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Diversity and the Transition to Adulthood in America, by **Phoebe Ho, Hyunjoon Park**, and **Grace Kao**. Oakland, CA: University of California Press, 2022. 241 pp. \$29.95 paper. ISBN: 9780520302662.

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“Coming of age,” a cultural cliché but an elusive process, typically connotes the changes that accompany the exit from adolescence and the entry into adult roles via status transitions from school to work, and from one’s family of origin to the formation of new intimate relationships, notably marriage and parenthood. This slim book is a lucid, engaging, holistic, and systematic account of the diverse and even diverging paths to adulthood traversed today by millions of young people in the United States—reflecting a rapidly changing society that has been transformed over the past half century.

A salient theme of the book is how race, ethnicity, and nativity matter. American society has become increasingly ethnically and racially diverse—notably by the entry of tens of millions of immigrants, chiefly from Latin America and Asia, drawn from a wide range of cultures, classes and countries. In 1970, only 4.7 percent of the U.S. population was foreign-born (the nadir in U.S. history); that share had tripled by 2018. Moreover, racial and ethnic diversity in the US is increasing more quickly among young people than the general population—5 in 10 people ages 6 to 21 belonged to racial and ethnic minority groups in 2018, compared to fewer than 2 in 10 in 1968.

To be sure, broad social trends over the past half century have variously affected the timetables to adulthood of all young people—such as the growth in college attendance, the delays in marriage and parenthood—but those shifts are more visible for some groups than others. As the authors point out, the American narrative of adulthood is largely based on a White middle-class ideal, which misrepresents and oversimplifies the complexity and paradoxes of contemporary adult transitions and their structural underpinnings.

To frame their analysis, the authors focus on five traditional milestones: finishing school, working full-time, establishing residential independence from parents, getting married, and becoming a parent. They examine these separately and in relation to each other, seeking to understand diverging patterns of attainment of those milestones across race, ethnicity, and nativity, and to separate young people’s thoughts and feelings about adulthood from the structural conditions that have placed traditional markers out of the reach of many.

The bulk of the analysis relies on a five-year merged cross-sectional sample from the American Community Survey, of more than 1.4 million White, Black, Hispanic and Asian young men and

women who were ages 25 to 34 between 2013 and 2017. The foreign-born are restricted to the “1.5 generation”—immigrants who arrived in the United States at age 13 or younger.

The findings are presented systematically chapter by chapter. Chapter 2 focuses on two milestones—education and employment—broken down by race/panethnicity, nativity and gender; it contextualizes attainment patterns amid changing labor markets and economic conditions, including the Great Recession; and compares them to parallel data on young adults from selected OECD countries. In an era of widening economic inequality, adult transitions play out in contexts of racial and ethnic socioeconomic disparities, and immigrants themselves arrive with vastly different levels of education (indeed, the most and the least educated groups in the United States are immigrants). The importance of education is a recurrent theme throughout.

Chapter 3 focuses on the other three milestones—residential independence and family formation—which show greater disparities in the rising share of young adults living with their parents, delays and declines in marriage and childbearing, and a weakening association between marriage and parenthood as more children are born outside marriage. All of these in turn are interrelated with educational attainment. A central finding is that experiences in the transition to adulthood differ especially between those who are college-educated and those who are not; while there is substantial racial, ethnic, and immigrant diversity in these pathways to adulthood, these differences are less apparent among young people with bachelor’s or higher degrees than among those who did not complete college.

Chapter 4 examines in original detail the interrelatedness of all five milestones, seeking to provide a multidimensional view of transitions to adulthood beyond the attainment of individual milestones as if they were a single sequence of steps, and to identify patterns of milestone attainment that capture their experiences at both ends of the educational attainment continuum. Educational attainment aside, there are sixteen possible combinations of the remaining four milestones (based on whether or not one has attained full-time employment, residential independence, marriage, and having own children at home), ranging from pattern 1—in which *all* the milestones have been attained—to pattern 16—in which *none* of the milestones (besides educational attainment) have been attained. The authors term the most prominent patterns “*profiles of adulthood*.” Three of the profiles—the “All Milestones,” “No Milestones,” and “Working Childless Single”—apply to both young men and women. For men, another main profile is the “Working Childless Husband.” For women, two other distinct profiles emerge: the “Single Mom,” and the “Married Stay-at-Home Mom.” This handful of profiles encompasses 75 percent of the patterns found in the national sample. While the “Working Childless Single” pattern is a modal profile for both young men and women with at least a bachelor’s degree, for those with no college education (high school or less) there was no single modal profile, but considerable variability in the share with “No Milestones” across race, ethnicity and nativity.

Chapter 5, titled a “Mosaic of Experiences,” digs deeper into the relevance of ethnicity, undocumented immigrant status, and sexual orientation for understanding transitions to adulthood, and shows how the conventional five milestones do not fully represent the myriad experiences of young people today or tell their stories. Here, for example, the authors unpack

one-size-fits-all panethnic categories to specify five Hispanic ethnicities (Mexican, Puerto Rican, Cuban, Salvadoran and Dominican), and five Asian ethnicities (Chinese, Filipino, Asian Indian, Vietnamese, Korean). The authors also examine the effect of an undocumented immigrant status on adult transitions, affecting or blocking the ability to get a driver's license, to finish schooling, obtain a full-time job, or attain many other goals. Similarly, the experiences of sexual minority youth challenge traditional conceptions of and methods for measuring marriage and parenthood as adulthood milestones. Large-scale data collection efforts have not kept pace with the diversity of these statuses and identities, limiting in-depth research at a national level.

In a final chapter the authors revisit major patterns of milestone attainment in light of their overarching themes and main findings. The routes from childhood to adulthood are not reducible to simple linear sequences. One of the book's key findings is that "adulting" experiences differ especially between those who are college educated and those who are not. A college degree emerges as a "great equalizer" in terms of racial, ethnic, immigrant and gender differences in the transition to adulthood. In contrast, the authors find much stronger influences of race, ethnicity, nativity and gender on the completion of adulthood markers among those without a college degree. The book succeeds in its aim to address and redress the lack of systematic research on how racial and ethnic minority and immigrant young people "come of age" in a country becoming increasingly diverse precisely along those lines. It is an excellent sociological introduction to an engrossing topic.