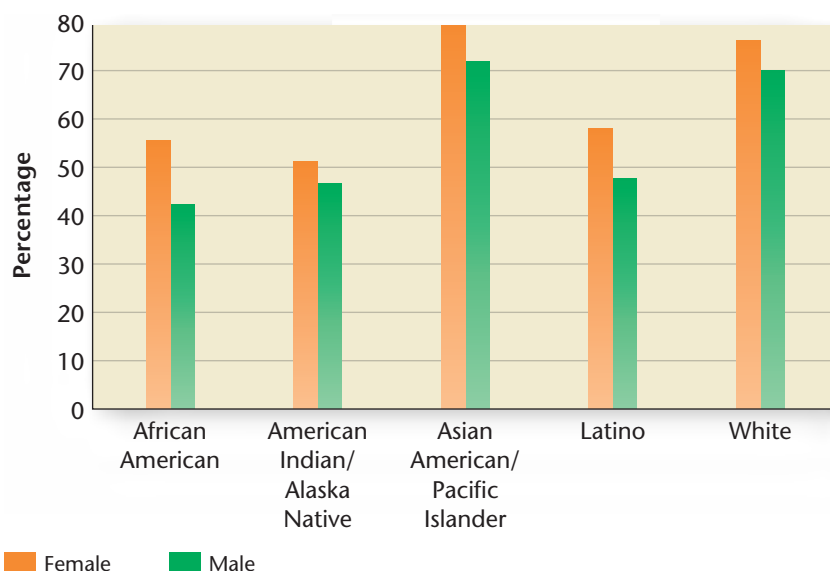
According to federal reports, 79 percent of eighteen- to twenty-one-year-olds had completed high school in 2003, the most recent year for which figures are available. However, by age twenty-four, 88 percent of the population had completed high school, the GED, or other alternative credentials.⁴⁴ A number of researchers are now questioning the federal statistics, indicating that they overstate graduation rates. The primary reason for the differences lies in the meaning of high school graduation. The federal legislation that supports elementary and secondary education, No Child Left Behind (NCLB), includes as graduates only students who receive regular standards-based diplomas on time with the class with which they began high school.

CROSS-REFERENCE

No Child Left Behind is discussed in greater detail in Chapters 1, 6, 8, and 10.

FIGURE 3.3**Graduation Rates by Sex and Racial or Ethnic Group**

Source: Gary Orfield, Daniel Losen, Johanna Wald, and Christopher B. Swanson, *Losing Our Future: How Minority Youth Are Being Left Behind by the Graduation Rate Crisis*. Cambridge, MA: The Civil Rights Project at Harvard University with Contributions from Urban Institute, Advocates for Children of New York, and The Civil Society Institute, 2004.



Both the Urban Institute and The Civil Rights Project at Harvard University have found that only 68 percent of the students who enter ninth grade graduate with a regular diploma at the end of the twelfth grade. The problem is particularly critical in large, urban, segregated schools. American Indians, African Americans, and Latinos have only a fifty-fifty chance of completing high school, placing them at great risk of not earning sustainable wages or being employed as adults. School districts with low graduation rates are more often in central cities. Rates are lowest in schools whose population is predominantly students of color (56%), includes a large percentage of English language learners (60%), comes from low-income families (58%), or has more students with disabilities than average (65%).⁴⁵

Graduation rates vary across ethnic and racial groups, as shown in Figure 3.3. Latino students continue to have one of the highest dropout rates. The largest proportion of Latino dropouts were born outside the United States. They may have not attended U.S. schools nor have completed more than elementary school in their countries of birth. Although first- and later-generation Latinos graduate at higher rates than immigrants, they are still two to three times more likely to drop out of school than their white peers.⁴⁶

Students from low-income families drop out of high school at a rate six times greater than that of students from middle- and high-income families.⁴⁷ A greater percentage of females finish high school than males, leading to concerns about fewer young men attending and completing college. Only two of three students with disabilities complete high school.⁴⁸ As one might expect, students who complete high school are more likely than dropouts to be employed. Sixty-three percent of high school graduates are in the labor force as compared to 45 percent of the population with less than a high-school diploma. More education does make a difference; 78 percent of college graduates are working.⁴⁹

Substance Use

One of the questions with which many teenagers struggle is whether to experiment with cigarettes, alcohol, or drugs. Although not as glamorized in films and advertisements as in the past, drinking and smoking are still associated with independence and adult behavior. Teens use drugs for different reasons. Sometimes biological predispositions or psychological problems trigger drug use. In other cases, social pressures, family problems, or self-hate lead young people to drugs.

The public worries about drug use. In the 2005 Phi Delta Kappa/Gallup Poll of the Public's Attitudes Toward Public Schools, respondents ranked the use of drugs as the fourth greatest problem that public schools face. Drug use fell behind the lack of financial support for schools, overcrowded schools, and lack of discipline.⁵⁰ Parents worry particularly about drug usage that may lead to **chemical dependency** in the future. Chemical dependency, such as addiction to drugs, alcohol, or tobacco, is one of the causes of social and academic problems among youths. People are judged to be dependent when they find that their need for the chemical substance is constant and they can no longer control their use. Dependency can be difficult to overcome and often requires professional treatment.

A large percentage of teenagers do try one or more drugs, but alcohol is the favorite, being used more than twice as often as other drugs. Fifty percent of twelfth graders have used an illicit drug at some time, but less than one in four has used one or more drugs in the past month. Younger students also use drugs. Just over one in five eighth graders have tried drugs, with eight percent of them using in the past month. Nine percent of eighth graders also report smoking cigarettes in the past month. Although the rate of usage is higher than the public may find acceptable, current usage by all teenagers is down from what it was in the mid-1970s and throughout the rest of the twentieth century as shown in Figure 3.4. The bad news

chemical dependency

The habitual use, for either psychological or physical needs, of a substance such as drugs, alcohol, or tobacco.

FIGURE 3.4

U.S. High School Seniors Reporting Use of Selected Substances in the Past Month

Source: L. D. Johnston, P. M. O'Malley, J. G. Bachman, and J. E. Schulenberg, *Monitoring the Future—National Results on Adolescent Drug Use: Overview of Key Findings, 2005*. Bethesda, MD: National Institute on Drug Abuse, 2006.

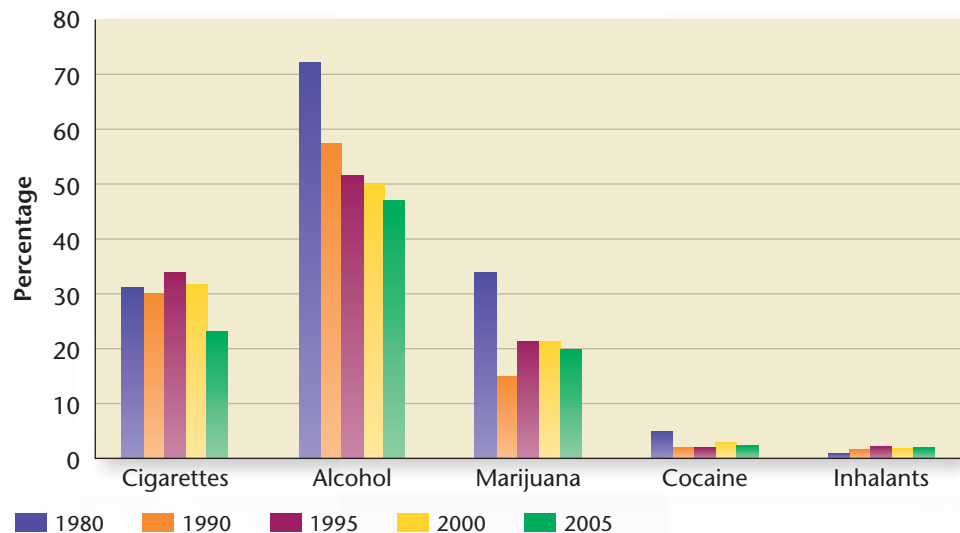
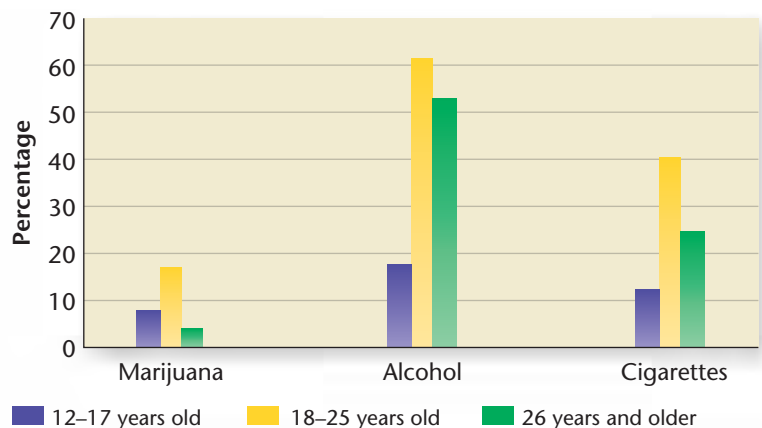


FIGURE 3.5**Current U.S. Drug Use by Type of Drug and Age Group**

Sources: U.S. Census Bureau, *Statistical Abstract of the United States: 2006*, 125th edition, Washington, DC: U.S. Government Printing Office, 2006, Table 194; and U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration, *2003 National Survey on Drug Use and Health*, 2006, retrieved from www.oas.samhsa.gov/nhsda.htm#NHSDAinfo.



is the high rates of nonmedical use of prescription pain killers such as Vicodin and Oxy Contin as well as sedatives/barbiturates.⁵¹ Students who plan to attend college are less likely to use drugs. Male teenagers are more likely than females to use drugs other than cigarettes.⁵² Drug use continues to be more prevalent among adults than teens as shown in Figure 3.5.

Violence

Many adults think that youths commit a larger proportion of violent crime than they actually do. Less than two of 1,000 juveniles were arrested for a violent crime in 2003. Eight percent of people arrested for murder are juveniles. The most serious charge in half the juvenile arrests is larceny/theft, simple assault, disorderly conduct, drug abuse, or liquor law violation.⁵³ Juvenile arrest rates for violent crimes are at the lowest level in two decades for all areas except aggravated assault. On the other hand, arrest rates for drug abuse violations have more than doubled since 1990.⁵⁴ Although most crimes are committed by males, juvenile arrest rates for females are increasing. African American youth are almost four times more likely to be incarcerated than their white peers. American Indian and Latino youth are 2.6 and 1.8 times as likely to be incarcerated.⁵⁵ Students with disabilities such as



Many schools are combating youth violence through conflict resolution and other programs that help students learn to respect others, stop harassment, and effectively handle interpersonal problems.

mental disorders, attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD), and learning disabilities are also overrepresented in the prison population.⁵⁶

It is a myth that most murdered youths are killed by their peers in gang shootings and other conflicts. In fact, automobile accidents account for 77 percent of teen deaths.⁵⁷ Adults are most likely to be the perpetrators of other violence against teens. One of every four victims of violent crime is a juvenile, the majority being female; one of three juvenile victims are under twelve years old. However, murder victims are also more likely to be male; African American youth are four times more at risk of murder than white youth.⁵⁸

Crime is related more directly to poverty than to the age of the criminal. At all age levels, persons with low incomes are more likely than persons with higher incomes to commit crimes. They are also more likely to be the victims of violent crimes. One reason for the higher crime rate for burglary and auto theft among teens is that a larger proportion of teens than adults live in poverty. Low-income teenagers commit crimes at about the same rate as adults who live in poverty. At the same time, most low-income people do not commit crimes.

Gangs involve more students than ever. A 2004 survey of law enforcement agencies found a total of 24,000 gangs and approximately 760,000 gang members in the United States.⁵⁹ Gangs are found in all states and in most large cities; a growing number of smaller cities and rural areas are also becoming home to gangs. There are some female gangs, but most gangs are made up of young men. For youths of both sexes, gangs can provide a sense of place and a feeling of importance as well as a strong identity structure. Gangs often provide a discipline that has been missing from the experiences of many young people.

Suicide is another form of violence that affects the student population. Seventeen percent of high schoolers report seriously considering suicide, and 9 percent actually attempt it. Latino and white teenagers are more likely to commit suicide than members of other groups. Adolescent and young adult males are more likely to commit suicide, but young women are more likely to think about it and make nonlethal attempts. Gay teens are at particular risk, being two to three times more likely to attempt suicide than their peers.⁶⁰ Suicide attempts are often calls for help. Teachers should be alert for signs that may suggest the need for a referral to other professionals. Providing support for gay students and recognizing signs of depression could lead to a reduction in teen suicide rates.



Many high schools students work after school and in the summer.

Economic Realities

Young people may be worried and somewhat pessimistic about their future economic conditions. However, they continue to seek out postsecondary education to improve their job and career opportunities. Sixty-four percent of high school graduates go to college immediately after high school. African American and Latino students attend at lower rates than whites. A larger number of females (57%) are attending college than males (43%).⁶¹ Fifty-three percent of low-income students go to college as compared to 80 percent of high-income students.⁶²

Many young people begin to work while they are in high school. Young people in low-income families have historically worked to help out the family. Although this pattern con-

tinues today, students from middle- and high-income families are more likely to work as teenagers. Their parents are also more likely to have finished college. Nearly half of white teens work as compared to one-fourth of African American and Latino teens. Over 40 percent of sixteen- and seventeen-year-olds have jobs, with males more likely to work than females. There is evidence of a strong positive link between working in high school and obtaining a job after graduation. However, teens working over 20 hours a week are more likely to have been suspended and neglect homework than their peers. At the same time, they are less likely to skip school or have serious behavioral or emotional problems.⁶³

After-school jobs are particularly beneficial to students from low-income families who do not have family or school connections to help them find employment. Unfortunately, many students who could derive long-term benefits from working while in high school—those in inner-city areas—have limited access to jobs. The lack of employment opportunities contributes to low self-esteem and to pessimism about the future and the value of school. In addition, in communities experiencing high unemployment, many young people do not have opportunities to learn how to work either through their own experiences or through the modeling of working adults.

Journal for Reflection

1. Thinking back on your childhood and youth, which of the challenges discussed in this section did you face?
2. How were you able to manage the challenge in positive ways?
3. How did your family or educators provide support to you during this period?

Power in Society

A democratic society is built on the principles of social equality and respect for individuals within society. However, many persons of color, limited English speakers, women, persons with disabilities, gays and lesbians, people with low incomes, and people affiliated with religions other than Protestantism do not experience the equality to which most members of the dominant group appear to be entitled.

Schools provide an example of institutions in which power relationships have been developed and maintained. Students' work and class rules are determined by teachers. Teachers are evaluated and disciplined when necessary by principals who report to a superintendent of schools. The rules and procedures for managing schools traditionally have been established by authorities who are not directly involved with the school and who may not even live in the community served by the school. Parents, especially in economically disadvantaged areas, often feel powerless in the education of their children.

Power not only allows domination over the powerless, but it also allows access to societal benefits such as good housing, tax deductions, the best schools, and social services. A more equitable sharing of resources for schools would guarantee that all students, regardless of family income or ethnic background, would have qualified teachers, sufficient books



Teacher–student relationships, as with many other relationships in U.S. society, are defined by one person or group having power over others.

and other instructional resources, well-maintained buildings and playgrounds, and access to high-level academic knowledge. Such equality does not exist across schools that students attend today.

Every American ought to have the right to be treated as he would wish to be treated, as one would wish his children to be treated.

John F. Kennedy

Ethnocentrism

Most of the time, we are not aware of our own power or the lack thereof, as a result of our cultural upbringing. This phenomenon often leads to **ethnocentrism**, in which we view our culture as superior to all others. Ethnocentrism is sometimes promoted through patriotism, especially at times when a country is involved in a political conflict with another country. The other country is often denigrated through name-calling based on negative stereotypes of its citizens.

Ethnocentrism is not limited to relations with other nations; it often occurs between groups within the United States. For example, homosexuals are victims of abuse by some radio talk show hosts and some religious groups. Members of some religious groups believe that their cultural values and lifestyles are the only correct ones; they do not tolerate alternative beliefs. Many members of the dominant culture believe that their culture is superior to those with roots outside Europe.

One of the manifestations of ethnocentrism is the inability to accept differences among groups as natural and appropriate. The values and behaviors of the dominant group become the norms against which others are measured. The dominant group often treats the differences as deficits that must be overcome through education and special programs. For teachers to help all students learn, they must confront their own ethnocentrism. Many teachers do not recognize that they subtly, and sometimes overtly, transmit feelings of superiority over students and the groups to which they belong as they deliver curriculum and interact with students and their families. Teachers show their respect for diverse groups when they include them in the curriculum.

Prejudice

Power relationships among groups influence young people's perceptions of themselves and the members of other groups. One of the struggles of youth is the construction of self, including identification and affiliation with one's gender and a racial or ethnic group. This process appears to be integrally tied to identifying "otherness," which involves assigning characteristics and behaviors to members of other groups to distinguish them from oneself. The construction of "others" places them either in a dominating or submissive role relative to the individual. This construction is often dependent on stereotypes that are promoted among peers and reinforced by society.

Our perceptions of others not only affect how we see ourselves in relationship to them but also influence how society treats members of different groups. Prejudice is a preconceived negative attitude toward members of specific ethnic, racial, religious, or socioeconomic groups. This prejudice sometimes extends to people with disabilities or people of a different sexual orientation or gender. Such negative attitudes are based on numerous factors, including information about members of a specific group that is stereotypical and many times not true. The prejudiced individual may have had little or no direct social contact with members of the other group.

An individual's prejudice may have a limited negative impact on members of the other group. However, these attitudes are passed on to children through the **socialization** process. Also, prejudiced attitudes can be transformed into discriminatory

ethnocentrism

The belief that members of one's own group are superior to the members of other groups.

socialization

The process of learning the social norms of one's culture.

behavior that prevents members of a group from being interviewed for jobs, joining social clubs, or being treated like other professionals. Prejudices are often reinforced by schools in which a disproportionate number of students in low-achieving or special education tracks are males, English language learners, students of color, or students from low-income families. Observing that these students are not enrolled in academically challenging courses, some students form stereotypes of their low-income and foreign-born peers as academically inferior. Through this process, many students from low-income families and ethnic minority groups are prevented from gaining the skills and knowledge necessary to enter college or an apprentice trade.

Discrimination

Many members of groups other than the dominant culture have experienced discrimination through practices that exclude them from equal access to housing, jobs, and educational opportunities. They also sometimes experience unfair treatment by store clerks, police officers, and educators. Having experienced discrimination, members of excluded groups can describe differential power relations among groups. Members of groups who do not experience discrimination often have a difficult time acknowledging the differences in power and advantage. As a result, rights based on group membership versus those of individuals are debated on college campuses, in board meetings of corporations, by politicians, and in many formal and informal neighborhood meetings. These discussions focus on programs that are perceived to favor one group over another, such as affirmative action, bilingual education, or equal funding for male and female athletes. An honest examination of power relationships and experiences with differences highlights the struggles inherent in a democratic society.

In addition to supporting individual prejudice and discrimination, society has historically discriminated against members of powerless groups. Laws and systems that promote and support the dominant culture have been designed to help maintain its superiority and the power of its members. “English only” laws that prevent official documents and communications from being printed or spoken in any language other than English represent but one example of these efforts. Such practices have often become institutionalized in state and federal laws, the judicial system, schools, and other societal institutions. They have become so ingrained in the system that it is difficult to recognize them unless one is directly affected by the discriminatory policies.

Racism

An assumption of superiority is at the center of **racism**. It is not a topic easily discussed in most classrooms. It is intertwined with the lived experiences of many people and evokes emotions of anger, guilt, shame, and despair. Most people have learned that the United States is a just and democratic society. They find it difficult to confront the societal contradictions that support racism. Educators must acknowledge the advantages, as well as the damage, caused by racism in order to overcome its negative impact on children and youth.

Students and adults go through stages of racial identity as they address issues of discrimination and their own racial identification. Teachers should recognize that students will be moving back and forth across the stages outlined in Table 3.1 in their struggle to know themselves. One of the first steps in this process is to begin to confront one’s own racial identity. How close is one to an internalization or autonomy stage? If educators have not struggled with issues of racism, how it affects their lives, and how they may contribute to its perpetuation or elimination, it will be impossible for them to develop antiracist classrooms.

CROSS-REFERENCE

Legal issues on discrimination are discussed in Chapter 6.

Racism is so universal in this country, so widespread and deep-seated, that it is invisible because it is so normal.

Shirley Chisolm

CROSS-REFERENCE

For information on the education of African American, Asian American, and Latino students, see Chapter 2.

racism

The conscious or unconscious belief that racial differences make one group superior to others.

TABLE 3.1**Development of Racial Identity**

Black Racial Identity	White Racial Identity	Latino Identity
<p><i>Preencounter:</i> African American individuals have assimilated into the mainstream culture, accepting many of the beliefs and values of the dominant society, including negative stereotypes about blacks.</p> <p><i>Encounter:</i> African Americans usually enter this stage when they are confronted directly by a racist act such as rejection by white peers or racial slurs or attacks. They are then forced to confront their own racial identity.</p> <p><i>Immersion–Emersion:</i> One’s identification as an African American becomes paramount. At first this identification is manifested in anger against whites, but it evolves into a growing knowledge base about African American history and culture. The result of this exploration is an emerging security in a newly defined and affirmed sense of self.</p> <p><i>Internalization:</i> Individuals begin to build coalitions with members of other nonwhite or nondominant groups and to develop relationships with whites who respect and acknowledge them.</p> <p><i>Internalization–Commitment:</i> Individuals are able both to maintain and to move beyond their personal racial identity—to be concerned with African Americans as a group.</p>	<p><i>Contact:</i> White individuals are not aware of themselves as racial beings and are oblivious to acts of individual racism. They have a color-blind view of race and racism.</p> <p><i>Disintegration:</i> Whites usually enter this stage as a result of some experiences with race that lead to the recognition that race does matter, that racism exists, and that they are white. They may show empathy when blacks experience racial discrimination but often fail to understand their anger.</p> <p><i>Reintegration:</i> Individuals believe consciously or unconsciously that whites are superior to people of color.</p> <p><i>Pseudoindependence:</i> One begins the intellectual process of learning about and fighting against racism. One begins to understand that whites have responsibility for maintaining or eliminating racism.</p> <p><i>Immersion–Emersion:</i> Individuals begin to grasp the need to challenge racism. They often experience feelings of guilt and shame for the racist ideas that they believed in the past.</p> <p><i>Autonomy:</i> White individuals have abandoned cultural, institutional, and personal racism. They have a more flexible view of the world, their own whiteness, and other racial groups. They value and seek out cross-racial/cultural experiences.</p>	<p><i>White:</i> They identify themselves as white, not acknowledging their Latino culture.</p> <p><i>Undifferentiated:</i> They accept the norms of the dominant culture without question.</p> <p><i>Person of color:</i> They identify themselves as persons of color, but lack knowledge about their Latino culture.</p> <p><i>Latino ethnic group:</i> They see themselves as members of one of many groups in the United States. They also can identify both the negative and positive aspects of their group.</p> <p><i>Latino:</i> They place their Latino culture, history, and traditions at the center of their lives.</p> <p><i>Latino-integrated:</i> They begin to identify themselves not just as Latino, but by their specific ethnic group (e.g., Mexican American).</p>

Sources: “Black Racial Identity” column is based on the five stages of black racial identity developed by W. E. Cross, Jr. and described in Beverly Daniel Tatum, “Talking about Race, Learning about Racism: The Application of Racial Identity Development Theory in the Classroom,” *Harvard Educational Review*, 62(1) (1992), pp. 1–24. “White Racial Identity” column is based on the six stages of white racial identity developed by J. F. Helms and described in Robert T. Carter, “Is White a Race? Expressions of White Racial Identity,” in Michelle Fine, Lois Weis, Linda C. Powell, and L. Mun Wong, Eds., *Off White: Readings on Race, Power, and Society*. New York: Routledge, 1997. The “Latino Identity” column is based on B. M. Ferdman and P. I. Gallegos, “Racial identity development and Latinos in the United States,” in C. L. Wijeyesinghe and B. W. Jackson, III, Eds., *New Perspectives on Racial Identity Development: A Theoretical and Practical Anthology* (pp. 32–66). New York: New York University Press, 2001.



Global Perspectives

Coming to Justice

The Anne Frank House was established in 1957 as a museum in Amsterdam in memory of Anne Frank and members of her family who were victims of the Holocaust during World War II. In addition to being a museum, the Anne Frank House is now a nonprofit organization with a goal of combating racism in all its forms around the globe. One of its guiding principles is the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, which is available on the Internet at www.unhchr.ch/udhr.

A new project of the Anne Frank House is a four-day program for older teenagers to introduce them to justice and injustice in an international context. The program, *Coming to Justice*, “is confrontational, challenging youth to think critically about their own views and assumptions, dispelling many myths regarding international conflicts and justice along the way.”⁶⁴ During the first day of the program, students reflect on definitions of justice and injustice and are introduced to the experiences of Anne Frank and her family. Attention changes on the second day to the early-1990s conflict in the Balkans. On the third day students attend a trial at the International War Crimes Tribunal in The Hague, the Netherlands. On the final day students meet with people who have been eyewitnesses to these conflicts with a focus on justice and appropriate remedies for injustice. Participants report that they learn in this international context how complex the concepts of justice and injustice are as they relate them to their own local situations.

Questions for Reflection

1. What is the Universal Declaration of Human Rights?
2. Why is the study of justice in an international arena important?

Sexism and Other Isms

Women of all racial and ethnic groups, people with disabilities, gays, lesbians, persons with low incomes, the elderly, and the young also suffer from discrimination and their lack of power in society. Many individuals are members of more than one of these powerless groups. For example, a low-income Latina may be triply harmed as a result of racism, classism, and **sexism**—the cultural attitudes and practices that devalue women. This woman’s chances of reaching a comfortable standard of living may be severely limited by her circumstances and group membership.

Some persons with disabilities and their advocates argue that **ableism** greatly disadvantages people with disabilities and their ability to live a full and productive life. Ableism not only leads to viewing persons with disabilities as inferior to others but also results in treatments and accommodations designed to help them become more like persons without disabilities. These efforts are not necessarily in the best interests of individuals with disabilities. For example, activists with a hearing disability may reject the view that they should become hearing through surgery and other aids. Being deaf is their normality, even though it does not seem normal to those who hear. In other instances, teachers and aides without disabilities sometimes provide assistance or do things for persons with disabilities rather than encouraging them to learn for themselves. For educators, the strategy of overhelpfulness may be easier and less time-consuming. Allowing individuals with disabilities to make the effort themselves may require a great deal of patience, but the long-term payoff for the student could be self-sufficiency.

sexism

The conscious or unconscious belief that men are superior to women and subsequent behavior and action that maintain the superior, powerful position of males.

ableism

The conscious or unconscious belief that persons with disabilities are inferior to persons without disabilities.

Journal for Reflection

1. What prejudice or discrimination have you experienced? How long ago? How often?
2. What discrimination might persons from a group other than your own experience that you don’t?
3. Why do some sociologists find that whites are privileged in society?

Resiliency

Many young people have the **resiliency** to overcome disastrous childhood and adolescent experiences and go on to become successful workers, professionals, and community leaders. The challenges discussed earlier in this chapter along with growing up in poverty can place children and youth at risk for developmental delays, behavior problems, and poor academic performance. The students that are most at risk live in dangerous environments that lead to health risks and threats to their safety. They may be attending schools in which students are not expected to perform at high levels and are not being pushed to do so. Their own parents may be so busy coping with several jobs and their own problems that they cannot support their children.⁶⁵

Journal for Reflection

1. What characteristics do you have that make you resilient?
2. How did your parents or other adults help you develop resiliency?
3. How do you think a teacher could assist students at risk to develop skills that will assist them in facing the obstacles in their lives?

With all of these problems, some students are still able to perform well, even at high levels, in school. Their personal attributes give them strength and fortitude and help them confront overwhelming obstacles that seem designed to prevent them from reaching their potential. Children who are resilient are able to cope effectively with stress. They believe in their own **self-efficacy**, can handle change, and have good social skills. Higher family SES contributes positively to resiliency, but is not required. Other positive factors are family members who are involved with their children, provide caring environments, help their children with homework, attend to grades, and participate in school activities. Resilient students have positive relationships with teachers and lack exposure to violence or trauma. They are also helped by quality educational and recreational opportunities in school and their neighborhoods.⁶⁶ Regardless of the challenges they face, they are usually social, optimistic, energetic, cooperative, inquisitive, attentive, helpful, punctual, and on task.

Summary

TODAY'S FAMILIES. Students in schools today come from diverse family structures. Although a majority of children live with their mother and father, many live with single parents, grandparents, adoptive parents, foster parents, gay or lesbian parents, or relatives.

WHERE STUDENTS LIVE. Poverty is greater in central city and urban areas, but it is growing in suburban areas. Schools in suburban areas, except those closest to urban areas, have greater financial support, and students perform at higher levels on achievement tests.

CHALLENGES OF CHILDHOOD AND YOUTH. Teenagers struggle with economic and social realities that can prove dangerous when they make inappropriate decisions. The poverty suffered by young people contributes to some of them engaging in violent acts and sometimes dropping out of school. At the same time, many young people exhibit amazing resiliency, allowing them to overcome economic and social hardships to finish school and become productive adults.

POWER IN SOCIETY. Members of groups that have controlled most of the country's institutions for centuries wield the most power in society. Being white, high-income, and English speakers provides benefits over people who are not white or

resiliency

The ability to overcome overwhelming obstacles to achieve and be successful in school and life.

self-efficacy

The belief that one can control one's life.

speak a language other than English. The prejudice that young people learn at home and in school can lead to discriminatory practices that harm people who are different from themselves.

RESILIENCY. Although some children and youth face major obstacles because their families are low-income and/or they live in unsupportive homes or communities, some are able to overcome problems and become successful in school. Effective parents and supportive teachers and neighborhoods can contribute to the development of resiliency for at risk students.

Discussion Questions

1. Families face a number of social and economic challenges that affect the well-being of children in this country. Which factors do you think are most damaging to children? What should teachers and schools do to help students develop resiliency and be able to achieve academically under adverse circumstances?
2. The number of students in central cities and rural areas are nearly equal as is the income status of the populations. What are the obstacles to a good education that students face in these two different settings?
3. Children and teenagers need adult support as they cope with the challenges of adolescence. Who do you think should be providing this support? What should be the role of teachers in providing the support?
4. What signs might teachers see to make them wonder whether a child or adolescent is being abused? What steps should you take if you suspect abuse or other risk-taking behaviors?
5. Some researchers are suggesting that the testing requirements of No Child Left Behind (NCLB) are pushing students out of school. Some school districts have been accused of underrepresenting the number of dropouts. Why might a school system want to underreport the number of dropouts? Why would a sceptic suggest that the NCLB requirements are pushing some students out of school?

School-Based Observations

1. Visit schools in rural, urban, and suburban communities and systematically record characteristics such as the ethnic and racial composition of the students, the income levels of families, the size of the student population and teaching force, the student–teacher ratios, the general school climate, and other observable characteristics. What are the similarities and differences in the schools in different types of communities?
2. In your visits to a school, determine the types of programs available to assist students in handling issues of sexuality, drugs, or violence in their own lives. What approach is the school using to address these issues? Is there any parental involvement in the development of these programs?

Portfolio Development

1. At one of the schools with which you are working, identify the characteristics of students in gifted and special education classes. In a paper for your portfolio, describe the context of the school and present your data regarding the characteristics of students in these courses. Analyze the data for signs of discrimination against the members of a group of students and write your conclusions.
2. Prepare a paper on the educational opportunities for homeless students in your community or another area

of the state with larger numbers of homeless families. What services is the school district providing to these students? How are they being integrated into the schools they attend? Why are some schools more successful at serving homeless students than others? Conclude your paper by reflecting on how you will work with homeless children when you become a teacher.

Preparing for Certification

STUDENT EXPERIENCES AND DEMOCRACY

1. One of the topics covered in the Praxis II Principles of Learning and Teaching (PLT) test is “becoming familiar with relevant aspects of students’ background knowledge and experiences.” Effective teachers identify methods and procedures for gathering background information about their students. What types of information will you want to have about your students and their backgrounds? What methods will you use to gather background information that will help you teach more effectively and also respect the privacy of students and their families?

2. Answer the following multiple-choice question, which is similar to items in Praxis and other state certification tests.

Six-year-old Heather lives with her mother, who works as a waitress. Ms. Atwater, Heather’s teacher, notes that Sara often arrives at school late and is inattentive in class. Heather says she frequently stays up past midnight if other people in the house are up. Ms. Atwater has observed bruises on Heather’s arms and legs, suggesting that Heather may be being abused. What is the first action Ms. Atwater should take?

- A. Visit the home to investigate
 - B. Arrange a conference with Heather's mother
 - C. Report the suspected abuse to the principal
 - D. Contact the county Office of Child Welfare
3. Answer the following short-answer question, which is similar to items in Praxis and other state certification tests. After you have completed your written response, use the scoring guide in the ETS *Test at a*

Websites

www.aauw.org The website of the American Association of University Women (AAUW) addresses the education and lifelong learning of girls and women, including many suggestions and resources for fighting sexual harassment.

www.childrensdefense.org The website of the Children's Defense Fund (CDF) includes data about the status of children in the United States. It also includes information on CDF's programs and activist work.

www.nationalhomeless.org The website for the National Coalition for the Homeless has information bulletins on homelessness in the United States.

www.calib.com/nccanch The National Clearinghouse on Child Abuse and Neglect Information's website serves as

Further Reading

Children's Defense Fund. (2005). *The State of America's Children in America's Union: 2005*. Washington, DC: Author. Information on the status of children today, including data on what happens to children daily in the United States. The report also includes a discussion of the No Child Left Behind Act and makes recommendations for families and others interested in the welfare of the nation's children.

Flores-Gonzalez, Nilda. (2002). *School Kids/Street Kids*. New York: Teachers College Press. Explores why Puerto Rican students in an urban high school stay, leave, and return to school. The implications of identification as a "school-kid" or "street-kid" are examined.

Glance materials to assess your response. Can you revise your response to improve your score?

Identify two specific actions Ms. Atwater might take to connect school and Heather's home environment for the benefit of Heather's learning. For each action, explain how that action will benefit Heather's learning. Base your response on principles of fostering positive relationships with family to support student learning and well-being.

a national resource for professionals seeking information on the prevention, identification, and treatment of child abuse and neglect.

www.cgcs.org The Council of the Great City Schools is a coalition of the nation's largest urban public school systems. The website includes promising practices for serving students in urban schools.

www.nccj.org The National Conference of Community and Justice is a human relations organization dedicated to fighting bias, bigotry, and racism in the United States. It promotes understanding and respect among all races, religions, and cultures through advocacy, conflict resolution, and education.

Kozol, Jonathan. (2000). *Ordinary Resurrections: Children in the Years of Hope*. New York: Crown. A description of living and being educated in the inner city through the experiences of inner-city children and the adults who try to assist them. The stories of individual children raise issues about recognizing the value and dignity of students as we teach.

Males, Mike A. (1999). *Framing Youth: 10 Myths about the Next Generation*. Monroe, ME: Common Courage Press. A debunking of myths about teenagers that have characterized them as the worst generation. Data about what teenagers are really like and what they need are a helpful resource for educators and parents.



Go to Allyn and Bacon's MyLabSchool (www.mylabschool.com) and complete the following activity for Chapter 3. Click on MyLabSchool **Case Archive**, then click on **On the Frontlines: Connecting with Families**.