

Schooling and Health: The Challenges of Today's Adults

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Questions for Discussion

- (1) How do we explain the effects of education attainment on health outcomes and what don't we know?
- (2) What social and emotional factors are affecting the lives of high school graduates, dropouts, certificate holders, and special populations such as immigrants, undocumented students, and LGBTQs?
- (3) What are the stresses and anxieties of college students in two- and four-year postsecondary schools?
- (4) What conflicts and pressures are affecting the everyday lives and future education plans of 24-year olds?

Effects of Education on Health

- While education is related to income and occupational choice it accounts for only part of the education's effect on health outcomes.
 - Increasing levels of education lead to different thinking and decision-making patterns, improve critical thinking skills, and provide individuals with better access to information.
 - Education also increases understanding of the nature of scientific inquiry and trust in scientific evidence.
- If education and training are a major driver in increasing cognition skills and key mechanisms for producing more healthy individuals, what does the evidence suggest are the major challenges for today's adults?

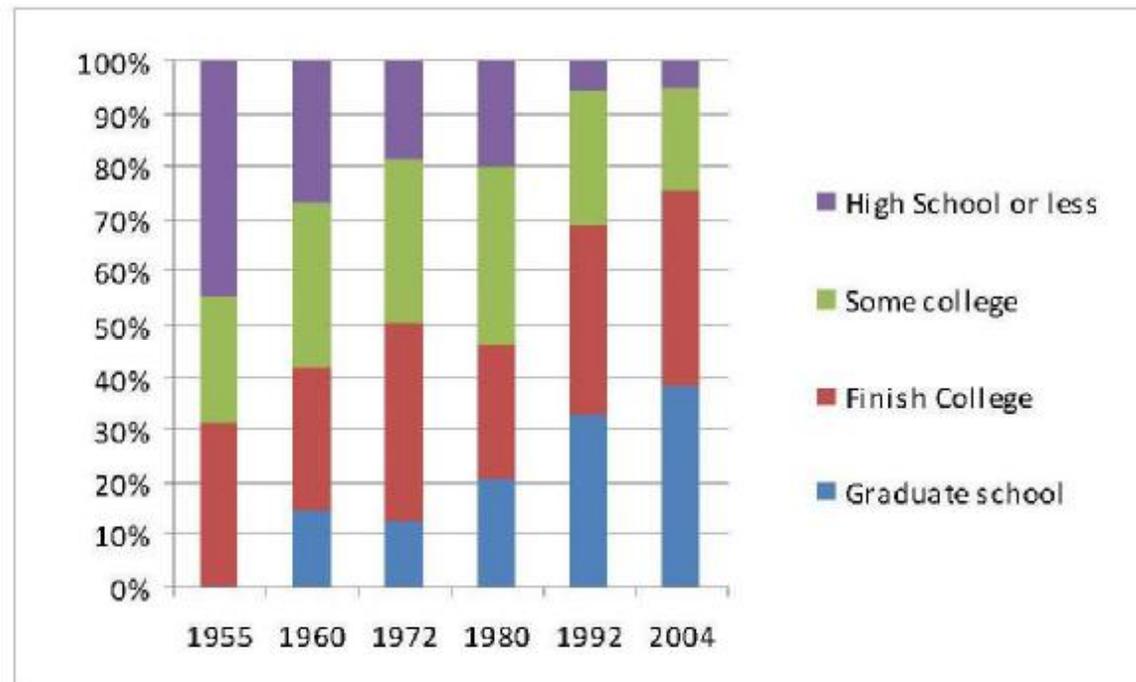
High School Graduates and Dropouts

- The high school graduation rate in the US has not changed significantly since the 1970s, but is uneven among some suburban districts which can be as high as 90% and some urban districts which can be as low as 53%
- The dropout rate has declined from 12% in 1990 to 7% in 2010, however the situation for black male dropouts is particularly dire: nearly 70% of black male dropouts will spend time in prison by their mid-30s.
- School violence continues to be a problem particularly in urban areas. Heller, Pollack, Ader, and Ludwig (2013) suggest that powerful root causes to violence among teenagers can be mediated by altering errors in judgment and decision making. Education can improve health if we recognize that there are social decision making skills that can be taught.

Certificate Holders

- ☛ This group is often forgotten when we examine relationships between education and health.
- ☛ Based on a recent pilot, about 12.7% of 18-24 year-olds hold credentials other than academic degrees.
- Youth aged around 20 are more likely to work in wholesale and retail trade, manufacturing, construction and hotels and restaurants, because many of these jobs require no higher education and work experience.
 - Due to the global financial crisis, the trend has been for these jobs to be temporary and part-time.
 - Young people are trapped in non-standard or informal type of jobs that don't meet their ambitions and the transition to more permanent and better-paid work continues to be delayed-a large number of young workers are still in temporary jobs after 5 years of leaving secondary schooling.
 - These type of jobs do not have health insurance and the situation may lead to frustration, discontent, and lack of ability to formulate successful pathways into more stable employment, training, and intimate relationships.

Educational Expectations of High School Seniors 1955-2004



Note: *For the 1955 sample, there was not a separate category for graduate school. Data from senior samples of the Educational Testing Service study 1955 (weighted); Project Talent 1960 (weighted); NLS-72 (weighted); HS&B 1980 (weighted); NELS:88-94 (weighted); ELS 92-04 (weighted).

Table from *Ambitious Generation* (Schneider & Stevenson 1999:75), with 2004 data added.

More than Rising Aspirations

- § Unaligned ambitions– inconsistent knowledge base and understanding between educational expectations and career plans
- § Students and parents uninformed about the types of academic preparation, credentials, and degrees needed for certain types of jobs
- § Mismatch is most prevalent among low-income and minority students
- § Fundamental issues of knowledge, values, and individual preferences also enter into the process regardless of a student's abilities and interests



Two-Year College Students

Almost half of the nation's young adults attend an institution of higher education part-or-full-time.

- Health services are present on many of the nation's campuses, but little information is available about the scope and utilization of health services beyond what is self-reported.
 - Better information is needed to understand the contribution of student health services to young adult health care services as well as for campus health service planning and administration.

Two-Year College Students

- Two-year schools have become the answer for many lower-SES and lower-ability students, but low rates of successful transfer and multiple years spent in remedial education stymie these students' Bachelor degree ambitions.
 - Many low-income, minority, and first generation college students who have the academic qualifications to attend a selective four-year institution choose instead to attend a less-selective school, a two-year school, and in some cases decide not to enroll.
 - This “under-matching” prevalent among those demographic groups, many of whom are also located in rural areas.
- Under-matched students are less likely than their peers to complete their degree on time, and more likely to dropout.
- These students face multiple threats to navigating the transition to postsecondary education:
 - Lack of information about college options
 - The need to work while in school
 - Psychosocial barriers including the fear of failure, resistance to leaving home, and lower academic self-esteem
 - Lack of financial aid knowledge
 - Complexity of the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA)

Four-Year College Students

- Demographically, the number of slots at the best universities has remained somewhat constant while the number of college-eligible students has risen, creating increased competition at most four-year schools.
 - Research shows the disconnect between ambitions and achievement and suggests that young adults do not know how to achieve their academic goals or make successful occupational choices.
 - They are often directionless and unrealistic about the world of work, the knowledge and skills they need to obtain a job, and the steps for securing stable employment.
 - However, this is not always the case-there are some young adults who are successful in reaching their educational and occupational goals.

After Graduation...Now What?

- Problem of unrealized expectations
- Difficulty in finding full-time work
- Unpaid internship opportunities
- Plans to return to school
- Vulnerability and anxiety for both parents and adults

Some Issues for Research

- Importance of not conflating age and status—need to conduct longitudinal cohort designs that allow for analyses of subgroups.
- Stop relying on self-reports of health services
- Conduct more randomized trials of health related interventions
- Use technology such as smart phones to learn more about subjective well-being and physical health.