

Spring 5-10-2014

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A SOCIOLOGICAL INVESTIGATION OF EARLY GRADUATES IN U.S. HIGH SCHOOLS

by

JEFF DUVALL

Under the Direction of Dr. James Ainsworth

ABSTRACT

Traditional high school graduates are typically seen as the standard for “successful” high school graduation because they earned the customary credential of a diploma and did so along a culturally prescribed timeline (i.e., in Spring of the 12th grade). While high school dropouts have long been recognized and researched as clearly deviating from cultural expectations of earning the standard credential and doing so “on time,” they are not the only type of “off time” student to do so. Early graduates, like dropouts, also pursue a non-traditional and off time high school exiting path, but because of a lack of prior research into these types of students, it is not clear how they compare to the traditional “on time” students. In this dissertation, I investigate early graduates in U.S. high schools to generate an initial basis for understanding how these early graduates differ from the normative group of on timer graduates in terms of their demographics, theoretically important considerations and school engagement (including academic and, separately, social engagement dimensions). This investigation also probes into important differences across

several conceptualized groups of early graduates and how each of these groups compare to each other and on time graduates. This investigation utilizes several waves of the nationally representative Educational Longitudinal Study (ELS) from the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES). I use a life course theory perspective to inform conceptualizations of these student groups and my analysis of important post-high school life transitions and trajectories patterns among early graduates.

INDEX WORDS: Academic engagement, Diploma, Disruption, Dropouts, Early escapees, Early graduates, Earnest achievers, Easy way outs, Educational Longitudinal Study, ELS, GED, Grads, Graduation, High school graduation, Life course, Mediocre passives, On time graduates, School engagement, Social engagement, Traditional graduates, Trajectories, Transitions, Underachieving passives

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by

JEFF DUVALL

A Dissertation Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree of

Doctor of Sociology

in the College of Arts and Sciences

Georgia State University

2014

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2014

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Spring 2014

DEDICATION

This dissertation is dedicated to my parents, Barb and Pierce, who have always given their children support, encouragement and opportunity to pursue their own paths in their own ways. Thank you.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

My dissertation journey turned out quite differently than I had initially envisioned. I want to thank God for helping me to keep my head above water over the past years as I struggled to complete this project amid many other focus areas I concurrently needed or chose to focus on. I am grateful for the direct and indirect guidance I have received from my parents, my stepdad Ev, my Aunt Nancy and my grandparents, whose examples and memories I have often relied on during this dissertation journey. My brother Tom has also helped me to feel encouraged and supported during this process, and I will always appreciate it. Thank, Tom.

I did not realize how much I would need and appreciate the gift of ongoing support from my friends, including Alice Savic, Dr. Michael Savic, Miho Sugimoto, Jeff Richardson, Dr. Tom Peters, Sharen Peters, Dr. Larry Haller, Dr. James Brock, Frank Gifford, Richard Leslie, George Murphy, Dr. Kirk Elifson, Dr. Claire Sterk and Joyce Staley Carr (who is an inspiration for so many of us who seek to be continuous learners).

And I would of course be remiss if I did not thank my faculty advisers, who have been patient and supportive all along. Thank you, Jim Ainsworth, for being my adviser and friend throughout my PhD journey. I will always appreciate your help and willingness to hang in there with me as I frequently paused, vanished, tripped, and got back up throughout this process. Thank you, Leann Ampola, for your grace and kindness during my many random calls and visits with Jim during this project. Thank you, Dawn Baunach and Elisabeth Burgess, for being part of my committee and for being supportive throughout and always making me feel less of an outsider despite my non-traditional background and life stage. I also want to thank Dr. Toshi Kii, who I had the pleasure of meeting many years ago in beginner's guitar class at Emory University. Our conversations and practice sessions helped me to convert my wish to pursue a PhD journey

into a reality. Thanks, Toshi, and while I still need a lot more practice with my guitar, I hope we can get the band back together one day soon. I am indeed grateful for knowing all of you, and will hopefully now have more time to reconnect with you more often.

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1 INTRODUCTION

Traditional high school graduates are typically seen as the standard for “successful” high school graduation because they earned the customary credential of a diploma and did so along a culturally prescribed timeline (i.e., in Spring at the end of the 12th grade). While high school dropouts have long been recognized and researched as clearly deviating from cultural expectations of earning the standard credential and doing so “on time,” they are not the only type of “off time” student to do so. Early graduates, like dropouts, also pursue a non-traditional and off time high school exiting path, but because of a lack of prior investigation into these types of students, it is not clear how they compare to the traditional “on time” students.

1.1 Statement of Issue

The concept of being “on time” versus “off time” sounds intuitively simple. Being “on time” implies being at the right place (either physically or metaphorically) at the right time. Being “off time” implies being early or late compared to others who more closely resemble traditional societal expectations. In life course terms, the notion of being on time denotes successful ascension of specific and socially expected transitions, trajectories and rights of passage along a culturally created and reinforced timeline. A person can be considered off time in terms of specific life events (e.g., teen pregnancy, pregnancy in late forties), transitions (like retirement in your forties, becoming a parent in your fifties) or trajectories (such as starting full time paid work in your mid-teens, seeking a professional degree in your sixties) if they occur “too early” or “too late” with respect to general societal expectations.

An implication of being off time is that it can lead a person to experience different types of life chances, networks and opportunities for themselves, their loved ones and future family

generations. For example, a girl that becomes pregnant in high school might still very well finish high school and attend college, however, her “outside of class” experiences (e.g., dorm life, sorority pledging, dating, network building, extracurricular activities) will likely be very different if she is also caring for a child while in college. An adult who becomes a parent in their fifties may have to work longer into their career to provide financial support for their child, and might find that they are less able to be as physically active with their child compared to younger parents. On the other hand, being “off time” could also be a positive factor in different contexts since some people may prefer an earlier or later transition into different statuses (e.g., becoming a tenured faculty member in your twenties, retiring in your forties, entering into a new line of work in your sixties).

1.2 Importance of the Study

This study provides the first investigation of early graduates that I am aware of (after an extensive search of the literature). Prior research relating to educational attainment has focused on why many students drop out, do not complete high school at all or finish after Spring of 12th grade. These studies tend to focus on high school dropouts, some of whom may complete school requirements later or eventually seek an alternative credential like a General Educational Development (GED) certificate.

While prior academic literature has yet to focus on early high school graduates, we can find several depictions in popular culture. Fictional books, movies and television shows tend to portray early graduates from high school as being extremely intelligent and focused individuals who want to “jump start” an ambitious college career en route to earning respect and acclimation in their eventual vocations. Fictitious examples of such early graduates include “brainiac” characters like television’s *Doogie Howser, M.D.* and *Mission: Impossible*’s Grant Collier and comic

book heroes such as the 1940's hero Mr. Terrific (who graduated college at 13 years of age) and the more modern protagonist Tony Stark (from the *Iron Man* and *Avengers* comics and movies). These fictional representations tend to be depicted as students who are gifted, ambitious and career focused altruists. It is interesting (but perhaps not surprising given traditional hegemony in popular culture) that all of these fictional characters are male. These depictions have the unintended consequence of masking important potential realities among early graduates, including the possibility that their interest in earning an early graduation status may have more to do with the "stick" (e.g., social alienation in high school) than with the "carrot" (e.g., quicker access to higher levels of education after high school). It is also interesting that there are no top of mind fictional or non-fictional reference points of individuals who sought to graduate early from high school because of influencers like social alienation, frustration or the need or desire to get a job to earn money.

It is important that we ask the question of "how do early graduates compare to dropouts and on time graduates?" The reason this question matters is because shedding light on it may reveal that early graduates have much more in common with dropouts than on time graduates. In other words, if our high schools are alienating capable students to the point of their seeking early completion and departure, these same school settings and processes are likely impacting less academically performing or engaged students even more harshly since they might not be as able to easily seek "early release" with a credential compared to the early graduates. It is time to take a deeper look at the popular stereotype of early graduates as being happy, intellectually earnest overachievers. It is possible that we might find that this stereotype misses the potential reality that many of these early graduates are academically capable but socially alienated individuals looking for an "early release" from their high school environment.

1.3 Research Goals

There are several goals for this study. First, this study will provide the first known investigation into *who* these early high school graduates are in comparison to on time graduates and dropouts. This includes an examination of differences in demographics (e.g., race, gender, income and family structure) between students who (1) graduated early and (2) graduated early with different types of credentials (i.e., with a diploma versus a GED certificate).

Second, this study will assess differences in levels of *academic engagement* to determine whether early graduates have more in common, in terms of academic performance, with on time graduates or dropouts. Academic engagement proxies include a student's expectations, aspirations, class preparation, homework completion, test scores, and grade point average.

Third, this study will assess differences in levels of *social engagement* among early graduates relative to on time graduates and dropouts to determine whether early graduates have more in common in terms of social cohesion (or its conceptual counterpart, social alienation) with either group. Indicators of social engagement include attendance, perceptions of school being a friendly or non-friendly setting, views of racial harmony within the school and levels of participation in extracurricular activities.

Fourth, this study will provide important insight regarding the near term life course implications of graduating early compared to graduating on time or dropping out in terms of post-high school educational pursuits such as further schooling, paid work, marriage and parenthood. Recent data from the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES) survey (the data source for this study) allow for examination of a student's educational participation two years after their "mean high school graduation" date for their class cohort (i.e., two years after Spring or early Summer of the 12th grade year).

1.4 Overview of Chapters

This chapter has provided an overview of the purpose, importance and research goals for this study. Chapter 2 provides with a summary of the literature and discussion of a conceptual framework that can help to inform this study of early high school graduates. Chapter 3 contains a detailed description of the data, methods and analytic strategies that support my investigation. Chapter 4 is the first of four consecutive chapters to offer detailed discussions of my hypotheses and analytic findings and focuses on what I learned about the demographic aspects and differences within and across different groups of early graduates. Chapter 5 describes actual differences in the levels of academic and social engagement across the different conceptual groups of early graduates. Chapter 6 takes a more detailed look into these levels of academic and social engagement to determine if they really impact the type of group an early graduate student would fall into. The fourth and last analytic discussion is presented in Chapter 7, which focuses on the post-high school trajectories of the different types of early graduate groups. A review of key findings, conclusions, theoretical consequences and suggestions for future research are presented in Chapter 8, the final chapter of this study.

2 THEORETICAL BACKGROUND AND LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Student Engagement with School

Past research into off time students has traditionally focused on dropouts, and a meta theme of this prior literature is that dropouts have lower levels of school engagement with their high school settings. In this context, the term ‘school engagement’ represents concepts such as the levels of attachment, resonance, commitment, sense of belonging and interest that a student has or feels towards their high school matriculation experience. A student’s level of school engagement is conceptualized to include important academic engagement and social engagement components.

Academic engagement reflects measures of academic achievement and performance (e.g., grades, tests) as well as student expectations, aspirations, class preparation and homework completion (Rumberger and Larson 1998; Rumberger 2004). Lower levels of academic engagement could compel students to seek early graduation since they feel less connection with their classes and teachers. High academic engagement signals student resonance with school faculty, staff and curriculum, which can lead to a lower student desire to graduate early (Rumberger 1995; Rumberger and Larson 1998; Swanson and Schneider 1999).

Social engagement relates to a student’s levels of attendance, behavior, assessments of peer and school dynamics and participation in school activities, including sports and non-sport activities (Rumberger and Larson 1998; Rumberger 2004). Absenteeism is considered the most common indicator of student engagement (Rumberger 2004). Higher social engagement may reflect greater student meshing with school process and activities (sports, clubs) that helps to keep the student on the traditional on time pathway.

Academic and social engagement (collectively referred to as school engagement) is expected to affect a student's connectivity with school and their likelihood of seeking an early graduation. Several theoretical perspectives offer insight into likely drivers and influencers of different aspects of school engagement. These perspectives include individual deficits theory, social justice and inequality perspectives, socioeconomic theory and sociocultural theory.

2.2 Review of Key Themes and Considerations

Individual Deficits Theory

An individual deficits theory explanation for higher or lower levels of academic and social engagement links levels of school engagement with a student's levels of ability and desire to achieve. This theory suggests that students fail to engage with their school because of character flaws, personal pathologies, deficits, or individual choices (Finn 1989; Newman et al., 1992; Mehan 1997; Berkhold, Gies and Kaufman 1998; Heck and Mahoe 2006). This highly agency based view suggests that students lacking sufficient engagement are more likely to seek an early graduation.

Social Justice and Inequality Perspective

The social justice and inequality perspective, which is a theoretical counterpoint to the individual deficits theory, maintains that structural and societal inequalities impact a student's level of family support, encouragement, guidance and access to better housing, communities and schools (Cummins 1986; MacLeod 1995; Descenes et al., 2001; Witherspoon and Schissel 2001; Cassidy and Bates 2005). The implication of this perspective for academic and social engagement is that students who have structural "wind at their back" (e.g., two parent households, higher standards of living, minimal racial and cultural barriers, access to better schools, recognition of the value of education) are more likely to remain academically and socially engaged with

school. Students attending better funded schools likely have more role models who may have completed school early. Students lacking sufficient encouragement, support and resources may wish to leave their school environment with a credential as soon as they can, also leading to early graduation. Institutional considerations are an important aspect of the social inequality perspective. There are several specific institutional considerations that are largely structural in nature that exert a strong influence on student engagement, including the student's family, school type and peers (Rumberger 2004).

Family influences on school engagement

A student's family background is often considered to be the single most important contributor to success in school (Rumberger 2004). Family background characteristics include family structure components (e.g., dual parent households, several children in household) and the family's socioeconomic status (which is often linked with each parent's education and income). Students from two-parent households are more likely to receive greater attention, supervision and encouragement throughout high school, thereby raising school engagement. Family structure and income are often linked to cultural capital explanations of educational engagement and success. Cultural capital theory postulates that within a household, the parents have to make choices about how to best invest their often limited time, energy, attention and resources in support of their children's development. Increases in a family's level of cultural capital are expected to increase school engagement levels because parents with more income can afford to provide their children with access to better schools, educational programs, activities and learning resources (e.g., a computer, books, educational DVDs). Having a second parent in the household also allows for greater parental capacity to spend time with the child to positively impact learn-

ing preferences and cognitive skills (Haveman and Wolfe 1994; Downey, Ainsworth-Darnell and Dufur 1998; Rothstein 2004; Rumberger 2004).

Family income also impacts levels of economic capital, and this matters because a family's level of economic capital affects the types of housing, school access, and the amount of time that a parent can devote to reading with their kids and talking about school and other pro-learning topics while building their child's confidence and likelihood of attending college. Wealth correlates with increased levels of school engagement for several reasons, including the expectation that wealthier students attend better resourced schools with lower student/teacher ratios. This enables wealthier students to receive more teacher and staff attention, thereby lowering alienation and raising academic engagement (Rothstein 2004a). Better resourced schools are also able to offer more activities, clubs and sports, thereby raising the likelihood of greater social engagement.

Social capital, reflecting a parent's access to supportive networks and their ability to influence their children's school experience, can also play an important part in school engagement. Parents can leverage social capital opportunities that focus on enhancing interactions between parents and their children (e.g., discussing school topics at home, spending time with their child) as well as between parents and teachers (e.g., attending PTA meetings) and other community members (e.g., volunteer opportunities). For example, when parents foster more school-oriented discussions with their children (thereby conveying the importance of education) and build stronger relationships with their child's teachers (which extends the parents' ability to monitor their child), their child is more likely to remain engaged with school (McNeal 1999).

The degree to which a student's family remains stable in terms of living in the same place impacts a student's mobility and stability. Student mobility occurs when a student is com-

pelled or seeks to change schools without the precursor of a family relocation (Rumberger & Larson 1998; Swanson & Schleicher 1999). Greater mobility is expected to lower school engagement since a student has to “start over” in terms of building new friendships, relationships with teachers, and familiarity with a new school environment. Stability reflects on time matriculation within the high school. A student who flunks a grade (e.g., their junior year of high school) or who is retained is expected to have lower levels of engagement with school because they are struggling academically, which reflects lower engagement to begin with, and because of grade retention will now face the additional pressures of feeling socially off time with their cohorts, which will lower their engagement further (Alexander, Entwistle, and Kabbani 2001). This could lead retained students to be more likely to seek an early graduation since they feel less connectivity with the school and classmates, however (given their academic struggle) they would be expected to seek a GED early graduation pathway.

School structural characteristics

The public versus private categorization of a school is theorized to link to student engagement for several reasons. First, private schools can be selective about the types of students they accept. This results in a filtered student composition since students who are deemed as resource intensive (e.g., discipline issues, special needs, lack of threshold academic ability) or come from families unable to afford tuition can be readily excluded (Coleman & Hoffer 1987; Chubb and Moe 1990; Byrk, Lee and Holland 1993; Rumberger 2004). Second, private schools are more likely to be comprised of ‘advantaged’ students (i.e., white students of higher social class and two-parent households), resulting in more positive race relations, which leads to greater school engagement (Patchen 1982). Students are more likely to become disengaged from public

schools and their higher proportions of minority, lower-class, and at-risk students (Wehlage and Rutter 1986; Byrk & Thum 1989; Fine 1991; McNeal 1997).

Peer effects on engagement

Peer effects are expected to have a high influence on a student's level of school engagement. Having high achieving (and presumably highly engaged) friends tends to reduce the likelihood of student disengagement (Kasen, Cohen, & Brook 1998), while having friends who are disengaged from school raises the likelihood that a student will also become disengaged (Ellenbogen and Chamberland 1997; Carbonaro 1998; Rumberger & Thomas 2000; Rumberger 2004). Students whose peer group lives in poorer communities are expected to experience more negative peer influences because of lower perceived benefits from staying engaged with school (since there are fewer opportunities available that reward school completion), less supervision and disciplinary press, and fewer role models (Hallihan and Williams 1990; Brooks-Gunn et al., 1997).

Socioeconomic Theories of Student Engagement

Socioeconomic theories regarding student engagement focus on how disparities in resources and capital can result in different school experiences and outcomes (Rumberger 2004). The implications for a student's academic and social engagement is that students who come from families that lack important resources (e.g., household situations that support parental supervision, access to learning materials, better schools) and capital (e.g., economic, social, cultural) will be less engaged compared to students who have greater access to such resources and capital. Differences in the levels of resources between more and less resourced schools tend to link to the socioeconomic status of the families in the tax base funding the schools, which implies an expected correlation between family income and levels of school resources available.

Several aspects of socioeconomic theory relate to the availability, attractiveness and extremity of paid work options for high school students. Students who are drawn to immediately available job opportunities are expected to have less school engagement. This is often described as the “pull out effect” (i.e., the lure of immediate income “pulls” students out of school) and tempts students to become further disengaged. Students from families with more economic resources and students with more pro-school friends are expected to perceive greater economic gains for remaining engaged with high school and therefore be less susceptible to pull out temptations (Rumberger 1983; Bickel & Papagiannis 1988; Clark 1992; Rumberger 2004). Students lacking such family support and peer influences could be more likely to disengage from school in favor of pursuing paid work as a “rational” economic decision. The decision to disengage from school to earn money could be seen as rational since it reflects the student’s perceptions of less anticipated future benefits from staying engaged with school versus the greater perceived benefits of earning money sooner. Bickle (1989) found that school disengagement in local areas that were experiencing harsh economic conditions “made sense” (i.e., was rational) since most disengaged students could not observe tangible economic benefits from staying engaged with school. This type of rationalization may extend beyond the student’s decision to disengage from school to other behaviors that are often construed as “reckless,” including teen pregnancy. McNeal (1997, 1999) found similar results in communities where life chances seem limited, and this suggests that leaving school early appears to make rational and economic sense among students who believe they will invariably wind up in the same types of jobs (often factory based) after high school that they can gain access to earlier by seeking early graduation. Additionally, the early graduation option is subjectively reified by the student as the “smart move” since it allows for an earlier earning of income and establishment of seniority over those peers who wait

until after the traditional on time high school graduation to begin working. The early graduate's decision to seek a jump start on earning seniority is greater when students perceive limited life chance options (e.g., students expect to work at a local factory or mine) (Bickle 1989).

The intensiveness of paid work is theorized to influence levels of student engagement in at least two ways. First, the “zero sum” perspective (Warren 2000) suggests that students who work during high school learn valuable life skills (e.g., time management, punctuality, responsibility), however, the benefits of learning these skills come at the cost of disrupting school studies, socializing with classmates and participation in activities, which results in lower levels of school engagement. Second, intensive employment (defined as 20 or more hours a week) by high school students doubles the likelihood of their becoming extremely disengaged from school before graduation compared to students who work less than 20 hours or not at all (Warren and Cataldi 2006).

It is important to view socioeconomic theory considerations of student engagement with awareness of the influences of important historical race aspects. For example, poverty rates for certain minority groups (i.e., blacks, Hispanics) are twice as high than those for the white majority (Rumberger 2004). This results in minorities being much more likely than whites to attend schools in poorer areas with fewer resources and learning support options, which leads to lower expected student engagement (Mayer 1991). Minorities are also more likely to face greater housing discrimination (Yinger 1993, Harding 2003), which impedes families from moving into a better school district (a move that could foster greater student engagement if it was viable). Additionally, minorities are expected to be less able to “trade up” in their quality of housing, neighborhoods and school options even when they do move (Harding 2003), further hampering student engagement among minorities compared to white students. Race based student engage-

ment considerations are complex and stretch beyond socioeconomic theory to sociocultural implications as well.

Sociocultural Theories of Student Engagement

Sociocultural theorists recognize the impact of cultural and economic disparities on student achievement, and that such disparities are often correlated with race and ethnicity. Sociocultural theory arguably differs from socioeconomic theory in that sociocultural perspectives suggest that there is wide variance in school success across different groups of minorities, despite having similar lack of resources and capital relative to the white majority (Yinger 1993; Harding 2003). The implication of sociocultural theory regarding school engagement is that students of different groups (e.g., race, ethnicity, level of acculturation) are expected to have different levels of academic and social engagement based on different types of values, attitudes, expectations, resources and capital that support success in school (Mayer 1991; Rumberger 2004).

Socioculturalists recognize that not all students enter high school with the same levels of confidence, comprehension, preparedness, experience in dealing with frustration and ability to navigate effectively through new environments. This leads to different levels and types of stress among different ethnic groups. These challenges makes academic and social engagement all the more difficult for students who have lower levels of capital (e.g., human, cultural, social) and enhances the likelihood of alienation and frustration. These challenges also include heightened student stress in adjusting to different styles of teaching, pedagogy and discipline (Roderick 2003). African American males in particular may encounter more disengagement in high schools that stress “get tough” discipline policies, leaving these males “marginalized and unsupported, thus decreasing motivation and sending messages that undermine a positive sense of competence and efficacy in school settings” (Davidson 1996:545).

Socioculturalist perspectives that address the importance of understanding values, attitudes and beliefs have been used to explain differences in academic success across different minority groups. For example, Asians are recognized as being more academically successful than other minority groups because of two specific cultural beliefs about schooling. First, there is a demonstrated belief among Asians that not getting a good education will translate into lower chances for future success (as opposed to the more positively toned concept that a better education leads to better outcomes). Second, there is a belief that school success is more linked to effort than to ability or the level of difficulty of the material being studied (Steinberg, Dombush and Brown 1992; Rumberger 2004). The wider implication of this research is that parents of different ethnicities may be more culturally inclined to promote certain attitudes and beliefs with their children regarding learning, school and educational outcomes, leading to different levels of student engagement.

Resistance theory

Resistance theory is an important dimension of sociocultural explanations for levels of student engagement. Resistance theory suggests that particular groups of students may “resist” or rebel against certain academic policies and educational experiences or choose to misbehave as a form of political opposition against the “educational indoctrination process” (Kech and Mahoe 2006:423), leading to lower academic and social engagement for these students. A student’s deviant acts and other patterns of misbehavior (which are indicative of school disengagement) are seen as the students’ attempts to internalize frustration with the educational system (Nieto 1995; Lawrence 1997). Proponents of resistance theory point out that acts of student rebellion may decline as a student becomes more acclimated and engaged with their school’s institutional norms (Eitle and Eitle 2004; Kech and Mahoe 2006).

Ogbu (1978, 1991a, 1991b, 1992), a major proponent of oppositional culture theory (a racialized form of resistance theory), argued that students can be decomposed into different types of groups based on their ethnicity and historical power and that their future expectations and perceived life chances tend to relate to their ethnicity. Key groups in Ogbu's premise are the dominant group (i.e., whites), voluntary minorities (e.g., most Asian Americans, European Americans and Mexican American students) and involuntary minorities (e.g., blacks, early Mexican Americans). According to Ogbu, voluntary minorities came to America by choice and free will while involuntary minorities were brought to America against their will for historical reasons (including slavery and conquest). Ogbu argued that "Voluntary minorities do not perceive learning the attitudes and behaviors required for school success as threatening to their own culture, language, and identities," while "involuntary minorities do not seem to be able or willing to separate attitudes and behaviors that result in academic success from those that may result in linear acculturation or replacement of their cultural identity with white American cultural identity" (Ogbu 1992;9-10). Voluntary immigrants tend to compare their current situation and future prospects against those of the homeland they left, which leads to favorable impressions. Involuntary minorities, on the other hand, tend to be more inclined to view their current situation and future prospects against those of the empowered dominant group (i.e., whites), leading to negative views and expectations, especially in light of historic discrimination and persistent inequality. This leads to expectations of limited future job opportunities, which results in a devaluation of schooling and student disengagement since "an important determinant of school performance is what children and their parents or community expect to gain from their education in adult life" (Ogbu, 1978:54). Resistance theory proponents see a link between negative expectations for future opportunities and resistance to the goals of schooling (leading to further disengagement).

Resistance theory suggests that school disengagement will be higher for involuntary minority students since they are more resistant to the goals, policies and expectations of schools.

Ogbu's positions on resistance theory were based on a limited number of ethnographic studies and many of the tenants of his arguments do not hold up to further scrutiny. For example, Ainsworth-Darnell and Downey (1998) conducted a quantitative investigation of many of Ogbu's hypotheses using the National Educational Longitudinal Study (NELS), and concluded that Ogbu's assumptions and theories are not supported. Furthermore, Ainsworth-Darnell and Downey (1998) and Cook and Ludwig (1997) were able to debunk Ogbu's claims that, compared to white students in the dominant or voluntary immigrant group, involuntary minority students (i.e., African Americans) perceive fewer returns to education, exhibit greater resistance to school, that this resistance accounts for the racial gap on school performance and that academically high achieving members of the involuntary group are negatively viewed by their peers. These ELS survey based findings suggest that involuntary minority students would not be expected to experience lower school engagement than white students or voluntary minority students.

Fordham and Ogbu (1986), citing their ethnographic research, argue that part of the black-white school achievement gap is explained by the "acting white" hypothesis which suggests that because African American students have a social identity that reflects resistance to "white" policies, preferences and values, "certain activities or events, symbols, and meanings are not appropriate for them because those behaviors, events, symbols, and meanings are characteristic of white Americans" (Fordam and Ogbu 1986:181). Academically successful black students are therefore, according to the "acting white" hypothesis, under greater stress than the high achieving dominant white group or voluntary immigrant students since high achievement may be

construed as “selling out” or “acting white.” This would lead us to expect that black students who have high academic engagement would also experience lower social engagement because of the stress and tension associated with peer accusations of “acting white.” Tyson and Darity (2005) point out that the “acting white” hypothesis applies to many non-academic behaviors, including preference in clothing styles and listening to heavy metal music, either of which might lead to a black student being labeled as an “Oreo” or other negatively intended descriptors by black peers. Ainsworth-Darnell and Downey (1998) found that the opposite situation occurs, i.e., black students who performed well academically were not treated negatively, but were actually more popular among their peers. Tyson et al., (2005:204) found that the negative stigma associated with positive school performance may not be nearly as racialized as Fordham and Ogbu contend since typically all high achieving students, regardless of race, can be stigmatized as being “nerds” or “geeks.” The implications of being a high achieving minority for student engagement is uncertain. On one hand, high achieving students are academically engaged with school, which is a major reason they may be stereotyped as “nerdy” or “acting white” in the first place. On the other hand, Ainsworth-Darnell and Downey (1998) found that academically engaged minority students may be lauded (rather than punished) by peers, which would lead to greater likelihood of increased social engagement with their school.

Student disengagement from school stemming from resistance to school expectations and processes extends beyond race to gender and income considerations. For example, Willis (1981) found that working class boys disengaged academically from school to better adapt to peer norms and their desire to affiliate with popular perceptions of masculine behavior. This includes rejecting school-based “mental work” (which is associated with “feminine” aspects of conformity, obedience and academic achievement) in favor of paid manual labor, which is seen as mascu-

line and offers immediate wages and entrenchment into a desirable peer group. This particular aspect of resistance theory ties closely to peer influences, with the implication being that a student who has friends with low levels of school engagement will also likely experience lower school engagement (Ellenbogen & Chamberland 1997; Carbonaro 1998, Kasen, Cohen, and Brook 1998; Rumberger & Thomas 2000; Rumberger 2004). This also suggests that gender and economic differences influence a student's level of school engagement, with lower income males experiencing less school engagement than wealthier males or females in general.

Social Control and Reproduction Theories

Social control and reproduction theories reflect the interplay of socioeconomic and socio-cultural differences among students and the implications for their levels of school engagement. Several seminal studies (Bowles and Gintis 1976, 1982, 2002; Kohn 1979) have emphasized the role of schools and parenting styles in “controlling” children and students implicitly by influencing the degree and manner of student engagement with teachers, processes, and expectations. As a result, schools intentionally or unintentionally reproduce social structures and inequality by influencing student engagement (Mehan 1997; Nash 1999; Gerwitz and Cribb 2003; Ainsworth and Roscigno 2005; Heck and Mahoe 2006).

Socioeconomic class differences can influence the manner in which parents guide their children's educational expectations and behavior, thereby impacting their child's engagement with school (Kohn 1979). Middle class parents tend to encourage their children to express autonomy, self-expression, motivation and curiosity, which leads to a student exhibiting comfort and confidence with teachers and school authorities, which in turn leads to increased school engagement. Kohn hypothesized that such traits would be helpful to children later in life as they progressed through school and eventually enter professions that value independent thinking, an

ability to get along well with others, initiative and creativity. Working class parents, on the other hand, are more likely to reinforce traits like obedience, conformity, repression of self-expression and deferment to external expectations, any of which could be expected to lower a student's confidence, comfort and engagement with school.

Bowles and Gintis (1976, 1982, 2002) argued that schools and the larger educational system are essentially tied together with the larger economic system and perpetuate the status quo by reinforcing the impression that the educational process in America is fundamentally a just meritocracy. This implies that any differences in a student's later occupational success are residuals of differences in their hard work and cognitive development during their school years and after graduation. The purpose of this "meritocracy illusion" is to stabilize society by claiming that social inequality is normal, justified and the result of one's efforts and abilities (which ties closely with the agency-based individual deficits theory). Schools perpetuate such social inequality through several tactics, including *legitimization* (the use of "reliable" criteria such as exam scores and claims of teacher and administrative impartiality), *acclimatization* (instilling of beliefs regarding what is "fair" or "proper"), and *stratification* (the grouping and steering of students based on demographics or, ostensibly, ability). They found that the school matriculation process and school-to-work transitions favor students who exhibit more submissive behaviors while refraining from traits that reflect creativity and independence (Bowles and Gintis 1976, 1982, 2002; Rosenberg 2004). These findings closely relate to cultural capital, social capital and resistance theories since students who are seen as rebelling against school imposed norms or do not understand the nuances of the teacher-student relationship and school perpetuated reward structures are more likely to become disengaged from school and seek early graduation while

students who demonstrate conforming behaviors are more likely to remain engaged and remain on time in school.

The influence of economic class on school engagement can manifest in how students are “steered” by faculty and staff into different educational vectors within a high school, and these vectors have different effects on school engagement. Higher socioeconomic students with higher levels of capital are far less likely to be steered toward vocational classes. Poorer, working class and minority students with less cultural capital are more likely to be funneled into such classes. This vocational trajectory is associated with lower student engagement and lower likelihoods of attending college (Ainsworth and Roscigno 2005). These lower levels of vocational student engagement are also expected because the vocational trajectory leads to a student having more immediately marketable skills (through their vocational training), which results in a greater likelihood of a “pull out” effect leading these students to consider early high school graduation to earn money sooner.

2.3 Potential Groups of Early Graduates

The prior review of literature helps us to understand many potential influencers and dynamics that can affect the levels of a student’s academic and social engagement. These differences in engagement levels in turn shape the nature of a student’s relationship with high school and their eventual exiting process from high school. While it is clear that early graduation is a form of high school exiting (along with remaining on time or dropping out), it is important to recognize that there may be different groups of early graduate students.

The literature on other off time students (i.e., dropouts) leads me to expect anticipate that there may be at least three distinct groups² of early graduates that I wish to investigate further. Early graduates who earn a GED certificate because they believe it is easier than remaining on time through traditional matriculation can be thought of as “easy way out” (EWO) early graduates. Students who seek early graduation as a way of minimizing their contact with an alienating school environment or to seek a new status (e.g., employee, parent, spouse) are hypothesized to be “early escapees” (EE) from high school. The subset of early graduates who are academically oriented and seek to get an aggressive start on college or post-high school training is conceptualized to represent “earnest achievers” (EA). To better understand the potential pathways, influencers and implications of these different types of hypothesized early graduate groups, it is helpful to consider their dynamics through a life course perspective.

2.4 Life Course Perspective Considerations

Early graduation is one means of exiting high school, and the manner in which a student exits from high school can have important implications for their life course. The life course perspective is concerned with the “relationship of time and human behavior,” and how “chronological age, common life transitions, and social change shape people’s lives from birth to death” (Hutchison 2008:20). The life course perspective also “allows us to formulate the trajectories of our lives, revealing the relatedness of different phases, explaining how we have developed, and anticipating our futures” (Holstein 2000:5). A student who is exiting high school is likely making a transition to at least one of several new statuses, possibly including full-time worker, spouse, parent, soldier or post-secondary student (e.g., college, vocational training). Two important questions that this research addresses are (1) how do the life course transitions and trajec-

² I would eventually identify a total of five distinct groups of early graduates, which will be discussed in Chapter 3.

tories of early graduates differ from or replicate those of traditional on time graduates and dropouts and (2) how do post-high school transitions and trajectories vary between different groups of early graduates.

Because early graduates are leaving with a credential (diploma or GED), they are likely able to pursue a life course similar to on time graduates since their credential enables them to pursue similar roles and future statuses (e.g., being a college student or participation in careers that require a college degree). The fact that early graduates are leaving high school before their class cohort suggests that they might be compelled to seek transitions (e.g., an early start on college, pursuing full time paid work) more aggressively, which could translate into time compression of role transitions (e.g., student, worker, parent) and trajectories (starting their work histories as soon as possible). Conversely, early graduates who are leaving high school early because of alienation and disengagement may be inclined to pursue different pathways than traditional graduates who are better able to deal with school processes, procedures and expectations. Early graduates who are fleeing negative school situations could be less likely to enter certain types of job opportunities and social interactions compared to the students who finish school on the traditional timing. As Settersen (2003:86) points out, “when people deviate from a norm, their behavior is not only evaluated negatively by others, but is often undertaken to reflect something problematic about their personalities or abilities.”

We do not currently know whether early graduates, compared to other student types, are expected to have a more or less positive life course trajectory in terms of life chances. To understand the conceptual importance of this issue, it is helpful to start with the simplistic but validated correlation that more education is associated with more income (Day and Newbeger 2002; Pallas 2003). For example, Day, Cheeseman and Newburger (2002) found that the average

dropout earned \$18,900 annually compared to \$25,900 for high school graduates. The income differentials increase further for individuals with a bachelor's degree (\$45,400) and a professional degree (e.g., doctors, lawyers, dentists who earned an average annual income of \$99,300).

With this in mind, we might start, for descriptive purposes, with a simplistic paradigm that correlates more education (i.e., completion of high school) with greater life chances (e.g., greater status, income, happiness or other forms of utility) as depicted in Figure 2.1.

High school graduates (early graduates or traditional on time graduates) are expected to experience greater life chances than non-graduates. To be clear, dropouts are not doomed to a miserable life, nor are high school graduates promised happy endings. While the simplistic example offered in Figure 2.1 shows that dropouts are likely on a different (and lower) trajectory in

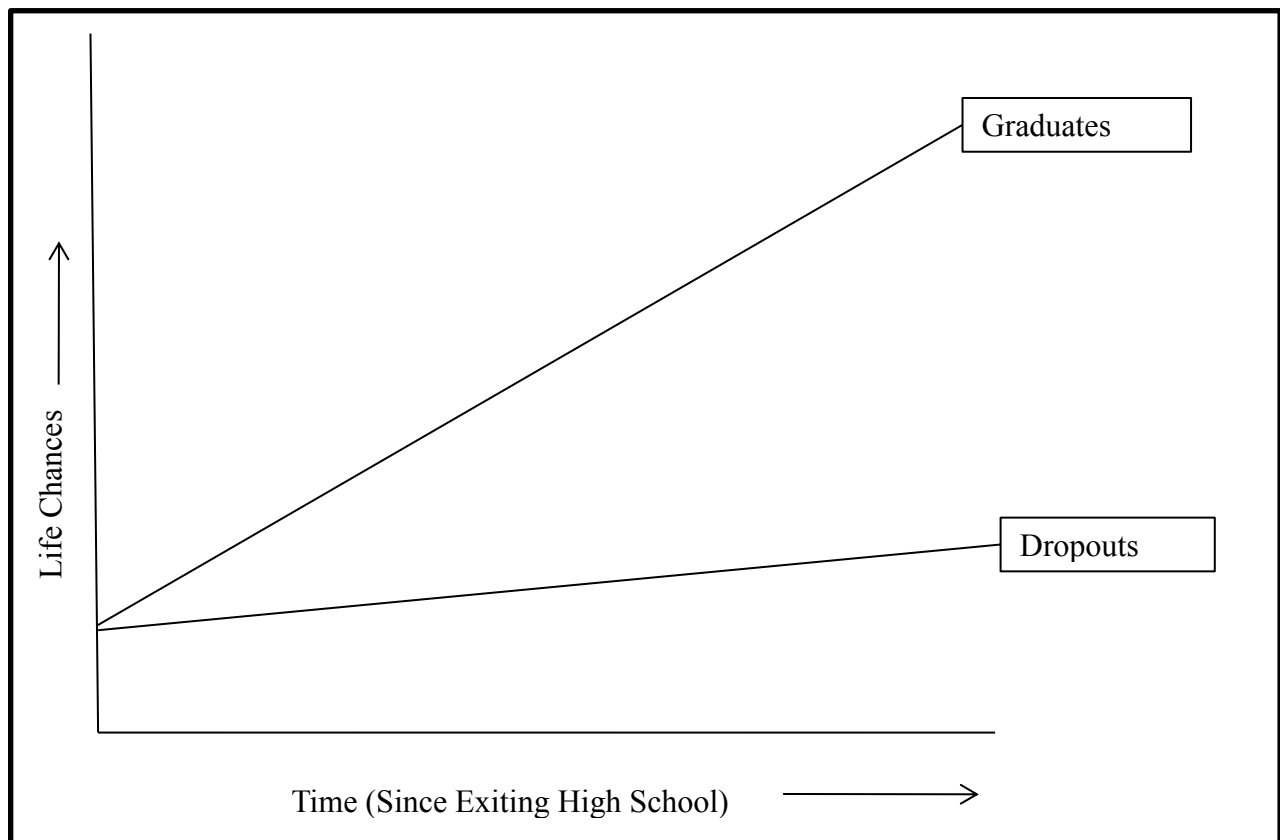


Figure 2.1 Hypothesized Basic Correlation Between High School Exiting Trajectories and Life Chances

terms of life chances, several other important caveats relating to the life course perspective need to be considered. The nature of high school exiting (dropping out versus graduating) will likely have a compounding effect on future outcomes. The relative advantages that high school graduates earn over dropouts likely has a cumulative effect over time (Bartley et al., 1997; Settersten 2008) since there will be more opportunities to enter the work force at a different status level (i.e., jobs that require a diploma) and to parlay successful initial roles into more successful future roles and higher remuneration over time. This advantage gap may also be increased through access to more privileged networks, status groups and support.

To understand the conceptual importance of this study, the prior graph needs to be modified to show the potential differences among high school completers. In Figure 2.2, high school completers are now shown as on time graduates (i.e., the majority of students who complete high school as expected in the Spring of 12th grade), earnest achiever early graduates (who are seeking to get earlier entry into college or post-high school training), early escapee early graduates (e.g., who seek an early graduation for reasons of alienation or to pursue paid work or other responsibilities), and easy way out early graduates (e.g., students who thought the path to earning a GED was preferable to remaining in class). At this point, we do not know if we should expect most early graduates to be in any particular group. It is quite possible that the type of credential early graduates receive correlates with these different archetype trajectories, with early graduates earning a diploma being more like “earnest achievers” or “early escapees” (indicating greater or similar life chances than traditional on time graduates) and those receiving a GED (the “easy way out” group) being more similar to dropouts (indicating fewer life chances than diploma earning graduates but still more life chances than dropouts).

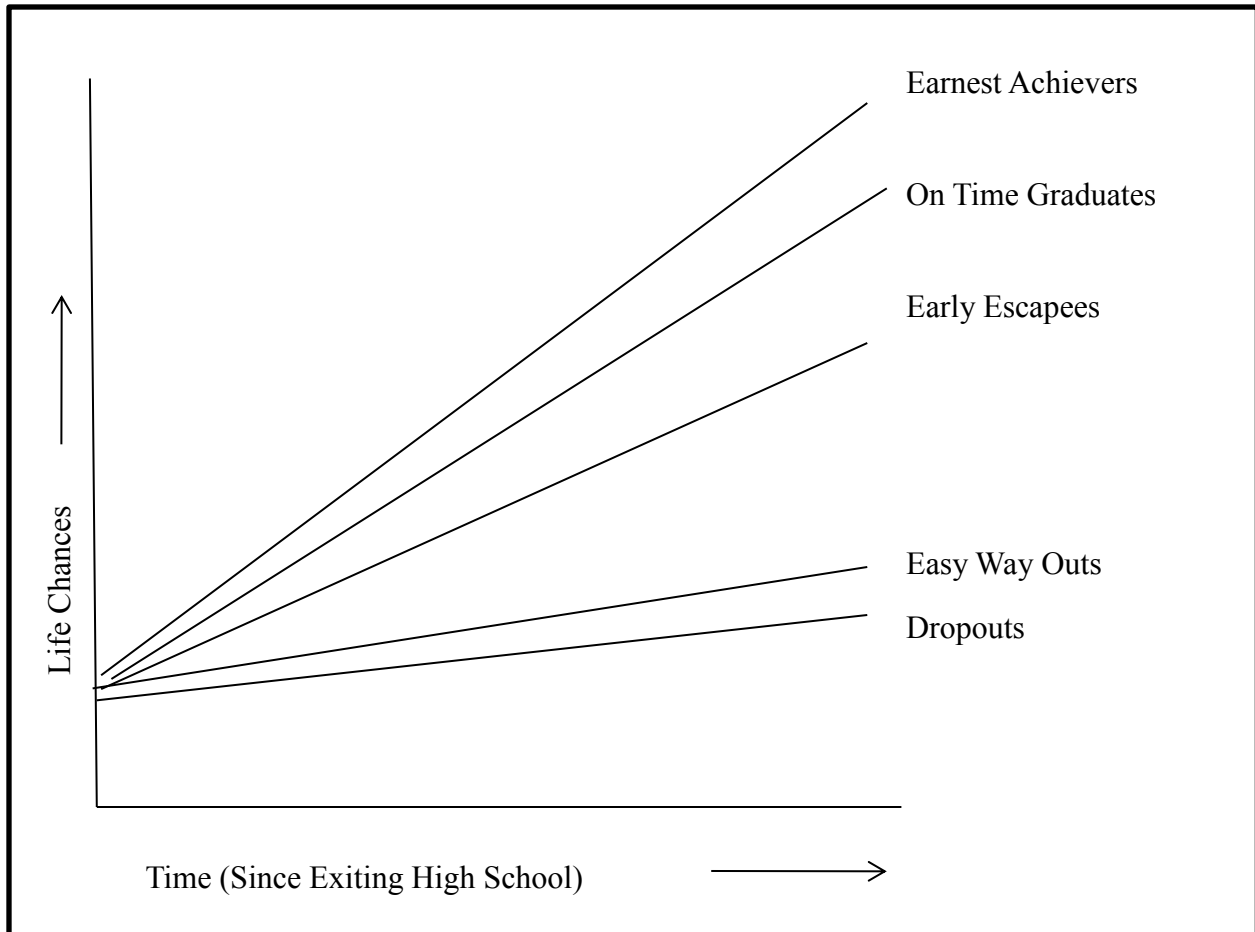


Figure 2.2 Hypothesized Expanded Correlation Between High School Exiting Trajectories and Life Chances

The expectation that the life chances of easy way out early graduates would track closer to dropouts than on time graduates is based on the nature of their GED credential. There are several important reasons to distinguish between individuals who leave high school with a traditional diploma versus those who leave with a GED. Each year, almost half a million adults earn their GED (Kaufman 2006). Many of those seeking to earn their GED do so because they believe it will improve their economic outlook. While GED certification is often framed as an equivalent to traditional high school completion, the limited research available finds that financial earnings among GED completers are more similar to unsuccessful GED seekers than to on

time high school graduates, who earn almost twice as much income per year as dropouts (Campbell 2003-2004). That finding is consistent with Cameron and Heckman's (1993) conclusion that GED holders tend to skew much closer to uncredentialed dropouts than to "regular" high school graduates. It is possible that employers see a GED as a "mixed signal" that shows candidates had the cognitive ability to get through high school, but may have lacked the proper motivation and discipline to do so (Heckman, Hsee and Rubinstein 1999). This is consistent with the concept that "seat time" may be just as important as actual cognitive learning in terms of influencing a student's life course (Bowles and Gintis 2002). Collins (1979) suggests that the actual "content" of what is learned in school and the cognitive ability to learn it (which could be reflected in the earning of a GED) are of lesser importance than the earning of the culturally "proper" credential of a high school diploma. Collins argues that since most, if not all, of the skills needed to perform well in the workplace can be best learned on the job, the function of schools is to ingrain dominant cultural ideologies (e.g., WASP values like the merits of competition) to limit access to the more desirable jobs and status groups to those with the "proper credentials," regardless of the actual merit of the individual in terms of being able to actually perform a particular job after leaving school (Armstrong 1981). These types of conclusions support the notion that a student's cognitive ability is only part of a much larger sociological story of the role of earning versus not earning the academic credential of a high school diploma and earning it on the traditional timing. For these reasons, this study makes an intentional distinction between early graduates who leave high school with a traditional diploma versus those who leave with a GED certificate.

How the Life Course Perspective Can Inform this Study

The life course perspective provides important theoretical support and direction for this research. While there is not a single “official” life course paradigm, one particular life course framework, constructed by Geile and Elder (1998), proves to be very helpful in highlighting the interaction between the roles of human agency, history and culture, social lives and timing in influencing a person’s life course trajectory (see figure 2.3). In this life course model, the development of human agency relates to “the use of personal power to achieve one’s goals” (Hutchison 2005:148). This expression of personal power is tied to a person’s belief in self-efficacy as well as to their perceived options, which are often socially and culturally constructed. With respect to early graduates, this aspect ties in closely with the individual deficits theory which suggests that a student’s success in school is a function of a student’s abilities, desire and skills. Early graduates who are earnest achievers may possess greater intelligence, diligence and ambition compared to their cohorts. On the other hand, early graduates who are not engaged academically or socially could lack the skill, acculturation, ability, awareness or desire to adapt to school norms and expectations.

The importance of a person’s particular location in time and space is a critical aspect of the life course perspective. For example, a high school student who is considering graduating early is making such a decision, knowingly or unknowingly, in the context of a particular time (e.g., 2014) and place (e.g., the South). The influences of this particular time provide critical context that a student needs to consider. For example, a high school student living in the Southern U.S. and considering early graduation in 2013 might weigh considerations like the recent economic recession (resulting in limited job availability), continued job shifting from industrialization to the information and services sectors (suggesting the need for more computer training

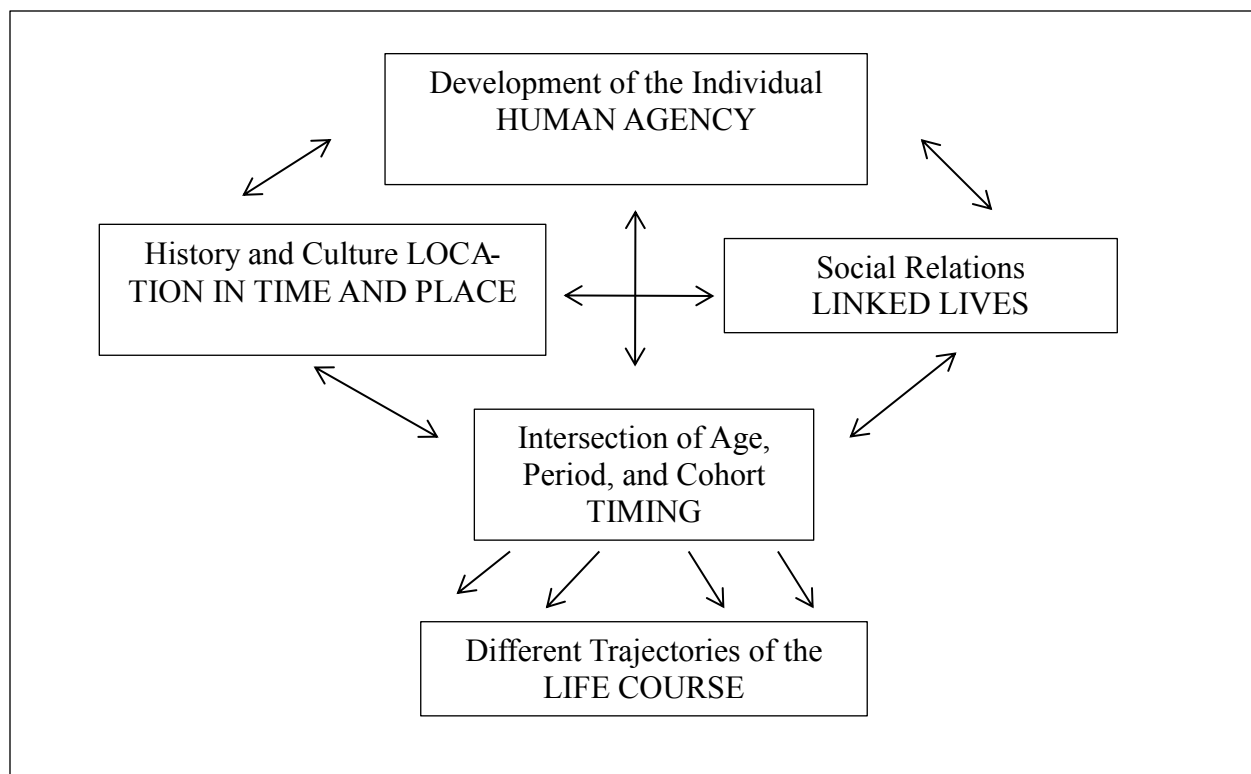


Figure 2.3 Four Key Elements of the Life Course Paradigm (Giele and Elder 1998:11)

and information management skills), outsourcing of jobs and the real potential of being deployed into a theater of war if considering a military position. This high school student might also consider that he lives in a setting that offers unique state funded college scholarship opportunities or attractive, affordable and accessible higher education opportunities that compel the student to seek an early entry into college. Additionally, a high school student living in a time and place with these considerations may have friends, peers and role models who have graduated early, making the early graduation option “more real.”

The choices and actions that individual high school students pursue (and their repercussions) rarely occur in a social vacuum. The life course perspective recognizes the importance of considering the influences of linked lives and intertwined social relations that often occur behind the scenes. A student considering early graduation is influenced by perceptions of their academ-

ic performance and social engagement with school, which in turn are highly influenced by parents, siblings, peers, friends and teachers. Parents in different educational, economic and social situations are able to provide different levels of support and capital to their children. It is expected that the more a parent emphasizes the importance of education, the more likely their child will also have pro-school attitudes, thereby raising engagement with school and lowering the likelihood of early graduation. The more friends and peers who have negative school attitudes, the more likely a child will see such anti-school behavior as normal and become disengaged, thereby raising their early graduation likelihood. While individual students can certainly express agency, their choices and sense of self-efficacy are often influenced by the levels of social support they receive from others.

The elements of human agency, location in time and place, and linked lives also reflexively interact with the timing of a student's life. Individual students, being influenced by their personal goals, location, influences and nuances of a particular era and social relations (including family) will seek ways to adapt to their particular circumstances and outlooks to maximize their outcomes in ways that are rational to them. For example, for a 17 year old from a wealthy family that has the means and expectations to send this high school student to college, the idea of leaving high school early to work full time would probably seem like a very irrational choice. However, at this particular moment, there may be another 17 year old high school student from a relatively poor household who believes that he is "destined" to work in a local factory because "everyone does it," including, potentially, his parents, siblings and peers. In this scenario, completing high school early could seem like a smart and proactive move since it enables this student to earn money sooner than later, helps this particular teen to earn seniority at work and allows the

teen to interact with familiar individuals. All of these elements merge to influence the differences in life course trajectories across high school students.

2.5 Life Course Perspectives Relating to Early Graduate Groups

Easy Way Outs

Merging the implications from the prior literature discussion with the life course perspective considerations offered in the Geile and Elder's model (shown in Figure 2.3) helps us to understand why the three hypothesized groups of early graduates (easy way outs, early escapees and earnest achievers) could emerge. For example, the easy way out subset of early graduates are hypothesized to be students who believe that earning a GED certificate is easier and preferable to remaining engaged with school at the level required to earn a traditional "on time" diploma. This "easy way out" scenario could be influenced by many theoretical life course perspective considerations.

The "development of individual human agency" life course aspect is very linked to individual deficits theory, and suggests that some students may lack the ability or desire to complete and pass traditional coursework (Finn 1989; Newman et al., 1992; Mehan 1997; Berkhold, Gies and Kaufman 1998; Heck and Mahoe 2006). Some students may feel that graduating early with a GED is, simply put, easier than completing traditional coursework process (Berkhold, Gies and Kaufman 1998; Civic Enterprise/Gates Foundation Studies 2004). Some students might lack the ability or desire to sufficiently fit in socially or to participate in activities, which lowers engagement and raises the odds of easy way out considerations.

The "social relations and linked lives" life course aspect is reflected in the student's influences from and interactions with their family, friends and classmates. Students who lack supportive family structures in which at least one parent actively encourages and supports school

attendance, learning and participation are more likely to become disengaged and seek an easier way out of high school (Haveman and Wolfe 1994; Downey, Ainsworth-Darnell and Dufur 1998; Rothstein 2004b; Rumberger 2004). Students who have switched high schools may experience less attachment with and acceptance from their new school's faculty and peers, which could frustrate them academically and socially, leading them to seek an easier way out (Rumberger and Larson 1998; Swanson & Schleicher 1999; Alexander, Entwistle, and Kabbani 2001). Having friends who have earned a GED is expected to increase the likelihood that a student will also consider leaving school early with a GED since there is first hand awareness of and interaction with others who have completed the GED process (Ellenbogen and Chamberland 1997; Carbonaro 1998; Rumberger and Thomas 2000; Rumberger 2004).

The "history and culture" life course perspective dimension recognizes that a person's location in time and space intertwines strongly with sociocultural theory explanations for "easy way outs." For example, minority students, who have to contend with many historical and cultural impediments, biases and challenges compared to white students, may be alienated by school processes and procedures, leading to frustration, potential rebellion and disengagement from school. The GED pathway might also be considered as a means of getting away from such a frustrating school environment while still earning a high school credential (Ogbu 1978, 1991a, 1991b, 1992; Nieto 1995, Davidson 1996; Lawrence 1997; Roderick 2003; Eitle and Eitle 2004; Kech and Mahoe 2006). Students who have been steered towards vocational courses (usually lower income students) might also be less engaged with school, leading them to seek an expedited exit from high school with a GED (Ainsworth and Roscigno 2005).

Early Escapees

The “early escapee” subset of early graduates are students who wish to expedite their high school graduation in order to more aggressively pursue a desired transition (e.g., the “carrot,” including work, parenthood, marriage) or to avoid current school related tensions (e.g., the “stick”) such as bullying, safety fears or social alienation from classmates. These students may or may not be academically successful, but there is likely a social disengagement aspect driving their decision to seek early graduation.

Prior literature has identified several student groups that could correlate with early escapees. “Push outs” are students who feel pressure or coercion to leave school because teachers or administrators want them removed, especially if these students are perceived to be resource intensive (e.g., needing extra faculty time and attention) or will lower the school’s standardized testing performance (Kravoleck and Buell 2005). Pullouts (described in the prior socioeconomic theory section) are early graduates who chose to aggressively pursue paid work (by choice or need) over staying in school (Bickel 1989; Bickel, Weaver, Williams and Lange 1997; Rumberger 2004). It is my hypothesis that there is still an important unexplored type of early escapees that might be described as “breakouts” (in the spirit of prison escapees), which reflects students who seek “early release” from school. These conceptual motivations for seeking “early release” from school include factors like (1) concerns of bullying and personal safety, (2) perceptions of unfair or alienating treatment by faculty, administrators or peers, (3) mental stress relating to courses, (4) negative effects of social stigmas (e.g., due to low income, self-expression and presentation, religious beliefs, sexual orientation, political views, being the subject of rumor or innuendo), (5) frustration with school policies and processes, (6) boredom or feeling “burnt out” with high school, (7) wish to join others who have already left high school (e.g., friends, sibling

or “significant other” in workplace or college or other non-local locations), (8) wish or need to move away, (9) need to care for a family member, (10) pregnancy or infant care and (11) intention to start or support a family in the near future. As early graduate research increases, there will likely be more potential reasons relating to “breakout” early graduates beyond those proposed here.

Filtering the literature through a life course perspective (like Giele and Elder’s life course model in Figure 2.3) helps us to understand the processes that could compel a student to seek an “early escape” with a diploma from high school. The human agency dimension and individual deficits theory suggests that some students, lacking the ability or desire to properly assimilate socially into their school environment, might chose to leave school to reduce social tension and stress. Another human agency explanation for early escapees is that some students may choose to engage in behaviors (e.g., teen sex) that results in pregnancy or the need to work for money sooner than their class peers (Bickle 1989; Finn 1989; Newman et al., 1992; Mehan 1997; Berkhold, Gies and Kaufman 1998; Heck and Mahoe 2006).

The “linked lives” dimension leads us to recognize that students from wealthier families are likely less pressured to seek paid work, which would lower their economic need to seek “early escape” from high school (Rumberger 1983; Bickel & Papagiannis 1988; Bickel 1989; Clark 1992; McNeal 1997, 1999; Rumberger 2004). Having involved parents who support schooling, learning and extracurricular activities results in enhanced levels of cultural and social capital. This in turn increases a student’s engagement with school while lowering a student’s sense of academic and social alienation, leading to less incentive to seek an early escape (Haveman and Wolfe 1994; Downey, Ainsworth-Darnell and Dufur 1998; Rothstein 2004b; Rumberger 2004).

The “linked lives” and “location in time and space” components are both relevant in recognizing important potential school quality differences students may experience. For example, students attending less funded schools are not as likely to have access to smaller classes (which enables more attention from faculty), specialty classes or to participate in sports and non-sport activities, which results in less academic and social engagement with their school (Byrk and Thum 1989; Rumberger 1995; McNeal 1997; Rumberger and Thomas 2000; Rumberger 2004). This lack of connectivity with their school could lead students to seek an early exit with their diploma. Students who have switched schools during high school are less likely to have established friendships, social equity and parental resonance with faculty and staff, thereby lowering social and academic engagement and raising consideration of early graduation (Rumberger & Larson 1998; Swanson & Schleicher 1999). The challenges of adapting to new school settings, processes, procedures and expectations can also lower academic and social engagement, leading students to seek an early graduation.

The “linked lives” and “location in time and place” dimensions also underscore the importance of school type effects. Public school students are more likely to have less engagement because of higher student/teacher ratios, fewer school resources and greater administrative acceptance of early graduation compared to private schools (Byrk and Thum 1989; Rumberger 1995; McNeal 1997; Rumberger and Thomas 2000; Rumberger 2004). Private schools, which are largely financed by tuition fees, have an economic incentive to discourage an early graduation, thereby lowering the likelihood of an “early escape.” Poorer students and minority students attending schools that leave them feeling racially or economically marginalized relative to wealthier white students may experience lower academic and social engagement, compelling them to seek early graduation. Students attending more crowded schools may feel “lost in the

shuffle” and therefore not develop a sense of connectivity and engagement with their teachers and class, leading to early exit consideration (Wehlage and Rutter 1986; Byrk & Thum 1989; Fine 1991; McNeal 1997).

Having friends who have already earned (or plan to earn) an “early escape” from high school is expected to raise a student’s consideration of the early exit option. On the other hand, having friends who are engaged and comfortable with school is expected to lower a student’s wish to leave school early (Ellenbogen & Chamberland 1997; Carbonaro 1998; Kasen, Cohen and Brook 1998; Rumberger and Thomas 2000; Rumberger 2004). Living in a community or neighborhood that offers limited immediate desirable alternatives to school (e.g., a good job) also will lower a student’s desire to seek early release (Hallihan and Williams 1990, Brooks-Gunn et al., 1997).

The linked lives and location in time and place life course dimensions also connect with socioeconomic theories of early escapees. Students from wealthier families and households with greater capital (e.g., social and cultural capital) will have less incentive or need to leave school early to earn money immediately (Rumberger 1983; Bickel and Papagiannis 1988; Clark 1992; Mortimer 2004; Rumberger 2004). Students from poorer and less capital endowed households likely attend lesser funded schools (e.g., fewer activities, higher student/teacher ratios, less individualized attention), leading to lower levels of school engagement and greater likelihood of seeking to graduate early (Byrk and Thum 1989; Haveman and Wolfe 1994; Rumberger 1995; McNeal 1997; Downey, Ainsworth-Darnell and Dufur 1998; Rumberger and Thomas 2000; Rothstein 2004b; Rumberger 2004). The availability of desirable paid work and a student’s preference or need to earn money (and possibly establish a form of seniority at work) sooner than later may lead students to seek early graduation (Rumberger 1983; Bickel and Papagiannis 1988;

Bickel 1989; Clark 1992; Mortimer 2004; Rumberger 2004). This type of “pull out” effect is even greater when a student perceives limited life chances and views the “reward” of staying in school to be low. Students working intensively (i.e., 20 or more hours a week) while in high school have less time to study, prepare for class, participate in social activities, clubs and sports, and less time to socialize with friends, leading to lower social engagement and greater likelihood of desiring an early exit from high school (Warren 2000, Mortimer 2004).

The nature of pull out effects and working while in high school are especially important and complex for early escapees. Prior life course studies suggest that different students may be influenced, for many reasons, to prioritize paid work over traditional schooling or to go in the opposite direction and seek to deepen their schooling focus to enable greater life chances later on. These paradoxical outcomes make more sense when considering the complexity of different life course dimensions across different lives. For example, it is quite possible that a female student living in a region that offers limited desirable job prospects, and even fewer such prospects for women, might be compelled to aggressively pursue an open job opportunity as soon as possible. On the other hand, the absence of such desirable opportunities might compel the same student to “wait out” the current bad market by remaining in school in the hope that new opportunities will arise downstream. Additionally, the choice to remain in school rather than “escape early” might better position the student to consider additional schooling and training options that will allow her to “trade up” in her future job hunting (Anisef, Axelrod, Baichman-Anisef and Turittin 2000).

Another seemingly contradictory “pull out” dynamic is that working for pay during high school can help or hurt a student’s engagement with school. This also makes more sense when viewed from a life course perspective. For instance, students expressing agency by earning

money while in high school are likely influenced by their family's economic status and support for their current and long term educational goals. Students working fewer hours (less than 20 per week) may be less compelled to work to contribute to their family's income and can therefore leverage their work experience to earn some discretionary spending money while developing important forms of capital. Examples of such potential capital include greater confidence, responsibility, adaptability, time management and means of better envisioning life as an adult, all of which could induce them to remain on time rather than to seek an early escape from high school. Students who work more intensively (i.e., 20 or more hours per week) are more likely to come from poorer families that may need the additional income, offer less support for continued education beyond high school or live in a setting that does not seem to reward remaining on time with school (Mortimer 2000).

Sociocultural theories, which relate heavily to the "history and culture" life course dimension, suggest that early escapees are students who feel marginalized, alienated or stressed because of their perceptions of unfair, non-empathetic or arduous school process and procedures (e.g., discipline policies, academic expectations, being steering towards certain course pathways) who might seek to minimize their tension by leaving high school early (Ogbu 1978, 1991a, 1991b, 1992; Nieto 1995; Davidson 1996; Lawrence 1997; Roderick 2003; Eitle and Eitle 2004; Ainsworth and Roscigno 2005; Kech and Mahoe 2006). Black students (compared to Hispanic, Asian and other minority students) may feel particularly frustrated and alienated when dealing with school processes and practices, which leads them to seek early graduation. On the other hand, these same students may have a harder time navigating school bureaucracies and completing the necessary coursework in the aggressive manner needed to earn early graduation.

High achieving minority students may be accused of “acting white,” which could result in their feeling greater peer-induced stress and alienation, leading them to seek early graduation as a means of escaping pressure and taunting from peers (Fordam and Ogbu 1986; Tyson and Darity 2005). Conversely, these students may actually be more popular among their classmates (Ainsworth-Darnell and Downey 1998), which would lower their likelihood of school disengagement. Lower income male students may seek early graduation from high school to get early access to full time paid work (Willis 1981). Then again, lower income students (male or female) may be more submissive to school authority and processes, and therefore be more likely to question school norms, leading them to remain on time in their school matriculation (Kohn 1979). Students who exhibit discipline and behavior issues (which signal a lack of submissive behaviors and school engagement) may be more inclined to seek early graduation as a means of escaping the confining school environment (Bowles and Gintis 1976, 1982, 2002). Alternatively, students who have involved parents and access to supportive capital are expected to be more engaged with school and therefore be less likely to seek an early graduation.

Earnest Achievers

The earnest achiever early graduate is hypothesized to be a strong academic performer but not necessarily very socially connected with their school. The combination of high academic engagement and aptitude and their average or below average social engagement and connectivity could compel earnest achievers to graduate early in order to get a jump start on post-high school education or training.

Elder (1974, 1999) provides a guiding life course example that can inform our understanding of earnest achievers by showing the interplay of Geile and Elder’s framework dimensions (Figure 2.3). Elder demonstrated how human agency (students remaining engaged with

school and intent on earning success) interacts with social relations (seeing the hardship their parents faced) and history and culture (growing up in a time of severe economic hardship) to influence a student to be academically focused, ambitious and determined. Elder's study shows how growing up during times of economic deprivation (i.e., illustrating the life course element of location in time and place) resulted in many children watching their parents struggle with new types of roles and identities (e.g., unemployed fathers becoming depressed, moms entering the paid labor market, siblings taking on parenting and homemaking responsibilities, all of which reflect the life course dimensions of social relations and linked lives). As a result of experiencing such conditions, many children grow up to value the pursuit of education and the seeking of pragmatic work as a hedge against future economic downturns (reflecting the element of individual human agency). The implications of this type of life course study is that contemporary high school students who are interested in assertively maximizing their life chances and raising their likelihood of economic success might seek an aggressive and early entry into college or other types of post-high school job training programs as a hedge against ever again experiencing the hardships their families faced earlier in life.

Earnest achievers reflect a positive human agency story since they demonstrate the ability and desire to perform well academically. Their academic strength is a catalyst to move on to new learning challenges like college or training programs. Since they are choosing to leave high school early despite being solid academic performers, we may expect that these same students may not experience sufficient social engagement due to their lack of desire or ability to engage socially with classmates or to participate in sports and non-sport activities (Finn 1989; Newman et al., 1992; Mehan 1997; Berkhold, Gies and Kaufman 1998; Heck and Mahoe 2006).

The influence of social relations and location in time and place also affect the earnest achievers, and, unlike the other two early graduate subsets, these effects tend to support their future learning goals. Students who have more encouragement, family support and resources are in a better position to consider getting an early start on college. Students from two-parent households are more likely to receive more attention, supervision and encouragement throughout high school, conditions which would help earnest achievers finish high school early (Cummins 1986; MacLeod 1995; Descenes et al., 2001; Witherspoon and Schissel 2001; Rumberger 2004; Cassidy and Bates 2005). Students from wealthier families are also more likely to envision greater life chances that require a college degree, which may encourage their early graduation so that they can transition to college faster. Students with higher levels of cultural capital might be more able to navigate school processes since they understand “how the game is played” and seek early graduation to enable faster access to college (Haveman and Wolfe 1994; Downey, Ainsworth-Darnell and Dufur 1998; Rothstein 2004b; Rumberger 2004). Parents can leverage social capital to help their child to get a jump start on college. Additionally, greater parental involvement, encouragement and interactions with school faculty and staff can help in enabling and guiding the student to an early graduation (McNeal 1999). Earnest achievers are expected to have remained stable in terms of not switching high schools, which reduces the challenge that they and their parents would have in effectively navigating a new school bureaucracy to enable early graduation (Rumberger & Larson 1998; Swanson & Schleicher 1999). In terms of school types, private schools might have more earnest achievers with the means to afford and seek early entry into college, as well as greater peer expectations of educational and life chance outcomes (Wehlage and Rutter 1986; Coleman and Hoffer 1987; Byrk & Thum 1989; Chubb & Moe 1990; Fine 1991; Byrk, Lee and Holland 1993; McNeal 1997; Rumberger 2004). On the other hand,

private schools may have an incentive to prevent early graduation since it results in lost tuition revenue since the student will be leaving sooner.

Earnest achievers are expected to have friends who value education, which could have mixed influences on the timing of their graduation. Having friends who are earnest achievers creates precedence that the early exiting option is viable and real, which would increase the likelihood of other potential earnest achievers following suit (Ellenbogen and Chamberland 1997; Carbonaro 1998; Rumberger and Thomas 2000, Rumberger 2004). Alternatively, the increased social engagement from having friends who are “pro school” could lead earnest achiever students to remain on time and not seek an early graduation.

Figure 2.3 also helps us to recognize potential inhibitors for earnest achievers since proactive student agency may not be enough to overcome challenges relating to social relations (e.g., lack of family or peer support) or location in time and place (e.g., attending a less funded school). Poorer students and minority students are more likely to attend schools that have lower levels of resources, encouragement and supervision, thereby making it harder for would be earnest achievers to find support and precedent for getting an early start on college through early graduation (Coleman and Hoffer 1987; Chubb and Moe 1990; Byrk, Lee and Holland 1993; Rumberger 2004).

History and culture also interact with racial aspects of potential earnest achievers. For example, minority students who are influenced by what they perceive as historically grounded oppositional culture may feel alienated by school practices and processes and therefore may have a harder time completing coursework in the aggressive timing and administratively prescribed manner that is needed to enable an early graduation (Ogbu 1978, 1991a, 1991b, 1992; Nieto 1995; Lawrence 1997; Kech and Mahoe 2006). On the other hand, Asian students, compared to

other minority groups, may be more culturally influenced by their parents to be earnest achievers and to seek an aggressive entry into college (Steinberg, Dombush and Brown 1992; Rumberger 2004).

2.6 Conceptual Framework

The prior sections of this chapter laid the groundwork in terms of theoretical background and literature support regarding why high school students may have different levels of academic and social engagement as well as why some students would be more likely than others to seek an early graduation. This section serves as a conceptual bridge between those literature and theory-guided considerations and the more detailed forthcoming discussion of the data, measures and analytic strategy in Chapter 3. This conceptual bridge is depicted by the framework shown in Figure 2.4. This framework links details of a student's background (e.g. race, gender, family situation, attitudes towards learning) with their levels of academic and, separately, social engagement with their high school. These engagement levels are then associated with different high school exiting pathways (e.g., graduating on time, dropping out or graduating early). This framework, informed by Rumberger and Larson (1998), also controls for theorized influences of a student's family and peers on that student's levels of school engagement.

While theoretical cases can be made to include more school and community aspects into the conceptual framework, I ultimately decided against including them in this framework for several reasons. First, these variables (based on the literature review) are not as relevant for an investigation of early graduates as they are for other school exit types (i.e., dropouts). Second, I am already capturing theory based processes and influences of schools and community through other related variables such as household income, race, whether a school is public or private, peer effects, and whether a student attends a school in an urban, suburban or rural neighborhood.

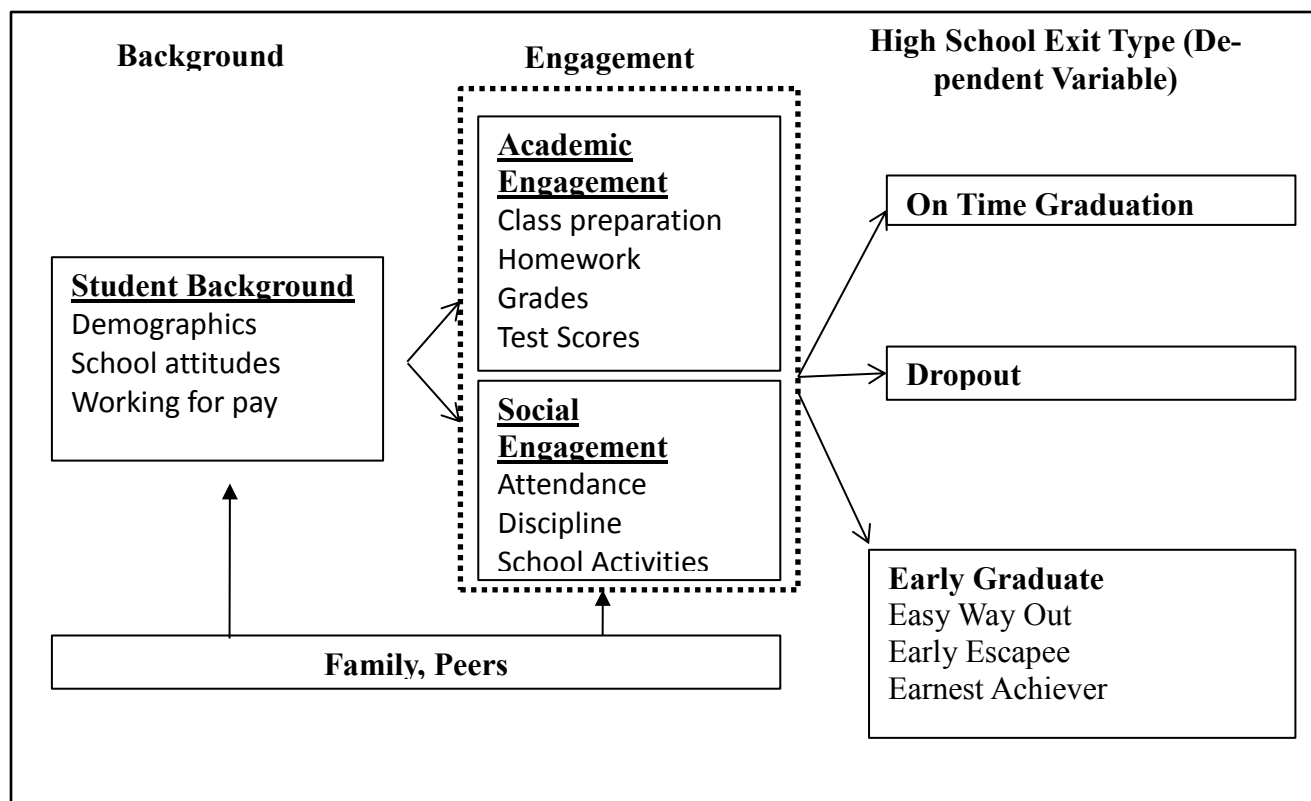


Figure 2.4 Conceptual Model for Predicting High School Exiting Pathways

Third, the variables that I will be assessing reflect student level reporting, which offers greater clarity, specificity and variance than reporting from a school level (e.g., I am utilizing each student's reporting of school disruptors, which likely varies across students in the same school because of considerations including a student's race, income, attitudes towards learning, etc). Fourth, there are coverage limitations within the ELS data sets, including a lack of relevant community-oriented variables.

This chapter has addressed many potential theory-based explanations for why high school students may have different levels of academic and social engagement. It also provided context for why some students would be more likely than others to seek an early graduation from high school. Additionally, it applied a life course lens to construct several theoretically distinct

groups of early graduates. Furthermore, it described a conceptual framework that will be used to guide my analyses for this study. The next chapter will detail how I will operationalize figure 2.4's framework. This will involve a deep look into the data source, variables under consideration, conversion of those variables into measures and the phases of my analysis plan.

3 DATA, MEASURES AND ANALYTIC STRATEGY

This chapter provides an overview of the data, measures and analytic strategy that support this study. A primary goal of this chapter is to explain the conversion of many theoretically relevant conceptualizations of school engagement and related influencers from the prior theory and literature review and conceptual framework into an operational approach for the different analytic phases of my investigation of early graduates.

3.1 Data

The data source for this research is the Educational Longitudinal Survey (ELS). Three waves of this national survey have been conducted to date by the Research Triangle Institute on behalf of the National Center for Educational Statistics (NCES). The ELS project has many goals, including measuring high school students' achievement, attitudes, aspirations, home educational support and educational experiences while in high school as well as eventual transitions, postsecondary education, employment, and living situations later in life (NCES 2005). The ELS is an appropriate data source for my study because it identifies early graduates and other school exiter types, follows them over time and allows for consideration of many theoretically relevant variables in explaining differences between school exiter types.

The first wave of the survey (known as the "base year" or ELS:2002) was conducted in 2002 during the Spring of 10th grade for the study sample. This base year study utilized a two-stage probability sample that enables the sample to be nationally projectable and representative of all high school sophomores. The first stage of the sampling process focused on developing a nationally representative sample of 750 high school schools. Private schools are part of this sample and were intentionally oversampled to enable comparisons with public schools. The sampling frame for these schools was the synthesis of two data sources, the NCES Common

Core of Data (CCD) and the Private School Survey (PSS), both reflecting 1999-2000 survey periods. The CCD data set reflects all public primary and secondary schools and school districts in the U.S. The PSS data set offers a listing and detailed statistics and characteristics of private schools in the U.S. This combined sample frame resulted in over 27,000 sample school candidates, and 1,221 of these schools were contacted by NCES for participation in the study. 752 of these schools actually participated in the study. The appropriate ELS weighting factors (National Center for Education Statistics 2005) are used in my study to address potential nonresponse and nonparticipation bias.

The second stage of the sampling process focused on generating a representative student sample from the 752 schools selected in stage one. Approximately 26 sophomores from within each of the participating schools were selected. NCES obtained a student list from each school and performed quality assurance checks on these lists. NCES then developed a stratified systematic sampling of students using race-based strata. The student sample was expanded as needed to include additional Hispanic and Asian (National Center for Educational Statistics 2005). This resulted in 17,591 students being selected for the survey, and 15,362 students actually participated.

In addition to the surveying of students, NCES also surveyed each student's parents, teachers and select faculty (e.g., math and reading teachers). Asian students were oversampled to support comparisons with white, black and Hispanic students. This base year survey is important for my study because it marks the first time that high school student data (and information relating to their families, peers and faculty) were collected at a national level. This is also the only time in the longitudinal survey process that all respondents were in high school be-

fore they eventually exited in different manners (i.e., graduated on time, graduated early or dropped out).

The first ELS follow-up survey (FU1) was fielded in the Spring of 2004, when most of the sample members were high school seniors. This follow-up survey was administered to students who had remained in school, graduated early or dropped out. This sample was drawn from the same students who participated in the base year survey and was freshened to include some students who were seniors at the time of the first follow-up survey but were not in the potential sophomore year sampling pool for the base survey because they lived outside the U.S. at the time or because of issues of grade sequence (e.g., they skipped a grade or had been retained). This first follow-up survey is important for my study because it is the first time that I can classify the base year sophomores into different types of expected high school exiters (two years later) since there are clear indications of being on time to graduate, graduating early (with a diploma or with a GED) or dropping out. The ELS study was done in a manner that led dropouts and early graduates to voluntarily self-identify by completing a specific questionnaire that reflects their dropout or early graduate status. Only those students in both the base year survey and the first follow-up survey are in my study sample (i.e., no “freshen” sample students are included since their sophomore baseline information was not collected in the base year study).

A third wave of data, the second ELS follow-up (FU2) were collected in 2006. This survey was issued four years after the base year sophomore survey (in 2002). This second follow-up allows for tracking the different statuses (e.g., college student, parent, married) and trajectories (e.g., two-year college, four year college, full time employment) of the high school exiters. All sampled students from the base year survey and first follow-up survey are included. This second follow-up survey is important for my study because it provides insights into early post-

high school life course transitions and trajectories for the different types of high school exiters. Because of the two-stage probability sampling process used for all three survey waves, the results of each survey can be generalized to be nationally representative (Henry 1990). The base year survey is representative of all 2002 high school sophomore in the U.S., the first follow-up is representative of all 2004 high school seniors, and the second follow-up is representative of former 2004 seniors two years later.

3.2 Measures

The ELS data set enables me to operationalize many of the concepts that I identified in the literature review. The high school exiter types will be compared across many different variable dimensions and measures in the follow chapters. A complete list and description of all measures to be used in this study is shown in Table 3.1.

The first set of analyses, to be presented in Chapter 4, will focus on demographic differences across the exiter groups. These demographic considerations include a student's sex, race, family composition and location (see Table 3.1). The measure *sex* is a binary of male or female. Prior research suggests that boys are more likely than girls to become academically disengaged because they see mental (i.e., academic) work as being less masculine (Willis 1981, Carter 2005) and therefore may seek an "easy way out" trajectory (i.e., graduating with a GED instead of with a diploma).

The measure *race* reflects a student's self-classification of being either Asian, Hispanic, black, white, Native American or Multi-Racial. I expect that non-whites are less likely to be academically or socially engaged with school due to cultural opposition and stressors that lower a student's desire to conform or participate in curriculum or school activities (Ogbu 1978, 1991a,

Table 3.1 Operational Measures

Variable Name	Description	Values	Mean (for entire ELS sample)
<i>Demographics</i>			
Sex	Self-reported sex of student	0 = Male 1 = Female	50% 50% 100%
Race	Self-reported student's race or ethnicity	1 = Asian 2 = Hispanic 3 = Black 4 = White 5 = Native American 6 = Multi Race	10% 15% 13% 57% 1% 5% 100%
<i>Family Composition</i>			
Parents	Parent reported relationship status of parent(s) and their spouse or partner with the student.	1= Mom + Dad 2 = Mom + Man 3 = Dad + Woman 4 = Other Family 5 = Just Mom 6 = Just Dad	59% 12% 3% 3% 19% 3% 100%
Siblings	The number of brother or sisters that the student lives with, including adoptive, half and step siblings, regardless of whether or not they live in the same household as the student	0 = 0 siblings 6 = 6 or more siblings	Mean Std. Dev 2.44 1.46
Income ³	A composite variable reflecting household income and parent's view towards education that is comprised of five equally weighted components including (1) father's/guardian's highest level of education completed, (2) mother's/ guardian's highest level of education completed, (3) family income, (4) father's/ guardian's occupational prestige and (5) the mother's/guardian's occupational prestige.	Ranges from a low of -2.11 to a high of 1.98	Mean Std. Dev .05 .75

³ The label for this variable is "Income", which is descriptively within the spirit of the actual ELS variable name of 'SES2' (socioeconomic status 2), however it is important to recognize that this particular variable is a composite variable that reflects parents' level of education and occupational prestige in addition to family income.

Variable Name	Description	Values	Mean	Std. Dev
<i>Cultural Capital</i>				
Computer	Composite variable reflecting a student's self-reporting that their household has a computer and internet access.	Ranges from low of -3.19 to high of .84	0.00	1.00
Books	A student's self-reporting that their household has 50 or more books.	0 No 1 Yes	No Yes	18% 82% 100%
<i>Social Capital</i>				
PTA	Parent's self-reporting that they or their partner attended a parent-teacher organization meeting during the school year.	0 No 1 Yes	No Yes	63% 37% 100%
<i>Location</i>				
Region	Region of the student's school as indicated in the Common Core of Data (CCD) 1999-2000 and the Private School Survey (PSS) 1999-2000.	1 = Northeast 2 = Midwest 3 = South 4 = West		18% 25% 36% 21% 100%
Neighborhood	Urbanicity of school locale as indicated in the Common Core of Data (CCD) 1999-2000 and the Private School Survey (PSS) 1999-2000.	1 = Urban 2 = Suburban 3 = Rural		34% 48% 18% 100%
<i>School Type</i>				
Private	The public or private status of a student's school as indicated in the Common Core of Data (CCD) 1999-2000 and the Private School Survey (PSS) 1999-2000.	0 = Public 1 = Private	Public Private	79% 21% 100%
<i>Peer Influences</i>				
Peers	A composite variable reflecting a student's self-reporting of the importance of education among their friends, including considerations of attending school, studying, getting good grades, finishing high school and continuing their education after high school.	Ranges from a low of -3.31 to a high of 1.11. Eigen value is 3.03, Chronbach's alpha is .84	Mean -0.00	Std. Dev 1.00

Variable Name	Description	Values	Mean	Std. Dev
<i>Pro-School Attitudes and Preparation</i>				
Importance	Student's self-reported attitude towards the importance of getting a good education	1 Not important 2 Somewhat important 3 Very important	2.82	.41
Homework	Student's self-reported level of class preparation regarding how often they go to class without their homework done	1 Usually 2 Often 3 Seldom 4 Never	2.89	.91
<i>Academic Performance</i>				
Grades	GPA for all courses	0.00 – 4.00	2.72	.77
Tests	Standardized test composite score for math and reading	Continuous variables ranging from 20.9-81.0	50.66	9.97
<i>School Attendance and Punctuality</i>				
Attendance	Self-reported level of times absent from school during 10 th grade school year.	1 10 or more times 5 Never	3.45	1.08
Punctual	A composite variable reflecting self-reporting of times that a student was late for class or skipped class.	-3.98 (lowly punctuality) to 1.93 (highly punctual). Bivariate correlation of .43	0.0	1.00
<i>School Spirit</i>				
School Spirit	Self-reported level that there is 'real school spirit'	1 Strongly disagree 4 Strongly Agree	2.83	.77
<i>Sense of Friendliness Within the School</i>				
Friendly	Self-reported level that 'school is a place to meet friends'	1 Strongly disagree 4 Strongly Agree	3.02	.72
Racial Harmony	Self-reported level that 'students are friendly with other racial groups'	1 Strongly disagree 4 Strongly Agree	3.21	.66
<i>Participation in School Activities</i>				

Variable Name	Description	Values	Mean	Std. Dev
Activities	Self-reported level of hours per week spent on extracurricular activities	0 0 hours 21 21 or more hours	4.77	5.70
<i>Post-High School Education</i>				
School Apex	Reflects the highest level of post-high school education that a student has attempted since high school among those students who attended any post-high school education.	1 = less than two year college 2 = two year college 3 = four year college	< 2 yr 2 yr 4 yr	1.2% 23.3% 75.5% 100.0%
Full Time	Indication of whether or not a student has always been a full-time student since enrolling in post-high school education.	1 = always part time or partial part time 2 = always full time	Part time Full time	20.5% 79.5% 100.0%
<i>Post-High School Paid Work</i>				
Have Worked	Indication of whether or not a student has ever worked for pay since high school.	0 = No 1 = Yes	No Yes	8% 92% 100%
Now Working	Reflects if a former high school student is currently working for pay	0 = No 1 = Yes	No Yes	26% 74% 100%
Hours Work	A categorical variable that applies to those students who are currently working for pay, indicating the number of hours currently being worked each week.	1 = 1 to 10 hours 5 = 51 or more hours	3.91	1.03
<i>Post High School Family Considerations</i>				
Married	Classification of current marital status	1 = single/ never married 2 = married 3 = divorced/ widowed/ separated	Single Married Divorced	96.7% 3.0% 0.3% 100.0%

Variable Name	Description	Values	Mean	Std. Dev
Has Kids	Indicator of whether or not the former high school student has any biological kids	0 = No 1 = Yes	No Yes	94% 6% 100%
Number Kids	Categorization of number of kids among those former high school students who have at least one biological child.	1 = 1 biological child 2 = 2 biological children 3 = 3 biological children	1 Child 2 Children 3 Children	83.3% 14.8% 2.0% 100.0%

1991b, 1992; Fordham and Ogbu 1986; Nieto 1995; Lawrence 1997; Eitle and Eitle 2004; Kech and Mahoe 2006). An exception among non-whites is that Asian students may be more likely than other non-whites to be academically engaged because of cultural beliefs that place great value on education and effort (Steinberg, Dombush and Brown 1992; Rumberger 2004). The *sex* and *race* variables are self reported by students during Spring of their 10th grade year.

Family composition includes the measure *parents*, which is a parent/guardian status variable that recognizes different types of parenting arrangements, including the primary residence being parented by (1) both a mother and a father, (2) a mother and a male guardian, (3) father and a female guardian, (4) an “other family” arrangement that includes female guardian only, male guardian only, two guardians, or a situation where a student lives with their parents or guardians less than half the time they were in 10th grade, (5) mother only and (6) father only. Parenting status was reported by parents during Spring of the student’s 10th grade year. I expect that students from two-parent households are more likely to remain academically engaged since prior research that links two parent households with a student having greater access to parental support, guidance, monitoring (Downey, Ainsworth-Darnell and Dufur 1998), encouragement, economic resources, access to better schools (Cummins 1986; Haveman and Wolfe 1994; MacLeod 1995; Descenes, Cuban and Tyack 2001; Witherspoon and Schissel 2001; Rothstein 2004; Rumberger 2004; Cassidy and Bates 2005), and more parental involvement with the student’s

teachers (McNeal 1999). I therefore expect students who come from two-parent households to be less likely to seek early graduation, with the exception of earnest achievers, who may be receiving encouragement and support to get an early start on post-high school education.

Additional analyses, to be reported in Chapter 7, involve the additional family characteristic measures *siblings* and *income*. *Siblings* measures the number of brothers or sisters that the student lives with, including adoptive, half and step siblings, regardless of whether or not they live primarily in the same household as the student (NELS Codebook 2002). This measure is theorized to reflect potential dispersion of parental attention and resources since more children in a family likely leads to less parental attention per child (Downey 1994).

The measure *income* is a composite measure of household income and parents' views towards education. *Income* is comprised of five equally weighted components, including (1) father/guardian's highest level of education completed, (2) mother/guardian's highest level of education completed, (3) family income, (4) father/guardian's occupational prestige and (5) the mother/guardian's occupational prestige. ELS personnel coded the level of occupational prestige through use of the 1961 Duncan index (NELS Codebook 2002). Since this study is concerned with high school exiting dynamics, this composite measure is preferred over just household socioeconomic status since this composite measure also reflects important parental experiences with education and resulting occupational prestige. The *income* measure ranges from -2.0 to 2.0. *Siblings* and *income* were reported by parents during Spring of the student's 10th grade year. My expectations for the *income* variable are the same as for the two-parent household status since higher income and valuation of education is expected to lead to greater parental support, guidance, encouragement, economic resources, access to better schools (Cummins 1986; Haveman and Wolfe 1994; MacLeod 1995; Descenes, Cuban and Tyack 2001; Witherspoon and Schissel

2001; Rothstein 2004; Rumberger 2004; Cassidy and Bates 2005) and more parental involvement with the student's teachers (McNeal 1999).

A family's access to different types of pro-learning cultural capital is measured with the variables *computer* and *books*. *Computer* is a composite variable that indicates that students report having both a computer and internet access at home. *Books* is a measure that indicates that students have at least 50 books at home, which suggests access to reading. These cultural capital proxies signal that a student has access and family encouragement to learning resources. Both of these composite variables are coded as yes or no responses, indicating whether or not a student's household has these types of resources. I expect that access to cultural capital at home leads to more academic engagement, which would result in students being less likely to be an early graduate, with the possible exception of earnest achievers (Downey, Ainsworth-Darnell and Dufur 1998).

The measure *PTA* is a proxy for a family's level of social capital in helping their child with school support and involvement. *PTA* reflects whether or not a student's parents attended a parent-teacher organization meeting during the current school year. This variable is a yes or no response for each student. Greater parental involvement is expected to result in increased student engagement with school, which suggests that these students would be less likely to seek early graduation (again, with the possible exception of earnest achievers) (McNeal 1999).

I am also assessing two location oriented variables, *region* and *neighborhood*. *Region* is a measure that reports which part of the country a student lives in (i.e., Northeast, Midwest, South or West). *Neighborhood* is a measure that indicates the type of setting that the student's school is in (i.e., urban, suburban or rural). Both *region* and *neighborhood* are derived from the 1999-2000 Common Core of Data and Private School Survey data sources and then matched to

each student in the ELS data set. Prior research suggests that schools in different settings correlate with differences in access to learning resources. For example, prior studies link urban schools with (1) less funding per student compared to wealthier suburban schools (Rothstein 2004a) as well as (2) historic racial inequality, resulting in higher proportions of minority, lower-class, and at-risk students (Wehlage and Rutter 1986; Byrk & Thum 1989; Fine 1991; McNeal 1997, Rumberger 2004; Cassidy and Bates 2005; Heck and Mahoe 2006) and (3) school policies and processes that may not resonate with minority students and can lead students to become alienated and disengaged from school (Ogbu 1978, 1991a, 1991b, 1992; Fordham and Ogbu 1986; Nieto 1995; Lawrence 1997; Eitle and Eitle 2004; Kech and Mahoe 2006). Suburban students are expected to have the highest likelihood of attending schools with greater educational resources and support since suburban schools tend to have higher spending per pupil due to higher tax bases (Rothstein 2004a). These suburban students are also expected to experience less cultural resistance to school norms, processes and policies because of a greater percentage of non-minority (i.e., white) students comprising the student population (Ogbu 1978, 1991a, 1991b, 1992; Fordham and Ogbu 1986; Nieto 1995; Lawrence 1997; Eitle and Eitle 2004; Kech and Mahoe 2006). These conditions are expected to support an earnest achiever's aggressive matriculation with a diploma or a student remaining engaged enough to graduate on time.

The type of school (public or private) that a student attends is measured with the variable *private*. This variable has been coded with public schools being 0 and private schools being 1. There are many theory based reasons to assess high school exit differences across different school types, including differences in the household income of students, school acceptance policies (e.g., private schools are able to deny access to resource intensive students) and resources available per student among those who are accepted (Coleman & Hoffer 1987; Chubb and Moe

1990; Byrk, Lee and Holland 1993; Rumberger 2004). I expect private school students to have greater access to learning resources and encouragement, and to therefore be more engaged in learning and less likely than their public school counterparts to seek an early graduation.

The composite variable *peers* measures the importance of education among the student's closest friends. This composite variable reflects a student's self-reporting of the importance to their friends to attend school, study, get good grades, finish high school and continue their education. The Eigen value for *peers* is 3.03 and the Chronbach's alpha is .84. The component variables all range from 1 (not important) to 3 (very important). Having high achieving (and presumably highly engaged) friends tends to reduce the likelihood of student disengagement, and thereby raise the likelihood of their graduating on time (Kasen, Cohen, & Brook 1998). Having friends who are disengaged from school is expected to raise the likelihood that a student will also become disengaged and likely seek an early graduation (Ellenbogen and Chamberland 1997; Carbonaro 1998; Rumberger & Thomas 2000; Rumberger 2004).

I have operationalized the concept of academic engagement through the inclusion of several measures of pro-school attitudes, preparation and performance. The measure *importance* reflects a student's self-reporting of how important they think it is to get a good education. *Homework* is a measure of class preparation and tracks a student's self-reporting of how often they go to class without having completed their homework. The variables *grades* and *tests* are measures of academic performance. *Grades* is a measure of a student's grade point average for all courses. *Tests* reports a student's standardized test composite score for math and reading. I expect all measures of academic performance to positively correlate with greater academic engagement (Rumberger and Larson 1998, Rumberger 2004). This would result in the more academically engaged students being less likely to seek an early graduation, with the possible ex-

ception of earnest achievers (for whom greater academic engagement could lead to faster matriculation).

The concept of social engagement is operationalized through the measures *attendance*, *punctual*, *school spirit*, *friendly*, *racial harmony* and *activities*. *Attendance* is a measure that indicates the number of self-reported student absences during the 10th grade school year and has been re-coded so that higher values now reflect fewer absences and better attendance. *Punctuality* is a composite variable that reflects the number of times a student was late for class or skipped a class altogether. The component variables for *punctuality* are (1) the number of times a student was late for class and (2) times a student skipped class, which were re-coded into a new range from a least punctual level of 1 to a most punctual level of 5 and have a bivariate correlation of .43.

School spirit is a self-reported student measure that there is “real school spirit.” This variable has been recoded into a range of 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree). Proxies for a student’s perceived level of friendliness within their school include *friendly* and *racial harmony*. *Friendly* is a self-reported rating that “school is a place to meet friends.” *Racial harmony* is also a self-reported rating that “students are friendly with other racial groups.” Both of these proxies reflect levels of friendliness within a school, and both have been recoded into a range of 1 (strongly disagree) to 4 (strongly agree).

A student’s voluntary participation in extracurricular school activities, including sports and non-sport activities, is measured with the variable *activities*. This variable measures the self-reported hours per week that a student spends on such activities. *Activities* ranges from a low of 0 (i.e., no time spent on extracurricular activities) to 21 (21 or more hours spent per week on activities).

All of the social engagement measures are now coded such that higher levels indicate greater social engagement. I therefore expect these measures to positively correlate with greater school engagement (Rumberger and Larson 1998, Rumberger 2004). Higher social engagement levels are expected to lower the likelihood of a student seeking an early graduation

The second ELS follow-up study reports on the students two years after the on time graduation for their cohort and four years after the initial base year survey was completed in 10th grade. These data enable me to operationalize different measures regarding each student's post-high school education, work and family statuses. *School apex* is a measure of the highest level of post-high school education that a student has attempted (e.g., four-year college, two-year college, less than a 2-year college program) since leaving high school among those students who attended any post-high school formal education. *Full time* is a measure that indicates whether or not a student has always been a full time (versus part-time or a mix of full and part time) student since enrolling in post-high school education. My expectation is that earnest achievers are more likely than other early graduates to have attended four year colleges and to have been full time students throughout their post-high school education (Rumberger and Larson 1998).

The “work for pay since high school” measures include *have worked*, *now working*, and *hours work*. *Have worked* is a variable that indicates whether or not a student has ever worked for pay since high school. *Now working* is a variable that indicates if a student is currently working for pay. *Work hours* measures the number of hours a student is currently working for pay among those who are currently working for pay. I expect that easy way outs, who may be less inclined to attend further schooling post-high school (Heckman, Hsee and Rubinstein 1999) and early escapees, who may have sought early escape from high school to earn money (Bickel 1989;

Bickel, Weaver, Williams and Lange 1997; Rumberger 2006) are more likely than the other early graduates to have worked for pay and to currently be working for pay.

The family status variables include indications of marital and parenting status. *Married* is a variable that indicates a student's current marital status (i.e., married or not married). *Has kids* is an indicator of whether or not the student has any biological kids of their own. *Number kids* is a measure of how many kids a student currently has, among those students who report having at least one biological child. I expect early escapees, compared to the other early graduate groups, to be more likely to be married and have kids since it is plausible that a desire to get married and start a family or their need to adapt to a teen pregnancy situation could be the catalysts for their seeking an early graduation in the first place (Bickel 1989; Bickel, Weaver, Williams and Lange 1997; Rumberger 2006).

3.3 Analytic Strategy

I have designed my analytic strategy so that it will answer several important questions relating to early high school graduates, including (1) "who (demographically) are these early graduates?" (presented in Chapter 5), (2) "how do levels of academic and social engagement compare across different types of high school exiters?" (Chapter 6), (3) "do levels of academic and social engagement explain why some students seek early graduation?" (Chapter 7), and (4) "how do the post-high school outcomes of early graduates compare to those of other high school exiter types?" (Chapter 8). Each of these primary questions form the basis for distinct and separate chapters in my dissertation.

Before any analysis is undertaken, I need to revisit my prior conceptualization of the different early high school graduate groups. Since each of my analytic chapters involves comparisons across these different groups, it is important to recognize potential issues and challenges

stemming from the shift from conceptualizing to operationalizing each of these early graduate groups.

3.4 Operationalizing Early Graduate Groups

Easy Way Outs

There are several important considerations regarding the early graduates sample. My literature review led me to conceptualize the existence of several potential early graduate groups. The first conceptual delineation is between those students receiving a GED and those receiving a diploma. The early graduates with a GED are considered to be the easy way out group of early graduates since they pursued the “easier” way of completing high school (i.e., not having to be physically present or follow traditional school processes and procedures). Ideally, the ELS data would include a variable for early graduates who finished high school early because they thought it would be easier to get a GED than a diploma. This question, unfortunately, was not asked of early graduates. The use of the ELS’s “earned a GED” variable to indicate easy way outs is the best theoretically-grounded option available, and this results in 135 easy way out early graduates within my sample.

There are 353 early graduates who earned a diploma in my sample. An additional 38 students were initially dropped from this group because of missing data⁴. Upon merging theoretical expectations from the literature review with actual data from the Education Longitudinal Study, it appears that three distinct groups exist among early graduates with a diploma: early escapees, earnest achievers and early passives.

⁴ To address the issue of missing data, I used multiple imputation to resurrect cases. I ran the initial analyses in SPSS and then compared the results with those I later derived by using SPSS’s multiple imputation function to resurrect the missing cases.

Early Escapees

Early escapees are those students who sought to graduate early because of feelings of alienation stemming from frequent disruptions (e.g., physical threats, actual violence, gangs, theft, drugs being offered, etc) or stressors (e.g., pregnancy, desire to move away). This early escapee group of early graduates is challenging to conceptually screen for because of the wide range of possible reasons that could compel a student to seek an early “breakout” from high school. I have screened all early graduates with a diploma for their self-reporting (in the base year survey) or in first follow-up survey of personally experiencing specific types of disruptions⁵ that were tracked in the ELS survey. Most of these potential early escapee motivators reflect concerns about safety, violence and bad behavior, while a few are more aligned with boredom, a wish to relocate or family concerns.

My analysis of disruption counts among all surveyed students resulted in an average of 3.18 disruptions per student, with a standard deviation of 2.74 disruptions. I then classified all early graduates with a diploma who reported experiencing six or more disruptions (i.e., more than one standard deviation above the mean) as an early escapee since they are more likely to become alienated from school and seek an early release, regardless of their GPA.

⁵ Disruptions that I screened for include if a student “agreed” or “strongly agreed” with the any of the following variables; *does not feel safe in school, disruptions get in the way of learning, misbehaving students often get away with it, there are gangs in school, racial ethnic groups often fight, had something stolen at school* or if a student reported any of the following experiences “once or twice” or “more than twice”; *had something stolen at school, someone threatened to hurt 10th grader at school, got into a physical fight at school, someone hit 10th grader, someone forces money/things from 10th grader, someone damaged belongings, someone bullied or picked on 10th grader, had something stolen at school, someone offered drugs at school, someone threatened to hurt student at school, someone hit student, graduated early because bored with high school, graduated early to move to another city, or graduated early to start a family.*

Earnest Achievers

Earnest achievers are relatively high performing (i.e., have a GPA higher than 3.0) early graduates with a diploma who reported normal levels of disruptions (i.e., five or less, which is within one standard deviation of the mean). There are 67 earnest achievers in my sample. Data limitations do not permit for a clear assessment of whether or not an earnest achiever has clearly indicated that they want an early start on college or other forms of additional education, so I have utilized a combined approach of screening for relatively low levels of disruptions and relatively high academic performance (as indicated by GPA levels of above 3.0) as a strong proxy for recognizing earnest achiever early graduates.

Early Passives

Early passives are an unexpected (based on the prior literature) but important (based on my review of the actual ELS data) "all other" group of early graduates with a diploma who are not particularly strong academic performers (i.e., their GPA is 3.0 or less) and are experiencing normal levels (five or fewer) of disruption. There are 187 early passives in my sample.

The relatively large number of "early passive" students in the sample led me to perform a cluster analysis in SPSS to determine if distinct student segments might be identified within the early passive group. I utilized the hierarchical clustering option within SPSS and I did not know beforehand how many potential student segments might emerge. The variables of focus for this procedure were each students' (1) grade point average and (2) number of reported disruptions. This process resulted in a series of potential solutions, with each solution then requiring subjective interpretation to identify the best solution. The SPSS hierarchical clustering process produced results for a two cluster, three cluster and four cluster solution. Both the three cluster and four cluster options had mixed intuitive appeal after interpreting the results, and both suffered

from small samples in at least one of the derived clusters. In the end, the two cluster solution had both the best intuitive appeal and threshold sample sizes among all the options.

The results of the two cluster solution (shown in Table 3.2) suggest that early passive early graduates can be decomposed into two distinct groups, (1) early graduate "underachieving passives" (students with a below average GPA of 2.0 or less and a low level of reported disruptions) and (2) early graduate "mediocre passives" (students with an average GPA of 2.0 or higher, but below the 3.0 threshold for earnest achievers and a noticeable yet normal level of disruptions). The *underachieving passives* group includes 108 students who have an average GPA

Table 3.2 ANOVA Results for the Two-Cluster Solution for Early Passives

Variables of Focus	Group Type	Sum of Squares	Degrees of Freedom	Mean Square	F	Sig.
GPA	Between Groups	5.71	1	5.71	18.39	.000
	Within Groups	57.48	185	.311		
	Total	63.19	186			
Sum of Disruptions	Between Groups	337.12	1	337.12	406.13	.000
	Within Groups	153.57	185	0.83		
	Total	490.68	186			

of 1.85 (with a standard deviation of .611) and an average disruption count of 1.37 (with a standard deviation of 1.01). These students are performing at or below a "C" grade average yet have relatively low reported disruptions. The second group, which I am calling *mediocre passives*, includes 79 students who have a slightly higher yet mediocre GPA of 2.21 (with a standard deviation of .475) and report experiencing an average of 4.09 disruptions (with a standard deviation of .745). More specific details about these two clusters are offered in Table 3.2, with the results indicating that the two clusters are significantly different from each other in terms of grade point average and levels of reported disruptions.

The inclusion of the early graduate underachieving passives and mediocre passives brings the total of early graduate groups to five. Table 3.3 offers an overview and comparison of these five groups.

Table 3.3 Conceptualized High School Early Graduate Segments in the ELS Sample

Early Graduate Exiter Group	Sample Count	GED or Diploma	Reported Disruptions	GPA	Comment
Easy Way Outs (i.e., Total Number of Early Graduates with a GED)	135	GED	Not a criterion	Not a criterion	GED may be seen as easiest way out of high school
Early Escapees	99	Diploma	High	Not a criterion	High disruptions, regardless of GPA
Earnest Achievers	67	Diploma	Low	High	High GPS, low disruption students
Underachieving Passives	108	Diploma	Low	Low	Underperforming students with low disruption
Mediocre Passives	79	Diploma	Average	Average	Average performing students with average disruption
Total Number of Early Graduates with a Diploma	353	Either			Includes all early graduate groups except easy way outs
Total Number of Early Graduates	488	Either			Includes all early graduate groups

3.5 Analytic Plan

My early graduate segmentation process results in a much stronger base of early graduate groups that I can assess across several phases of analysis. I will now review the intent of all four of the forthcoming analytic chapters in this study. A brief outline the key hypotheses of each chapter is presented below and more detailed discussions (including ingoing expectations based on relevant prior literature) will follow in each respective analytic chapter.

Chapter 4 presents the first wave of analysis and is designed to answer the question of “who are the early graduates?” The findings from this chapter are important because they will

represent the first known reporting of demographic differences (e.g., sex, race, parents, region and neighborhood) between different groups of early graduates. I will be using means comparisons to determine if significant demographic differences exist between different early graduate groups. The hypotheses that I will be exploring in Chapter 4 are:

Hypothesis 4.1: White and Asian students comprise a smaller percentage of easy way outs compared to other races.

Hypothesis 4.2: White and Asian students comprise a higher percentage of earnest achievers compared to other races.

Hypothesis 4.3: Earnest achievers will have the highest percentage of two parent households compared to the other early graduate groups

Hypothesis 4.4: Early escapees will have the highest percentage of urban students compared to the other early graduate groups.

Hypothesis 4.5: Earnest achievers will have the highest percentage of suburban students compared to the other early graduate groups.

The second analytic phase of my study, presented in Chapter 5, addresses the question of “how do levels of academic and social engagement levels compare across the different types of early graduate groups?” I am seeking to understand how different groups of early graduates compare with each other as well as with on time graduates and dropouts in terms of academic and social engagement levels. This analysis utilizes chi-square tests of significance to determine if there are significant differences in the levels of academic and social engagement between the groups. If significant differences are found, I will further investigate the findings through a nested logistical regression approach to determine if these differences remain significant after controlling for other theorized factors. I will be focusing this analysis on the following hypotheses:

Hypothesis 5.1: Early graduates are not different than on time graduates in terms of academic engagement but are more academically engaged than dropouts.

Hypothesis 5.2: Early graduates with a diploma are similar to dropouts but lower than on time graduates in their levels of social engagement.

Hypothesis 5.3: Earnest achievers will be the most academically engaged among the early graduate groups.

Hypothesis 5.4: Easy way outs will be the least academically engaged early graduate group.

Hypothesis 5.5: Early escapees have less social engagement compared to earnest achievers, underachieving passives and mediocre passives.

The third analytic section, presented in Chapter 6, addresses the question of “do levels of academic and social engagement explain why some students seek an early graduation?” This third analytic chapter is designed to determine if levels of academic and social engagement really matter in terms of explaining why different groups of early graduates seek an early graduation pathway. I will be creating a series of nested multinomial logistical regression models that treat the different types of high school exiter groups (e.g., easy way outs, early escapees, earnest achievers, underachieving passives, mediocre passives, on time) as dependent variables in different iterations of the models. Dropouts are excluded from this section by design because my focus is on comparisons between different types of early graduates and on time graduates (the normative group from which the early graduates are deviating from). This analytic strategy will allow me to determine if academic and social engagement levels are significant, even after controlling for other important theory-based variables that might help to explain the influencers of early high school graduation. My ingoing hypotheses for this chapter are:

Hypothesis 6.1: On time graduates have higher levels of academic and social engagement compared to early graduates.

Hypothesis 6.2: Easy way outs have lower levels of academic and social engagement compared to the other early graduate groups and on time graduates.

Hypothesis 6.3: Early escapes have lower levels of social engagement compared to the other exiter groups.

Hypothesis 6.4: Earnest achievers will have higher levels of academic engagement but lower levels of social engagement compared to all of the other exiter groups.

Hypothesis 6.5: Neither underachieving passives nor mediocre passives will have higher academic or social engagement compared to the other exiter groups.

Chapter 7 is the final analytic chapter and addresses the question of “are there differences in the initial post-high school outcomes among the early graduate groups?” This chapter describes the patterns of educational, occupational and family trajectories across the different early graduate groups based on information gathered in the second ELS follow-up survey. This second follow-up survey was fielded four years after the initial survey (which took place in Spring of 10th grade) and two years after the fielding of the first follow-up survey (in the Spring of 12th grade). The longitudinal nature of the ELS data enable tracking of students across the early graduate groups to determine the levels and types of post-secondary schooling, paid work and family status (e.g., if married, parent status). This chapter also contains my assessment of how well the “real world” findings from the ELS data stack up against the previously mentioned popular culture stereotypes of early graduates (e.g., earnest achievers are seeking to fast track their college entry).

Similar to the approach used in the second analytic chapter (Chapter 5), this analysis involves chi-square tests of significance to determine if there are significant differences in education, work, marital status and parenthood across the different early graduate groups. If significant differences do exist, I will take the next step of investigating the findings through a nested logistical regression approach to determine if these differences remain significant after controlling for other theorized factors. There are many important life course oriented hypotheses that will be tested in this final substantive chapter, including:

Hypothesis 7.1: East way outs are less likely than any other early graduate group to be enrolled in formal post-high school education.

Hypothesis 7.2: Earnest achievers are more likely to attend post-high school schooling full time compared to other early graduates.

Hypothesis 7.3: Earnest achievers are the least likely early graduate group to be currently working for pay.

Hypothesis 7.4: Early escapees are the most likely early graduate group to have ever been married and, separately, to be a biological parent.

This assessment of differences in post-high school trajectories will provide important initial post-high school life course learning across the different early graduate groups. This initial learning can then be compared to later follow-up ELS survey waves to better understand the trajectory and transition patterns and trends across the different groups of early graduates. This early graduate post-high school analysis represents the end of this dissertation's analytic sections. The findings, interpretations, considerations and implications across these analytic chapters will be summarized and discussed in Chapter 8, the final chapter of this study.

4 WHO ARE THE EARLY GRADUATES?

The purpose of this first analytic chapter is to address the question of “who are the early graduates?” This chapter offers the first known insights into the demographics of early graduates, including an assessment of how (or if) they differ from on timers in terms of sex, race, parenting status or location. This chapter also sheds light on potential demographic differences between the various conceptualized groups of early graduates (e.g., earnest achievers, easy way outs, underachieving passives, etc.).

This chapter is organized into five sections. The first section is an overview of the ELS student demographic data and how this information can inform our understanding of early graduates. Since Chapter 3 provided detailed descriptions of the ELS data and measures, my intention in this section is to provide a quick refresher on the ELS demographic data to set the stage for a much more detailed assessment in this chapter’s second section. This second section focuses on demographic hypotheses regarding early graduates and lays out each hypothesis as well as my theory-guided expectations and rationale. The third section examines how the findings from my analysis actually compare to my expectations for each hypothesis. This analysis involves transforming the ELS student sample into specific and mutually exclusive high school exiter groups (i.e., the different early graduate groups as well as on timers and dropouts) and then generating the percentage of each exiter group that falls under each demographic dimension (e.g., the percent of earnest achievers that are female versus male). I then perform chi-square tests of significance to assess the hypotheses mentioned in the prior section to determine if significant demographic differences exist across the different high school exiter groups. This chapter’s fourth section discusses other interesting demographic findings that are outside the scope of my

hypotheses. The fifth and final section will summarize my findings of demographic differences across the early graduate groups.

4.1 Overview of the ELS Early Graduate Demographic Data

The ELS data can be sorted by student exiter groups as well as by demographic dimensions, including a student's gender, race, parental arrangement and location (as shown in Table 4.1). The top row above each demographic category in this table provides sample counts for each high school exiter group. It is helpful at this time to make a few initial observations and sample interpretations to familiarize ourselves with this demographic data. Starting at the top of the table (gender), we can see high directional variance within the different demographic rows. For example, the 50% male and 50% female composition of the full ELS sample masks the male gender skew among easy way outs and earnest achievers. The finding that males (60%) are more likely than females (40%) to be easy ways outs is not unexpected since males may be more resistant to school procedures and policies (Ogbu 1978, 1991a, 1991b, 1992; Fordham and Ogbu 1986; Lawrence 1997) and males may also be more likely to see mental work as less masculine (Willis 1981). I am, however, surprised to see that nearly three-fourths of earnest achievers (74%) are males compared to just 26% being female. Perhaps the same theorized negative influencers (e.g., resistance to school norms and policies) that may be affecting easy way out students do not affect earnest achiever males in the same way. Or maybe the expectations and norms for male earnest achievers are markedly different than those for female earnest achievers. For example, it could be the case that high GPA female potential early graduates who report normal levels of school disruptions may have more school engagement compared to high GPA male potential early graduates, and those relatively higher levels of school engagement could then influence these female students to remain on time in terms of graduation. It is also possible that these

types of female students face different types of hurdles than males in terms of seeking an earnest achiever pathway.

Table 4.1. Sample Counts by High School Exiter Types

	Full ELS Sample	All Early Grads	Easy Way Outs	Early Escap-ee	Earnest Achiever	Under-achieve Passive	Mediocre Passive	On Time Grads	Drop-outs
STUDENT COUNT	15,430	494	125	99	62	94	79	12,873	150
GENDER									
Female	50%	51%	40%	48%	26%	50%	58%	51%	45%
Male	50%	49%	60%	52%	74%	50%	42%	49%	55%
	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%
RACE									
Asian	10%	7%	6%	4%	15%	8%	4%	10%	11%
Hispanic	15%	19% ^a	16%	13%	25%	24%	20%	13%	22%
Black	13%	16%	13%	11%	7%	22%	20%	12%	24%
White	57%	51%	60%	67%	41%	41%	49%	59%	33%
Native American	1%	1%	2%	0%	0%	2%	1%	1%	3%
Multi Race	5%	5%	4%	5%	13%	3%	5%	4%	8%
	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%
PARENT									
Mom +Dad	59%	49%	44%	47%	55%	50%	51%	63%	35%
Mom + Man	12%	14%	16%	12%	11%	13%	14%	11%	21%
Dad + Woman	3%	5%	3%	9%	2%	4%	6%	3%	3%
Other Family	3%	9%	9%	7%	10%	9%	8%	4%	10%
Just Mom	19%	22%	25%	23%	20%	19%	20%	17%	29%
Just Dad	3%	3%	3%	2%	3%	5%	1%	3%	2%
	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%
REGION									
Northeast	18%	11%	9%	7%	4%	14%	14%	19%	17%
Midwest	25%	23%	14%	31%	22%	19%	37%	25%	22%
South	36%	46%	58%	40%	45%	46%	37%	35%	36%
West	21%	20%	19%	21%	28%	21%	13%	20%	25%
	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%
NEIGHBORHOOD									
Urban	34%	37%	33%	34%	46%	41%	34%	33%	44%
Suburban	48%	46%	43%	55%	48%	38%	51%	49%	37%
Rural	18%	16%	24%	11%	6%	21%	15%	18%	19%
	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%

Source: National Center for Education Statistics Education Longitudinal Survey 2002/04 Data Files and Electronic Codebook System, First Follow-Up.

^a Sample interpretation: 19% of all early graduates in the ELS sample are Hispanic.

Table 4.1 also shows many interesting demographic variances within each early graduate group as well as between these groups and the entire ELS sample. For instance, there is a relatively high composition (compared to the entire ELS sample) of Asians (15%) and Hispanics (25%) among earnest achievers, blacks among underachieving passives (22%) and mediocre passives (20%) and whites among early escapees (67%). While there may be some cultural norms that support the academic success of Asian students, there are no theory-based expectations for the relatively high Hispanic representation among earnest achievers. There may be interesting but currently unknown cultural norms that are supporting an aggressive matriculation of certain types of Hispanic students (e.g., based on how long their parents have lived in the USA, their family's level of acculturation). The higher representation of blacks among the two passive groups is within expectations in light of my literature review, which offers theoretical support (e.g., less resourced schools, alienation) for why black students may not be as academically or socially engaged as other students. The very high white student composition (67%) of early escapees is unexpected since the prior literature suggests that black students are more likely than whites to become alienated (Ogbu 1978, 1991a, 1991b, 1992; Fordham and Ogbu 1986; Lawrence 1997) and seek an early escape. Another possibility is that early escapees are being 'pulled out' of school by their need or wish to work for pay. It could also be that these particular students have less tolerance or resilience regarding the types of disruptions they are facing in school. These examples are just a few that can be derived from Table 4.1's demographic comparison breakdowns within each exiter group.

We can also get a sense of how demographics vary across the early graduate groups by looking at the within row comparisons shown in Table 4.2. This table intentionally excludes the full ELS sample, on time graduates and dropouts (who would have claimed the vast majority of

students) so that we can more easily focus on demographics across the early graduate groups. The dispersion of early graduates across the different exiter groups in Table 4.2 results in several interesting findings. For example, among those early graduates living with both a mom and a dad, 25% are easy way outs and 15% are earnest achievers. In other words, an early graduate living with both a mom and a dad is more likely to be an easy way out exiter than an earnest achiever, however, much of this finding is explained by the fact that there are almost twice as many easy way outs in the sample (n=125) compared to earnest achievers (n=62).

Tables 4.1 and 4.2 offer different ways of thinking about early graduate demographics. For example, if we know that an early graduate is an earnest achiever, Table 4.1 tells us that the odds are slightly in favor (55% compared to a coin flip of 50%) that they live with both a mom and a dad. On the other hand, if we know that a specific early graduate comes from a home with both a mom and a dad, Table 4.2 indicates that we would be less likely to expect them to be an earnest achiever since earnest achievers comprise the lowest percentage (15%) of any early exiter group regarding two parent households. Now that we have a sense of how to interpret the information in Tables 4.1 and 4.2, we are ready to move on with a discussion of the demographic hypotheses I will be investigating.

4.2 Hypotheses and Expectations Relating to Demographic Differences among Early Graduates:

Hypothesis 1: (1a) White and (1b) Asian students comprise a smaller percentage of easy way outs compared to other races.

The first demographic hypothesis to be tested is that white and Asian students comprise a smaller percentage of easy way outs compared to other races. This hypothesis is based on prior research that suggests that whites are more likely to have greater access to important forms of capital that will increase their levels of school engagement. These forms of capital include learn-

ing resources, encouragement, parental support (Haveman and Wolfe 1994; Downey, Ainsworth-Darnell and Dufur 1998; Rothstein 2004; Rumberger 2004), and attending schools with greater resources (Cummins 1986; MacLeod 1995; Descenes et al., 2001; Witherspoon and Schissel 2001; Cassidy and Bates 2005) while also experiencing lower levels of racial and cultural opposition compared to non-white students (Ogbu 1978, 1991a, 1991b, 1992; Fordham and Ogbu 1986; Lawrence 1997). The expectation that Asian students are less likely than other minorities

Table 4.2 Sample Counts across Early Graduate Groups

	Easy Way Outs	Early Escapes	Earnest Achievers	Under-achiever Passives	Mediocre Passives	Early Grad Groups Sum
Share of Early Graduates	28%	20%	14%	22%	16%	100%
Gender						
Female	24%	23%	8%	23%	22%	100%
Male	30%	20%	18%	19%	13%	100%
Race						
Asian	23%	13%	30%	23%	10%	100%
Hispanic	23%	15%	17%	26%	19%	100%
Black	24% ^a	16%	6%	30%	24%	100%
White	31%	27%	10%	16%	16%	100%
Native American	40%	0%	0%	40%	20%	100%
Multi Race	20%	20%	32%	12%	16%	100%
Parents						
Mom + Dad	25%	21%	15%	21%	18%	100%
Mom + Man	32%	19%	11%	19%	18%	100%
Dad + Woman	17%	39%	4%	17%	22%	100%
Other Family	29%	24%	12%	35%	0%	100%
Just Mom	31%	22%	12%	16%	19%	100%
Just Dad	29%	14%	19%	29%	10%	100%
Region						
Northeast	25%	15%	6%	31%	23%	100%
Midwest	17%	27%	13%	18%	25%	100%
South	34%	18%	13%	22%	13%	100%
West	26%	21%	19%	23%	10%	100%
Neighborhood						
Urban	24%	19%	17%	24%	15%	100%
Suburban	26%	24%	14%	18%	18%	100%
Rural	40%	13%	5%	28%	14%	100%
Source: National Center for Education Statistics Education Longitudinal Survey 2002/04 Data Files and Electronic Codebook System, First Follow-Up.						
^a Sample interpretation: 24% of all black early graduates are in the “easy way out” group.						

to leave school with a GED is based on prior research that suggests that there is a cultural belief among many Asian families that stresses the importance of a student's effort and the linkages of education with positive future outcomes (Steinberg, Dombush and Brown 1992; Rumberger 2004).

Hypothesis 2: (2a) White and (2b) Asian students comprise a higher percentage of earnest achievers compared to other races.

The second hypothesis to be tested is that white and Asian students comprise a higher percentage of earnest achievers compared to other races. This second hypothesis is essentially the corollary of the first hypothesis, and is grounded in the expectation that the same forms of capital that would reduce the likelihood of a student leaving school with a GED could also be leveraged to support an aggressive graduation with a diploma. Based on prior research, I expect white and Asian students to be more likely to have better access to pro-learning support at home such as books, computers, parental supervision and encouragement than students from other racial groups (Haveman and Wolfe 1994; Downey, Ainsworth-Darnell and Dufur 1998; Rothstein 2004; Rumberger 2004). Whites are also expected to be more likely to attend schools with greater resources per student (Cummins 1986; MacLeod 1995; Descenes et al., 2001; Witherspoon and Schissel 2001; Cassidy and Bates) while also experiencing lower levels of racial and cultural opposition compared to non-white students (Ogbu 1978, 1991a, 1991b, 1992; Fordham and Ogbu 1986; Lawrence 1997). This Asian student expectation is based on prior research that suggests there is a cultural belief among many Asian families that emphasizes the importance of a student's effort and the linkages of education and positive future outcomes (Steinberg, Dombush and Brown 1992; Rumberger 2004).

Hypothesis 3: Earnest achievers will have the highest percentage of two parent households compared to the other early graduate groups.

This third hypothesis is based on prior research that links two parent households with a student having greater access to parental support, guidance, encouragement (Haveman and Wolfe 1994; Rothstein 2004; Rumberger 2004), economic resources, access to better schools (Cummins 1986; Haveman and Wolfe 1994; MacLeod 1995; Downey, Ainsworth-Darnell and Dufur 1998; Descenes, Cuban and Tyack 2001; Witherspoon and Schissel 2001; Rothstein 2004; Rumberger 2004; Cassidy and Bates 2005) and more parental involvement with the student's teachers (McNeal 1999).

Hypothesis 4: Early escapees will have the highest percentage of urban students compared to the other early graduate groups.

The fourth hypothesis is that early escapees will have the highest percentage of urban students compared to the other early graduate groups. This expectation is based on prior research that links urban schools (and perhaps rural schools as well) with less funding per student compared to wealthier suburban schools (Kozol 1991, Rothstein 2004a), historic racial inequality (Mayer 1991; Yinger 1993; Harding 2003) and school policies and processes that may resonate less with minority students, which can lead these students to become alienated and disengaged from school (Ogbu 1978, 1991a, 1991b, 1992; Fordham & Ogbu 1986; Lawrence 1997).

Hypothesis 5: Earnest achievers will have the highest percentage of suburban students compared to the other early graduate groups.

The fifth and final hypothesis in this chapter is that earnest achievers will have the highest percentage of suburban students compared to the other early graduate groups. Just as urban students are expected to be less engaged with school compared to suburban students, suburban students are expected to have the highest likelihood of attending schools with greater educational resources and support since suburban schools may have higher spending per pupil due to higher

tax bases (Rothstein 2004a). These suburban students are also expected to experience less cultural resistance to school norms, processes and policies because of a greater percentage of non-minority (i.e., white) students comprising the student population. These conditions are expected to support an earnest achiever's aggressive matriculation with a diploma (Ogbu 1978, 1991a, 1991b, 1992; Cummins 1986; Fordham & Ogbu 1986; Ying 1993; Harding 2003).

4.3 Findings Relating to Early Graduate Demographic Differences

The information in Table 4.1 is very helpful in terms of laying out the various demographic means for the different exiter groups. To help support my assessment of whether or not each hypothesis is supported, I have performed statistical analysis on Table 4.1 to determine if significant demographic differences exist across the exiter groups. This particular statistical analysis involved chi-square tests of significance in SPSS to uncover statistically significant demographic differences (at the 95% or higher level) within the same row between the various exiter groups. The results of this analysis are shown in Table 4.3.

Hypothesis 1

The first hypothesis is that with respect to race, white and Asian students comprise a smaller percentage of easy way outs compared to other races. Table 4.1 shows that whites account for 57% of the entire ELS sample and 51% of all early graduates. It turns out that whites comprise 60% of all easy way outs, indicating that whites are accounting for at least their 'fair share' (based on their overall sample representation) of easy way outs. Furthermore, Table 4.2 shows that 31% of all white early graduates are easy way outs. This is the highest level of white student representation in any of the early graduate groups. Table 4.3 tells us that the level of white student representation among easy way outs is neither statistically significantly higher nor

lower than the levels of white student representation of the other early graduate groups (although the white representation among easy way outs is significantly higher than that for dropouts).

Table 4.3 Demographics and Means Testing by High School Exiter Type

	A	B	C	D	E	F	G
	Easy Way Outs	Early Escape	Earnest Achiever	Under-achiever Passives	Mediocre Passives	On Time Grads	Drop-outs
GENDER	%	%	%	%	%	%	%
Female	40.0 ^C	48.5 ^C	25.8	50.0	58.2	50.6 ^C	44.7 ^C
Male	60.0	51.5	74.2 ^{ABFG}	50.0	41.8	49.4	55.3
	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%
RACE							
Asian	5.6	4.0	14.8	7.6	3.8	9.8	10.8
Hispanic	16.1	13.1	24.6	23.9	20.3	13.5	21.6
Black	12.9	11.1	6.6	21.7	20.3	12.4	23.6 ^F
White	59.7 ^G	66.7 ^{CDG}	41.0	41.3	49.4	59.1 ^{DG}	33.1
Native American	1.6	0.0	0.0	2.2	1.3	0.8	2.7
Multi Race	4.0	5.1	13.1 ^F	3.3	5.1	4.4	8.1
	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%
PARENTS							
Mom + Dad	44.0	46.5	54.8	50.0	50.6	62.5 ^{ABG}	35.3
Mom + Man	16.0	12.1	11.3	13.0	13.9	11.2	21.3 ^F
Dad + Woman	3.2	9.1	1.6	4.3	6.3	2.9	2.7
Other Family	8.8 ^F	7.1 ^F	9.7	8.7	7.6	3.6	10.0 ^F
Just Mom	24.8	23.2	19.4	18.5	20.3	16.9	28.7 ^F
Just Dad	3.2	2.0	3.2	5.4	1.3	2.9	2.0
	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%
REGION							
Northeast	8.9	7.1	4.5	13.9	13.9	18.8	16.9
Midwest	14.1	31.3 ^A	22.4	18.5	36.7 ^A	25.3	22.3
South	57.8 ^{FG}	40.4	44.8	46.3	36.7	35.5	35.5
West	19.3	21.2	28.4	21.3	12.7	20.4	25.3
	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%
NEIGHBORHOOD							
Urban	32.6	34.3	46.3	40.7	34.2	33.1	44.0
Suburban	43.0	54.5	47.8	38.0	50.6	48.6	37.3
Rural	24.4 ^C	11.1	6.0	21.3	15.2	18.3	18.7
	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%

Source: National Center for Education Statistics Education Longitudinal Survey 2002/04 Data Files and Electronic Codebook System, First Follow-Up.

Sample interpretation: 74% of group C (earnest achievers) are male, and this percentage is statistically significantly higher (at the 95% level) than the male percentages for group A (easy way outs), group B (early escapees), group E (on time graduates) and group F (dropouts).

None of these findings support the ‘white students’ portion of hypothesis 1. These findings also lead me to consider reasons why there is such a directionally high level of white representation among easy way outs relative to the other early graduate groups. It may be that white students are more likely to attend school settings that entail particular school norms, processes or expectations that lead them to seek a GED instead of a diploma. This could also relate to white students being less likely to adhere to ‘seat time’ expectations (like class attendance) and other school policies.

Table 4.1 offers some directional support that Asians are less likely to be easy way outs since Asians account for 6% of easy way outs, which is four percentage points lower than their 10% composition share of the entire ELS sample. This 6% Asian easy way out share, however, is neither significantly lower nor higher than the Asian early graduate levels for the other exiter groups (as seen in Table 4.3). Table 4.2 offers another reason to challenge the Asian easy way out portion of hypothesis 1 because if we focus only on Asian early graduates as our reference point (rather than on Asians within the entire ELS sample), we see a relatively large concentration (23%) of Asian early graduates within the easy way out group. This level of Asian early graduate concentration (while tied with underachieving passives) lags only the level of Asian representation among the earnest achievers (who account for 30% of all Asian early graduates).

After considering all of these findings, I am led to conclude that I should reject this first hypothesis, especially as it relates to the white students. There is limited directional support that Asian students are less likely to seek the early escapee/GED route of early graduation (as shown in Table 4.1) and this support is at best mixed in light of the lack of statistically significant findings (in Table 4.3) and the relatively high level of Asian early graduates into the early escapee group (as shown in Table 4.2).

Hypothesis 2

The second hypothesis is that white and Asian students comprise a higher percentage of earnest achievers relative to other races. Table 4.1 shows that whites do account for the highest percentage of earnest achievers (41%), which is higher than the earnest achiever representation of any of the other racial groups. This finding, however, need to be tempered by the fact that whites account for the majority (57%) of the overall ELS sample (as also reported in Table 4.1). This means that the white composition level of earnest achievers is actually 16 percentage points below the overall ELS white composition level of 57%. Furthermore, the 41% white composition of earnest achievers is directionally lower than the white student shares of easy way outs (60%) and mediocre passives (49%) and is significantly lower than the white student share of early escapees (67%) as shown in Table 4.3. This suggests that white early graduates are directionally less likely to be earnest achievers relative to the other early graduate groups (as well as relative to on timers). This helps to explain why the white share of earnest achievers is not significantly higher than any of the other exiter groups shown in Table 4.3. Another way of thinking about the white share of earnest achievers is offered in Table 4.2. Here we can see that while 14% of all early graduates are earnest achievers, only 10% of white early graduates are earnest achievers. It seems that white early graduates are underrepresented (relative to the entire ELS sample as well as to the sample of all early graduates) in the earnest achiever group. This could be because a lot of white early graduates may not be eligible to be an earnest achievers because they are seeking a GED instead of a diploma, are not reporting higher than normal levels of disruption (which would result in their classification as an early escapee) or simply do not have a GPA of above 3.0 (the threshold GPA for earnest achievers). Another possibility is that the school settings these white early graduates are attending may be better at keeping more of the

‘would be’ earnest achievers engaged enough that they do not pursue an early graduation, which would result in those potential earnest achievers remaining in the on time group.

To see if the Asian student portion of the second hypothesis is supported, we can again refer to Table 4.1. At first glance, Table 4.1 suggests that Asian students are not standouts within the earnest achiever group since their 15% share of this group lags the racial shares of whites (41%) and Hispanics (25%). However, a closer look at this table reveals that the 15% Asian share of earnest achievers is actually 5 percentage points higher than the 10% level of Asian representation among the entire ELS sample. We also see that the Asian student share of earnest achievers (15%) is directionally (but not significantly) higher than the Asian share of any other exiter group as seen in Table 4.3. We can also see that Asians are disproportionately represented within the earnest achiever segment since almost 1 in 3 (30%) earnest achievers are Asian (see Table 4.2).

In thinking through what these results reveal about Hypothesis 2, I find that in absolute terms, whites are indeed more represented among earnest achievers while Asian students are not. However, once we adjust for overall racial composition within the ELS sample, we see that the story reverses in terms of relative racial representation since whites are relatively less represented among earnest achievers while Asian students are relatively more represented. Overall, these results do not support hypothesis 2 as it relates to white earnest achievers while they directionally support hypothesis 2 as it relates to Asian earnest achievers.

Hypothesis 3

The third hypothesis is that the highest percentage of early graduates from two parent households will be found among the earnest achiever group. Table 4.1 offers directional support for this hypothesis since 55% of all earnest achievers live in households with two parents and

this represents the highest percentage of two parent households among any of the early graduate groups. Additionally, this 55% level of earnest achievers living with two parents is also directionally higher than the 49% level found among all early graduates. The ‘directional support’ caveat is based on several specific observations. First, Table 4.1 shows that while the representation level of earnest achievers with two parents (55%) is directionally higher than the 49% level found among the entire subset of early graduates, it is directionally lower than the 59% level found among all students in the ELS sample. Second, the 55% two-parent household level of earnest achievers is not statistically significantly different from the means of any of the other early graduate groups (as shown in Table 4.3). Third, we can see in Table 4.2 that while 15% of all early graduates with two parents are in the earnest achiever group, this is essentially the same level as the 14% of all early graduates in the ELS sample who live with two parents. Overall, there is at best mixed support for hypothesis 3.

Hypothesis 4

The fourth hypothesis is that among all early graduate groups, the highest percentage of urban students will be found among the early escapees. Table 4.1 shows that urban students account for 34% of all early escapees. This is the same urban composition found among the entire ELS sample and is actually directionally below the 37% urban level within the subsample of all early graduates. We can also see that the urban student representation level among earnest achievers (34%) is essentially the same as the urban representation levels for easy way outs (33%) and mediocre passives (also 34%) while lagging the levels for earnest achievers (46%) and underachieving passives (41%) (although these differences are directional rather than statistically significant as shown in Table 4.3).

Table 4.2 also lacks clear support for hypothesis 4 since it shows that the urban student share of early escapees (19%) is slightly lower than the overall 20% early escapee share of all early graduates. Furthermore, if we know that an early graduate is an urban student, Table 4.2 suggests that they would be more likely to be an easy way out or an underachieving passive (both groups have a 24% share of urban early graduates) than an early escapee. These findings indicate that there is no clear reason to claim that urban students are more likely than suburban or rural students to be an early escapee, therefore hypothesis 4 is rejected.

While these findings are unexpected, there are several potential explanations for the lack of a meaningful urban early escapee story within the data. It may be that early graduates attending urban schools may be experiencing greater than normal levels of unreported disruptions, however, these urban students may be more resilient or used to such disruptions. Another possibility is that the likelihood of being “pulled out” of high school by the need or desire to work for pay is less of a factor in these urban settings. It could be that even if an urban student has a need or desire to work for pay, there may be fewer viable job opportunities in their communities. Another possibility is that an urban student who needs to be more focused on family, parenting or other outside of school concerns is less likely to seek an early escapee pathway because of different types and availability levels of supportive networks (e.g., siblings, parents, relatives, neighbors) or different social more aspects (e.g., urban teen pregnancy might entail less stigma, urban schools may have teen parent support programs, etc.).

Hypothesis 5

The fifth hypothesis is that among all early graduate groups, the highest percentage of suburban students will be found among the earnest achievers. This hypothesis is the corollary to the fourth hypothesis relating to urban students. Table 4.1 shows that 48% of earnest achievers

are suburban students. This is on par with the suburban shares found among the entire ELS sample (also 48%) and the subset of all early graduates (46%). While Table 4.1 tells us that the highest suburban share among the different early graduate groups is among earnest achievers, Table 4.3 indicates this difference is not statistically significant.

While 48% of earnest achievers are suburban students, Table 4.2 shows that only 14% of suburban students are earnest achievers. This 14% suburban representation level is the lowest among all of the early graduate groups. On the other hand, half of all suburban early graduates are either easy way outs (26%) or early escapees (24%). In thinking through the implications of these findings, it seems that if we know that a student is an early graduate, and we further know that this particular student is an earnest achiever type of early graduate, the odds are almost 50/50 (actually 55%) that this student is attending a suburban school. If we instead know that a student attends a suburban school and we also know that this same student is an early graduate, there is only a low directional chance (14%) that this student is an earnest achiever. There are several possible explanations for these findings, including differences in suburban (versus urban and rural) school processes and environments as they relate to the level of reported disruptions (e.g., suburban students may be experience fewer disruptions or be less inclined to report them) or academic expectations (as they relate to grade point averages). Another possibility is that suburban schools are more apt to support a pathway that enables low disruption/high GPA students to graduate early. As for the finding that only 14% suburban early graduates are earnest achievers, it may be that there are relatively fewer low disruption/high GPA students seeking an early graduation in suburban school settings to begin with. It could also be that suburban schools are better able to keep would be earnest achievers engaged enough with school that they remain on the traditional on time graduation path.

In order for the fifth hypothesis to be supported, I would need to find that, among all early graduate groups, the highest percentage of suburban students will be found among the earnest achievers. When I consider the findings through a lens of column comparisons (in Tables 4.1 and 5.3), I do find that earnest achievers directionally (but not statistically significantly) have the highest share of suburban students among the early graduate groups at 46%. However, when I view the findings through a row comparison lens as in Table 4.2, I find that only 14% of suburban early graduates are earnest achievers. Overall, there is mixed support for the fifth hypothesis.

4.4 Additional Findings of Interest

In addition to the hypotheses-specific findings in the prior section, I found several other interesting results that deserve mention. While there are literally hundreds of comparisons that could be made from Tables 4.1 – 4.3, I will focus on just a few select observations that I found particularly noteworthy. First, there is an interesting basis for a story regarding Hispanics and multi-race students (as self-identified in the ELS questionnaire) among earnest achievers that should be further examined in future research. Hispanic students comprise a fourth of earnest achievers, which represents a 10 percentage point increase (and a 67% overall increase) compared to the 15% Hispanic representation level within the overall ELS sample (as seen in Table 4.1). Similarly, multi-race students (who represent a relatively low 5% of the entire ELS sample) compose 13% of all earnest achievers. It would be interesting to learn more about potential differences in cultural expectations and settings (including school and family processes) that may be influencing these particular students.

In terms of parenting arrangements, it is worth noting that 59% of the entire ELS sample contains students living with both a mom and a dad, and this level of overall “student with two

parents” representation is being driven by the 63% two parent mean among on time graduates, who represent the majority (88%) of the entire ELS sample. In other words, on time graduates are more likely than any other exiter group to have both a mom and a dad in the home, even more so (at least directionally) than earnest achievers. Those students who live with both a mom and a dad are significantly more likely to graduate on time as opposed to being an easy way out, early escapee or dropping out of high school altogether (as seen in Table 4.3). These particular findings hold whether we are looking at the “two-parent” means comparisons in Table 4.3 for on timers (63%) compared to easy ways outs (44%), early escapees (47%) and dropouts (35%) or if we are looking at the relative differences of these exiter segment means compared to their overall ELS composition means in Table 4.1. For example, the mean level of dropouts with a mom and a dad at home (35%) is 24 percentage points lower than the overall ELS sample mean of 59% (see Table 4.1). This implies that having a mom and a dad at home supports greater student engagement with school, possibly because of increased parental encouragement, supervision and access to pro-learning capital and resources. Having both a mom and a dad present also raises the likelihood of having dual incomes in the household, which could result in a student attending better schools.

The regional data offer some initial findings on the relationship between geography and high school exiting. There does not appear to be any noticeable differences between any region’s composition shares of on timers and dropouts and that same region’s overall share of the entire ELS sample (see Table 4.1). There is, however, something statistically noticeable about the South’s high composition of easy way outs (58%) compared to their composition of on timers (37%) and dropouts (36%) (Table 4.3). This finding also holds if we look Table 4.1 and see the 22 percentage point increase in the South’s share of easy way outs (58%) relative to the

South's 36% share of the entire ELS sample. While I do not have any ingoing rationale for this finding, it may relate to historical differences in school qualities, race relations, student expectations, social mores or perceptions of the GED certificate in the South compared to other regions.

Several neighborhood findings were discussed in the prior section, however, those discussions focused on urban and suburban students. Table 4.3 shows that there is an interesting rural story that could be pursued in future research. For example, the 6% rural share of earnest achievers is significantly lower than the 24% rural share of easy way outs. Table 4.1 shows that this 6% rural share of earnest achievers also reflects a 13 percentage point decrease relative to the 19% rural share of the entire ELS student sample. It may be that rural students are more likely to attend schools where the GED option is more common and less stigmatized. Another possibility is that rural schools offer relatively less support or precedence for an earnest achiever pathway. It could also be that the normative student expectations are quite different in rural schools and communities compared to their urban and suburban counterparts.

4.5 Conclusions

My testing of the early graduate demographic hypotheses testing resulted in several findings. With respect to race, whites are unexpectedly noticeably higher in their representation among easy way outs. Also unexpectedly, whites are relatively less represented among earnest achievers relative to the entire ELS sample. Asians, as expected, are relatively more represented among earnest achievers. It is also interesting that Hispanic and multi-race students are relatively over-represented (compared to their overall ELS sample composition) among earnest achievers (see Table 4.1).

In terms of household composition among the early graduates, there is a story about earnest achievers and two parent households. As expected, earnest achievers are more likely than

the other early graduate groups to have two parents at home, which also means they are more likely to receive the theorized support benefits (e.g., greater levels of encouragement, resources and supervision) that correlate with such parenting arrangements.

When it comes to neighborhood settings, urban students were expected to be more represented among early escapees (due to expected lower levels of resources per student and higher expected levels of alienation) and less represented among earnest achievers (for the same reasons). Suburban students were expected to have the opposite pattern of their urban counterparts since the suburbs tend to have higher tax bases (which is expected to result in more educational resources per student), raising the expectation of more suburban representation among the earnest achievers. The data suggest that the opposite situations are occurring among early graduates, with urban students being more represented among earnest achievers and suburban students being more represented among early escapees. These neighborhood findings were not expected based on my review of prior literature. Potential explanations for these findings include (1) the presumption of greater resources per student in suburban schools relative to urban schools is not as true or relevant as prior literature suggests, (2) the suburban school resource advantage may exist, but may not be as applicable or impactful for the subset of students who seek early graduation and (3) school exiting processes may differ in unrecognized ways in urban schools for students seeking early graduation. The earnest achiever group is also interesting from a regional location standpoint because of its underrepresentation (again, relative to the overall ELS sample) of rural early graduates and, separately, early graduates in the South.

This first analytic chapter focused on generating insights into the demographics and differences in these demographics across the different groups of early graduates. Now that we have a sense who the different early graduate groups are from a demographic perspective, we can turn

our focus towards understanding how these different groups compare and contrast in terms of their levels of academic and social engagement, which is purpose of Chapter 5.

5 HOW DO LEVELS OF ACADEMIC AND SOCIAL ENGAGEMENT COMPARE ACROSS DIFFERENT TYPES OF HIGH SCHOOL EXITERS?

This second analytic chapter addresses the question of “how do levels of academic and social engagement compare across different types of high school exiters?” This phase of my study marks the first known investigation of (1) how different types of early graduates compare to on time graduates and dropouts with respect to school engagement and (2) how different types of early graduates compare with each other with respect to school engagement.

This chapter is organized into five sections. The first section is an overview of the ELS academic and social engagement data. Since the engagement measures being used in this chapter were discussed in detail in Chapter 3’s review of data, measures and analytic strategy, I will present them in this first section in an intentionally brief manner to re-familiarize ourselves with these measures. The second section discusses my engagement hypotheses and the theory-based rationale underlying my expectations. The third section focuses on my analytic findings and how they stack up against expectations. This analysis of school engagement differences across exiter groups utilizes OLS regression analysis that treats each specific academic or social engagement measure of interest as a dependent variable while treating the different exiter types as independent variables in an initial model. This is then followed by a second round of regression analysis which adds in theory-based control variables reflecting demographics, family background, school context and peer effects (as described in Chapter 3) to determine if significant differences between exiter groups still remain from the initial model. The fourth section of this chapter reports other interesting findings that are outside the scope of my hypotheses. The fifth and final section provides a summary of academic and social engagement findings across the early graduate groups.

5.1 Overview of ELS Academic and Social Engagement Data

Table 5.1 provides a recap of the theory-based proxies for academic engagement that were described in Chapter 3's discussion of data, measures and analytic strategy. These academic engagement measures include proxies for a student's attitude towards the importance of getting a good education (*importance*), preparation for class (*homework*), grades for all courses (*grades*) and performance on standardized test scores (*tests*). These measures were recoded as needed so that higher scores now correspond with higher levels of academic engagement.

Table 5.1 Overview of Academic Engagement Measures

	Measure	Description	Range
Academic Engagement	Importance	Student's self-reported attitude towards the importance of getting a good education	1 Not important 2 Somewhat important 3 Very important
	Homework	Student's self-reported level of class preparation regarding how often they go to class without their homework done	1 Usually 2 Often 3 Seldom 4 Never
	Grades	GPA for all courses	0.00 – 4.00
	Tests	Standardized test composite score for math and reading	Continuous variables ranging from 20.9-81.0.

Table 5.2 is a review of the social engagement proxies. These proxies include measures of a student's attendance at school (*attendance*), how *punctual* students are in terms of not being late or skipping class (*punctual*), perceptions of seeing school as a place to meet friends (*friendly*), the degree of racial friendliness within their school (*racial harmony*) and involvement in extracurricular activities (*activities*). All of these engagement measures were re-coded so that higher means reflect increased levels of social engagement. Factor analysis was conducted among all of the academic and social engagement measures, and only the *punctual* measure (reflecting the grouping of measures of a student being late for class or skipping class altogether) emerged as a composite measure candidate in this analysis.

Table 5.2 Social Engagement Measures

	Measure	Description	Range
Social Engagement	Attendance	Self-reported level of times absent from school during 10 th grade school year.	1 10 or more times 5 Never
	Punctual	A composite variable reflecting self-reporting of times that a student was late for class or skipped class.	-3.98 (lowly punctual) to 1.93 (highly punctual). Byvariate correlation of .43.
	School Spirit	Self-reported level that there is 'real school spirit'	1 Strongly disagree 4 Strongly Agree
	Friendly	Self-reported level that 'school is a place to meet friends'	1 Strongly disagree 4 Strongly Agree
	Racial Harmony	Self-reported level that 'students are friendly with other racial groups'	1 Strongly disagree 4 Strongly Agree
	Activities	Self-reported level of hours per week spent on extracurricular activities	0 0 hours 21 21 or more hours

5.2 Hypotheses and Expectations Relating to Early Graduates' Levels of Academic and Social Engagement

Hypothesis 1: Early graduates are (1a) not different than on time graduates in terms of academic engagement but are (1b) more academically engaged than dropouts.

This first part of this initial hypothesis, that early graduates are not significantly different than on time graduates in terms of academic engagement, is based on the rationale that the reasons many early graduates with a diploma seek to complete high school early may be linked to non-academic factors such as a lack of social engagement, alienation, or disruption (Rumberger 1995; Rumberger and Larson 1998). The rationale for the second part of the hypothesis is based on prior literature that suggests dropouts may not of had the desire or ability to stay on the traditional academic path that is required to earn a diploma or GED (Heckman, Hsee and Rubinstein 1999, Bowles and Gintis 2002).

Hypothesis 2: Early graduates with a diploma are (2a) similar to dropouts but (2b) are lower than on time graduates in their levels of social engagement.

This second hypothesis is based on the expectation that since these early graduates are earning a traditional diploma, they have the desire and ability to adhere to traditional academic processes; however, they are still seeking to leave high school early. Their motivation to graduate early is therefore likely to be non-academically based, which indicates that these students may not have sufficient levels of social engagement with their school setting (Collins 1979, Rumberger 1995; Heckman, Hsee and Rubinstein 1999; Bowles and Gintis 2002; Rumberger and Larson 1998).

Hypothesis 3: Earnest achievers will be the most academically engaged among the early graduate groups.

This third hypothesis is based on the expectation that earnest achievers may be aggressively seeking to transition to post-high school education (e.g., college), which reflects pro-learning attitudes and behaviors (Finn 1989; Newman et al., 1992; Rumberger 1995; Mehan 1997; Berkhold, Gies and Kaufman 1998; Heck and Mahoe 2006). Additionally, the process of aggressive matriculation likely requires students to be more involved in understanding the academic processes and procedures of their high school since the early graduation pathway is non-traditional compared to the norm of graduating on time (Rumberger 1995; Rumberger and Larson 1998).

Hypothesis 4: Easy way outs will be the least academically engaged early graduate group.

The fourth hypothesis is informed by prior research that suggests that GED holders do not have the desire or ability to stay on the traditional academic path that is required to earn a diploma (Finn 1989; Newman et al., 1992; Heckman, Hsee and Rubinstein 1999; Bowles and Gintis 2002).

Hypothesis 5: Early escapees have less social engagement compared to earnest achievers, underachieving passives and mediocre passives.

The fifth hypothesis is based on the rationale that since most early escapees are performing at least sufficiently (i.e., passing) in terms of academic performance, their decision to seek an early graduation with a diploma is likely linked with their being less socially engaged with school. Their lower levels of social engagement are expected to be more severe than the levels among earnest achievers and the two passive groups because early escapees have reported experiencing noticeably higher levels (i.e., more than one standard deviation) of disruptions than all students in general. Their expected lower levels of social engagement can also be linked to these students having more interest or necessary attention on outside of school concerns like working for money and family responsibilities (Rumberger 1983; Bickel & Papagiannis 1988; Bickel 1989; Finn 1989; Bickel, Weaver, Clark 1992; Giele and Elder 1998; Anisef, Axelrod, Baichman-Anisef and Turittin 2000; Warren 2000; Mortimer 2004; Rumberger 2004). Now that we have laid out the expectations and rationale for each of the school engagement hypotheses, the next step is to review how the actual ELS based findings stack up with these expectations.

5.3 Findings Relating to Early Graduates' Levels of Academic and Social Engagement

Hypothesis 1

The first hypothesis is that early graduates are not different than on time graduates in terms of academic engagement but are more academically engaged than dropouts. To determine if the actual ELS data support this hypothesis, we should look at Tables A.1-A.3. (in Appendix A), which show regression results for school exiter types while using academic engagement measures as dependent variables. Each table shows two models, with the first model (the “uncontrolled” model) containing only the different school exiter groups as independent variables and the second model (the “controlled” model) adding in theory-based control variables that

were discussed in detail in Chapter 3. Since we are trying to determine if early graduates are essentially the same as on time graduates with respect to academic engagement, on timers are the reference group for this particular set of analytic results tables.

The comparison of academic engagement differences starts with Table A.1, which treats each student's reported level of *importance* (of getting a good education) as the dependent variable. Table A.1 suggests that there are several differences between certain types of early graduates and on timers with respect to pro-learning attitudes (*importance*). Easy way outs (-.22***), underachieving passives (-.05***) and mediocre passives (-.08***) have significantly lower levels of *importance* compared to on timers, even after considering the influences of other control variables in model 2. An example interpretation of the coefficients in Table A.1 is that the -.22*** coefficient associated with easy way outs in model 2 indicates that even after considering many other potential influences on levels of education *importance*, easy way outs have an average level of *importance* that is .22 lower than the average level of educational *importance* reported by on time graduates. Furthermore, this .22 lower level of *importance* for easy way outs is statistically significant at the 99.9% level, indicating that the likelihood that easy way outs do not really have lower ratings of *importance* than on timers due to issues of chance in the sampling process is less than 1 in 1,000.

We can also see from Table A.1 that early escapees (-.08*** in model 1, the uncontrolled model) were initially significantly lower than on timers as well, however, this difference was reduced to non-significance after the inclusion of the control variables in model 2. Supplemental stepwise regression revealed that the *peers* control variable was the reason for this drop in the early escapee coefficient's explanatory power. This suggests that those early escapees who have close friends with pro-learning essentially place the same level of *importance* on education

as on timers. Overall, since three of the five early graduate groups are significantly different than on timers, the *importance* component of academic engagement does not support the first part of hypothesis 1 (that early graduates do not differ from on timers in terms of academic engagement).

Table A.2 shows regression results for the *homework* models. The early graduate groups are clearly different than on timers in terms of being prepared for class by having their homework completed. Just as in the prior *importance* discussion, easy way outs (-.22***), underachieving passives (-.08**) and mediocre passives (-.11***) are all significantly lower than on timers for the *homework* component of academic engagement, even after considering the influence of the control variables. Also consistent with the prior *importance* discussion is the finding that early escapees (-.16*** in model 1) are initially significantly lower than on timers regarding *homework*, however, this difference becomes not significant after considering the influence of the control variable *two parents* in model 2. This suggests that early escapee students who have two parents at home are not that different from on timers in terms of coming to class with their homework completed (perhaps because of the potential increase in parental supervision, encouragement and support). Earnest achievers, not too surprisingly, are significantly different and higher than on timers in terms of *homework* completion. Overall, the *homework* means differ significantly between on timers and four of the five early graduation groups, therefore the *homework* component of hypothesis 1b is not supported.

In terms of the performance measures of academic engagement Table A.3 shows that each early graduate group is significantly different than on timers with respect to grade point average (*grades*). With the exception of earnest achievers, each early graduate group has significantly lower grades than on timers. It is important to recognize that this particular measure of

academic engagement needs to be considered through the lens of how the different early graduate groups were created. While this process was described in Chapter 3, a few key considerations should be revisited at this point. The first sorting criterion for early graduates was whether or not they earned a diploma. This resulted in easy way outs being the first identified group because of their GED (instead of a diploma) status. The remaining early graduates (all with a diploma) were then assessed for the second criterion of reported disruptions and stressors in their school. This process enabled the creation of the early escapee group. The rest of the early graduate pool was then classified by the third criterion of grade point average, with those having a 3.0 or greater grade point average being categorized as earnest achievers (since they have a diploma, reported relatively low stress and have relatively high grades). The remaining students were then sorted into one of the two passive (underachieving or mediocre) groups, which by implication means these students are sub-3.0 grade point average students. For these reasons, the comparison of *grades* between on timers and early graduates is best focused on the easy way out and early escapee groups (who had no grade point average restrictions in their composition criteria). We can see in Table A.3 that both easy way outs (-.65***) and early escapees (.026***) have significantly lower *grades* than on timers, therefore the *grades* component of academic engagement does not support hypothesis 1a.

The comparison findings for *tests*, our final academic engagement measure, are presented in Table A.4. *Tests* (the composite score on standardized tests) is free from the methodological constraints that applied to the *grades* measure, however, the results appear directionally and significantly similar to those for *grades* (in Table A.3). Easy way outs (.40***), underachieving passives (-2.71***) and mediocre passives (-2.84***) all have significantly lower test scores than on timers, while the *test* score of earnest achievers (2.54***) is significantly higher than on

timers. It is interesting that the easy way out coefficient switched from negative in model 1 to positive in model 2. Supplemental stepwise regression identified that the *peers* control variable in model 2 led to this sign reversal, indicating that easy way outs with close friends who value education have significantly higher test scores than on timers. Table A.4 shows that the early escapee test score (-3.82***) is significantly lower than the on timers score in model 1; however this difference becomes non-significant after the inclusion of control variables in model 2.

Stepwise regression indicates that the control measure *income* is the primary reason that the early escapee coefficient lost much of its explanatory power, indicating that early escapees from higher income families are not significantly different than on timers in terms of *tests* scores. Overall, the model 2 *test* scores for the early graduate groups contain significantly different test scores than on timers for four of the five groups. The *tests* component of academic engagement does not support hypothesis 1.

The comparisons of early graduates to on timers across our four academic engagement measures (*importance*, *homework*, *grades* and *tests*) are summarized in Table 5.3. This summary clearly shows there are significant academic engagement differences between early graduates and on timers. These differences tend to show that early graduates are less academically engaged than on timers with the important exception of earnest achievers, who have significantly higher *homework* and *tests* scores. Overall, the first part of the first hypothesis, that early graduates are not significantly different than on time graduates in terms of academic engagement, is not supported.

The second part of hypothesis 1 is that early graduates are significantly more academically engaged than dropouts. To see if early graduates are more academically engaged than drop-

outs, we need to replicate the flow of the prior analytic review (Tables A.1-A.4), only this time with dropouts being the reference group instead of on timers (as shown in Tables A.5-A.8).

Table 5.3 Summary of Academic Engagement Variable Differences Between Early Graduate Groups and the Omitted Group of On Time Graduates

Table Source	Measure	Easy Way Outs	Early Escapes	Earnest Achievers	Under Achieving Passives	Mediocre Passives
A.1	Importance	-.22*** (.03)	-.02 (.02)	-.04 (.02)	-.05*** (.01)	-.08*** (.01)
A.2	Homework	-.22*** (.03)	-.07 (.04)	.17*** (.05)	-.08** (.03)	-.11*** (.02)
A.3	Grades	-.65*** (.03)	-.26*** (.03)	.71*** (.04)	-.55*** (.02)	-.54*** (.01)
A4	Tests	.40*** (.31)	-2.13 (.36)	2.54*** (.43)	-2.71*** (.30)	-2.84*** (.15)

Table A.5 shows that two of the five early graduate groups, easy way outs (-.22***) and mediocre passives (-.05***) have significantly different (and lower) levels of *importance* (i.e., believing that a good education is important) than dropouts. It is surprising that *none* of the early graduate groups place significantly *higher* value on the importance of education than dropouts. It is perhaps even more unexpected that *any* of the early graduate groups would view education as being *less* important than dropouts since these early graduates did leave high school with some form of completion credential (diploma or GED). Perhaps easy way outs and mediocre passives do not see traditional high school-based education as being particularly important, however, these students do recognize the value of earning a graduation credential rather than leaving early without one. In other words, these students may not have a great love for formal school-based learning; however, they may have a sense of pragmatism regarding how their earning a high school completion credential can help with their future life chances (e.g., paid work, family support, other forms of post-high school education, military enlistment). Or perhaps mediocre

passives (who left with a diploma credential, and therefore likely had more “seat time” in school than easy way outs) had more ability or propensity than dropouts to persevere through school processes and remain “attached” to school, despite possibly not particularly valuing the importance of education. Another possibility is that dropouts also see education as important, but feel compelled (or pushed) to disengage from high school because of life circumstances (e.g., pregnancy, need to work for money, move with family, etc.). Since none of the five early graduate groups report significantly higher levels of *importance* than dropouts (and two of the groups have significantly lower levels), the *importance* component of academic engagement does not support the second part of hypothesis 1.

In terms of *homework* completion, easy way outs, early escapees and earnest achievers are all significantly different than dropouts. As shown in Table A.6, even after considering the control variables in model 2, easy way outs (-.22***) and early escapees (-.01*) are significantly less likely to complete homework than dropouts. Earnest achievers (.23***), on the other hand, are the sole early graduate group that is more likely than dropouts to come to class with their homework completed. The easy way out and early escapee findings do not make initial intuitive sense. It may be the case that dropouts are more prone than easy way outs to show up to class prepared if easy way outs are more likely to intentionally resist school processes, despite their seeking a credentialed pathway (i.e., a GED), for which class preparation (e.g., *homework*) may not be a major concern. The early escapee homework coefficient (-.01* in model 2) is less extreme than the easy way out coefficient (-.22***) and may reflect a scenario where early escapees are detached or alienated from school processes such as expectations of homework completion. Overall, only one of the five early graduate groups (earnest achievers) has significantly

higher homework completion than dropouts. The *homework* component of academic engagement therefore does not support hypothesis 1b.

The prior discussion about *grades* (relating to Table A.3.) and the important caveats relating to the composition of the early graduate groups also applies to how we should think about any *grade* differences between early graduates and dropouts (i.e., we should focus on any interesting findings among easy way outs and early escapees). Table A.7 shows us that easy way outs have significantly lower grades (-.65***) than dropouts while early escapees had significantly higher grades (.14***) than dropouts. Future research might help us learn if the significantly lower grade point average for easy way outs is more a reflection of lower aptitude or ability or is more about their having less desire or interest in school processes. The relatively higher grade point average for early escapees is consistent with the notion that early escapees are not leaving school early because of poor grades and may be seeking to graduate early because they experience higher levels of school disruptions or seek to transition to their next desired post-high school status (e.g., work for pay, family support). Of the two relevant early graduate groups (easy way outs and early escapees) in the *grades* discussion, both are significantly different than dropouts, however, only one of these two groups (early escapees) is significantly higher than dropouts. This results in the *grades* component of academic engagement offer mixed support for hypothesis 1.

There are relatively few differences between early graduates and dropouts in their standardized *tests* scores (Table A.8). Early escapees (.87*) and earnest achievers (5.54***) are scoring significantly higher than dropouts on these tests, although the early escapee coefficient lost much of its power from model 1 because of the control variable *race* in model 2, suggesting that much of the early escapee differential on *test* scores (compared to on timers) is explained away

once racial differences are considered (i.e., early escapees who are non-white have test scores that are more in line with on timer test scores compared to white early escapees). Easy way outs were initially significantly lower on *tests* than dropouts in model 1 (-2.23***), but not in model 2 (.40). Supplemental stepwise regression reveals that the control variable *income* accounts for this loss of significance, suggesting that test scores for higher income early escapees are not that different from on timers. This is also the case between the *tests* scores between early escapees and on timers. Since only two of the five early graduate groups have significant higher *test* scores than dropouts, the *tests* component of academic engagement offers mixed support for hypothesis 1b.

Table 5.4 provides a summary of the academic engagement comparisons between early graduates and dropouts. While there are several interesting findings across the four academic engagement variables measures (*importance, homework, grades and tests*), we need to think about the how these findings come together in addressing the second part of the hypothesis 1 that early graduates are significantly more academically engaged than dropouts. In total, there is not a

Table 5.4 Summary of Academic Engagement Variable Differences Between Early Graduate Groups and the Omitted Group of Dropouts

Table Source	Measure	Easy Way Outs	Early Escapees	Earnest Achievers	Under Achieving Passives	Mediocre Passives
A5	Importance	-.22*** (.01)	.01 (.02)	-.01 (.02)	-.02 (.02)	-.05*** (.01)
A6	Homework	-.22*** (.03)	-.01* (.04)	.23*** (.05)	-.02 (.04)	-.04 (.02)
A.7	Grades	-.65*** (.03)	.14*** (.03)	1.10*** (.04)	-.16*** (.03)	-.15*** (.02)
A.8	Tests	.40 (.31)	.87* (.40)	5.54*** (.46)	.28 (.34)	.15 (.22)

clear “yes” or “no” answer that emerges from Tables A.5-A.8. While there are significant differences between the early graduate groups and dropouts occurring across all four academic

engagement measures, there is not one measure comparison for which *all* of the early graduate groups significantly differ from dropouts or for which *none* of the early graduate groups differ from dropouts. There is also not one early graduate exiter group that significantly differs from dropouts across all four dimensions (keeping in mind the *grades* comparison caveats). In the end, there is at best mixed support for hypothesis 1b. It should be noted that if we were to focus only on the comparisons between earnest achievers and dropouts, hypothesis 1b would be directionally supported since earnest achievers are significantly higher than dropouts for *homework*, *grades* and *tests*.

Hypothesis 2

The second hypothesis is that early graduates with a diploma have less social engagement than on timers but are not more socially engaged than dropouts. Tables A.9-A.14 provide the analytic results for the different early graduate groups across the social engagement variables (*attendance*, *punctual*, *school spirit*, *friendly*, *racial harmony* and *activities*), with on timers being the omitted group. Because the second hypothesis is intentionally focused on early graduates with a diploma, easy way outs are excluded from this discussion (therefore their respective rows are not reported in Tables A.9-A.14).

Table A.9 shows that early escapees (-.29***), underachieving passives (-.34***) and mediocre passives (-.41***) have significantly lower *attendance* levels compared to on time graduates. It is not surprising that these early graduate groups would have lower attendance than on timers, nor is it unexpected that Table A.9 shows that earnest achievers are not significantly different than on timers in terms of attendance. These *attendance* results directionally support hypothesis 2a.

There are significant differences between the early graduates with a diploma and on timers in terms of the *punctual* dimension of social engagement. Table A.10 shows that early escapees (-.27***), underachieving passives (-.46*) and mediocre passives (-.52***) are significantly less punctual than on timers. The underachieving passives' coefficient of -.46* in model 2 represents a decrease in significance and magnitude from their model 1 coefficient of -.62***. Stepwise regression indicates that this decrease relates to the influence of the control variable *peers* in model 2. This suggests that underachieving passives with close friends who value education are more likely to be punctual for class compared to underachieving passives who lack such friends. Earnest achievers are also significantly different than on timers, and this difference (.14**) is positive, indicating that earnest achievers are more *punctual* than on timers. Overall, these *punctual* findings provide directional support for hypothesis 2a.

The *school spirit* analytic results are presented in Table A.11. These comparisons mark the first time that all four of the relevant early graduate groups are all significantly different *and* lower than on timers. Early escapees (-.21***), earnest achievers (-.09*), underachieving passives (-.08**) and mediocre passives (-.12***) all report levels of school spirit that are significantly below the reported level among on timers. The model 2 results for earnest achievers show that this coefficient lost some explanatory power from model 1 (where it had a coefficient of -.11***), and this decrease is attributed to the influence of the control variable *private* in model 2. This suggests that earnest achievers from private schools are more in line with on timers with respect to perceived levels of school spirit compared to public school earnest achievers. Similarly, the underachieving passives coefficient dropped from -.14*** in model 1 to -.08** in model 2, and this is due to the influence of the *race* control variable in model 2, suggesting that non-

white underachieving passives perceive higher levels of school spirit than white underachieving passives. Overall, these school spirit results strongly support the first part of hypothesis 2.

According to Table A.12, earnest achievers (-.18***), underachieving passives (-.07**) and mediocre passives (-.10***) all report significantly lower levels of *friendly* (i.e., school is a place to meet friends) than on timers. The underachieving passives' coefficient is -.14*** in model 1 and drops to -.07** in model 2 due to the inclusion of the *race* control variable. This suggests that non-white underachieving passives have higher levels of *friendly* compared to white underachieving passives. Early escapees have a significantly lower *friendly* level (compared to on timers) of -.06* in model 1, however, this coefficient loses its statistical significance in model 2 because of the influence of the *peers* control variable. This suggests that having pro-education friends leads early escapees to be more like on timers with respect to *friendly* ratings. These *friendly* results provide directional support for hypothesis 2a.

With respect to levels of perceived *racial harmony* at school, Table A.13 shows that early escapees (-.14***), earnest achievers (-.07*), and mediocre passives (-.02*) all have significantly lower levels than on timers. Underachieving passives offer a surprise finding since their level of *racial harmony* is statistically higher (.06**) than that for on timers. There is not an intuitive explanation for this finding. It may be the case that the reporting of positive *racial harmony* (compared to on timers) may have helped to keep underachieving passives engaged with school socially (despite their relative poor *grades* performance). It could also be that underachieving passives attend schools with different racial relations contexts than those of on timers. Overall, these racial harmony findings offer directional support for hypothesis 2a.

The results presented in Table A.14 show that *activities* is the only other social engagement dimension (along with *school spirit*) where all four relevant early graduate groups are sig-

nificantly different than on timers. Early escapees (-.87***), earnest achievers (-.89**), underachieving passives (-.17***) and mediocre passives (-.12***) all report lower levels of participation in school activities compared to on timers. The earnest achiever coefficient had been significantly positive in model 1 (.133***), however this coefficient experiences a loss of explanatory power and a decrease in statistical significance due to the inclusion of *income* in model 2, suggesting that higher income earnest achievers are more similar to on timers in terms of participation in activities compared to lower income earnest achievers. This consistent pattern of significantly lower levels of activities across all four relevant groups (compared to on timers) supports hypothesis 2a.

A summary of the social engagement comparisons between early graduates and on timers is presented in Table 5.5. Overall, the first part of hypothesis 2 is supported. The four relevant early graduate groups were each compared to on timers across six social engagement groups. This results in 24 total social engagement comparisons, of which 20 (83%) show significantly

Table 5.5 Summary of Social Engagement Variable Differences Between Early Graduate Groups and the Omitted Group of On Time Graduates

Table Source	Measure	Early Escapees	Earnest Achievers	Under Achieving Passives	Mediocre Passives
A.11	Attendance	-.29*** (.05)	.08 (.05)	-.34*** (.04)	-.41*** (.02)
A.10	Punctual	-.27*** (.04)	.14** (.05)	-.46* (.03)	-.52*** (.02)
A.11	School Spirit	-.21*** (.03)	-.09* (.04)	-.08** (.043)	-.12*** (.01)
A.12	Friendly	-.04 (.03)	-.18*** (.04)	-.07** (.03)	-.10*** (.01)
A.13	Racial Harmony	-.14*** (.03)	-.07* (.03)	.06** (.02)	-.02* (.01)
A.14	Activities	-.87*** (.24)	-.89** (.28)	-1.77*** (.20)	-1.25*** (.01)

lower levels among the early graduate groups compared to on timers. It is also worth noting that the consistent pattern of significant negative coefficients for the four early graduate groups for *school spirit* and *activities* may be linked to these particular dimensions of social engagement being more “voluntary” and within a student’s agency to seek out or ignore. The social engagement dimensions of *attendance* and *punctual* seem to be much more “procedural” while *racial harmony* and *friendly* may likely be seen as being more structural and beyond the control of any specific early graduate.

The second part of hypothesis two is early graduates with a diploma are not significantly different than dropouts in terms of social engagement. This part of the discussion involves an assessment of Tables A.15-A.18. Table A.15 shows the *attendance* comparisons between the four relevant early graduate groups (easy way outs are again shaded out) and on timers. Early escapees and underachieving passives are not significantly different than dropouts, however, earnest achievers are significantly higher (.34***) while mediocre passives (-.16***) are significantly lower than dropouts with respect to *attendance*. The positive coefficient for earnest achievers is not too surprising (since their better attendance likely supports their higher grades), however, there is not an obvious reason to expect mediocre passives to have significantly lower attendance than dropouts, especially since mediocre passives are remaining engaged enough with school to earn a diploma. This particular finding is all the more unexpected since I would have thought that if either of the two passive groups had worse attendance than dropouts, it would be the underachieving passives since their grade point average is lower than that of mediocre passives. Since only one of the four early graduate groups (earnest achievers) have significantly different levels of *attendance* than dropouts, this particular social engagement component offers support for part two of hypothesis 2.

The findings for *punctual* in Table A.16 show that only one (early escapees) of the four groups is not significantly different than dropouts. Earnest achievers are significantly more *punctual* (.49***) than dropouts, while underachieving passives (-.12**) and mediocre passives (-.17***) are significantly less *punctual*. While both of the passive groups are following the same trend, it is still unexpected that students who would be less punctual than dropouts would still remain “on path” in school, at least in terms of graduating with a diploma. While *punctual* is a theoretical social engagement proxy, it may not necessarily be a powerful enough consideration in terms of keeping students on path for an on time graduation. The *punctual* comparisons, with three of the four groups being significantly different than dropouts, do not support hypothesis 2b.

The *school spirit* comparisons (Table A.17) show that two of the groups, earnest achievers and underachieving passives, are not significantly different than dropouts while both early escapees (-.15***) and mediocre passives (-.05***) report significantly lower levels of *school spirit* compared to dropouts. The lower *school spirit* level among early escapees may be linked to their feeling tension, stress or other forms of disruption that would likely result in lower levels of *school spirit*. As was the case with *attendance* (Table A.15), there is not a clear explanation for why the mediocre and underachieving passive groups are not consistent in terms of how they compare with dropouts. There is also not a clear rationale for why mediocre passives would report lower levels of *school spirit* than dropouts. The mediocre passive coefficient of -.07*** drops to -.05** in model 2 because of the effects of the *peers* control variable in model 2. This suggests that having pro-school friends can mitigate some of the difference in school spirit ratings between mediocre passives and on timers. Overall, the *school spirit* findings offer support

for part two of hypothesis 2 since none of the early graduate groups have higher ratings than dropouts.

The *friendly* comparisons (Table A.18) show that early escapees and underachieving passives are not significantly different than on timers in terms of seeing school as a place to meet friends. On the other hand, earnest achievers (-.15***) and mediocre passives (-.07**) report significantly lower *friendly* levels than dropouts. It is possible that earnest achievers may be seeking an early graduation in part due to this dimension of social engagement. In other words, these better performing students may not be experiencing relatively high levels of disruptions (which would place them in the early escapee group), but they may also not be experiencing sufficient positive peer interactions to keep them socially engaged with school and are therefore seeking an early graduation. The mediocre passive finding is consistent with the *attendance* and *school spirit* results in that their reported level of *friendly* is significantly lower than dropouts, yet the underachieving passive group's level of *friendly* is not significantly lower than that for dropouts. Since none of the four groups are significantly higher than dropouts on the *friendly* dimension, this aspect of social engagement also offers support for part two of hypothesis 2b.

Three of the four early graduate groups are significantly different than dropouts in terms of their reported levels of *racial harmony* (Table A.19). Early escapees (-.16***), earnest achievers (-.09*), and mediocre passives (-.04*) all report significantly lower levels of *racial harmony* compared to dropouts. Once again, underachieving passives are not significantly different than dropouts in terms of racial harmony. The mediocre passive coefficient was -.06** in model 1, and lost some of its significance in model 2 due to the effects of the *peers* control variable, suggesting that mediocre passives who have pro-school friends are directionally closer to on timers in terms of racial harmony ratings than mediocre passives who lack such friends.

While the lower racial harmony levels among early escapees, earnest achievers and mediocre passives are unexpected, it could be these students are still engaged enough with school through other academic and social considerations that they are can withstand tensions resulting from relatively lower levels of racial harmony. It could also be that the absolute levels of racial harmony among these groups are not dire enough to cause these students to disengage from school. The *racial harmony* component of social engagement, with none of the groups being significantly higher than dropouts, supports hypothesis 2b.

The *activities* comparisons (Table A.20) are also supportive of hypothesis 2. This is because three of the four groups (early escapees, earnest achievers, and mediocre passives) are not significantly different than dropouts in their *activities* levels. The one group exception, underachieving passives (-.75**), is interesting because this is the first and only time that underachieving passives have a significantly lower social engagement component score than dropouts while mediocre passives do not. It is also interesting to think through the potential stories of why underachieving passives would be less involved in school clubs, sports or activities than dropouts. It may be the case that these underachieving passives are socially alienated from school and express their alienation through choosing to skip or be late for class (as reflected in their significantly negative *punctual* coefficient of -.12** in Table A.16) and by choosing to minimize their participation in *activities*.

A summary of the social engagement comparisons between early graduates and dropouts is presented in Table 5.6. Overall, the social engagement comparisons between the four relevant early graduate groups and dropouts across the six social engagement variables results in only two of the 24 comparisons showing early graduate having a significantly higher level of social engagement compared to dropouts (the exceptions are earnest achievers being higher on *punctual*

and *attendance*). The remaining 22 cases show that early graduates are not experiencing higher social engagement levels than dropouts support hypothesis 2b.

There are two interesting points about the social engagement differences among early graduates with a diploma relative to dropouts that warrant additional attention. First, it is interesting that earnest achievers are the only group to have significantly higher levels of any of the

Table 5.6 Summary of Social Engagement Variable Differences Between Early Graduate Groups and the Omitted Group of Dropouts

Table Source	Measure	Early Escapees	Earnest Achievers	Under Achieving Passives	Mediocre Passives
A.15	Attendance	-.03 (.05)	.34** (.06)	-.08 (.04)	-.16*** (.03)
A.16	Punctual	.07 (.05)	.49*** (.05)	-.12** (.04)	-.17*** (.03)
A.17	School Spirit	-.15*** (.04)	-.03 (.04)	-.02 (.03)	-.05** (.02)
A.18	Friendly	-.01 (.03)	-.15*** (.04)	-.03 (.03)	-.07*** (.02)
A.19	Racial Harmony	-.16*** (.03)	-.09* (.04)	.05 (.03)	-.04* (.02)
A.20	Activities	.15 (.26)	.13 (.30)	-.75** (.22)	-.23 (.15)

social engagement variables (in this case, *attendance* and *punctual*) compared to dropouts, yet this same group also has significantly lower levels of other social engagement measures (*friendly* and *racial harmony*). It may be that earnest achievers respect and abide by school processes and policies (such those regarding *attendance* and *punctual*), yet they may be alienated by lower levels of peer interactions (as reflected in their lower *friendly* and *racial harmony* scores). Secondly, mediocre passives are significantly lower than dropouts across all but one (*activities*) of the social engagement measures. While the mediocre passives and underachieving passives tend to follow a similar pattern of academic engagement differences compared to dropouts (Tables 5.7-

5.10), these two groups have very little in common in terms with how they compare to dropouts across the social engagement dimensions (shown in Tables A.15-A.20), with the exception of their similar *punctual* comparisons (Table A.16). The differences between these two passive groups appear to be grounded in their different social engagement levels in terms of *attendance*, *school spirit*, *friendly*, *racial harmony* and *activities*, with mediocre passives tending to be significantly lower than dropouts across these measures.

Hypothesis 3

The third hypothesis is that earnest achievers will be the most academically engaged students among the early graduate groups. To determine if this third hypothesis can be supported, we should again look at Table 5.3, which is a summary of the model 2 results from Tables A.1-A.4 for each of the early graduate groups with respect to academic engagement (on timers, the normative graduation group, are the omitted group).

Table 5.3 shows that earnest achievers are the only early graduates with mean levels of *homework* (.17***) and *grades* (.71***) that are significantly higher than the means for on time graduates. Earnest achievers and easy way outs both have significantly higher scores on *tests* compared to on timers. The *importance* coefficient for earnest achievers (-.04) is the only academic engagement measure among earnest achievers that is not statistically higher than on timers, however, none of the early graduate groups have a significantly positive coefficient for this measure (and easy way outs, underachieving passives and mediocre passives are significantly lower than on timers). Because earnest achievers are clearly and positively differentiated from the other groups on three of the four academic measures (*homework*, *grades* and *tests*) and are not significantly lower than any of the other groups on the remaining academic engagement measure (*importance*), Overall, I find that the third hypothesis is supported.

Hypothesis 4

The fourth hypothesis is that easy way outs will be the least academically engaged early graduate group. Table 5.3 tells us that easy way outs are significantly lower than on timers for three of the four measures. The easy way outs coefficient for *importance* (-.22***) is more than 2.5 times lower than the next group runner-up (mediocre passives with a -.08*** coefficient). The easy way out coefficient for *homework* (-.22***) is twice as low as the nearest group (mediocre passives with a -.11*** coefficient). Easy way outs also have the lowest coefficient for *grades* (-.65***) among the early graduate groups. Easy way outs do, however, have a positive coefficient for *tests* (.40***), which suggests that the standardized *tests* component of academic engagement may be measuring skills, abilities or effort that are very different than those associated with traditional day-to-day school processes and procedures (as reflected in the *grades* measure). Their high standardized test scores raises the possibility that easy way out students may be, for whatever reasons, good test takers and are therefore more apt to be drawn to the test-centric nature of the GED credentialing process. A case can be made that easy way outs are the least academically engaged early graduate group if we focus only on the measures of *importance*, *homework* and *grades*. However, because both the underachieving passives and mediocre passives have significant negative coefficients across all four of the academic engagement measures (including *tests*), a case can also be made that these two groups are both more academically disengaged than easy way outs. In the end, there is mixed support for the fourth hypothesis.

Hypothesis 5

The fifth and final hypothesis is that early escapees have less social engagement compared to earnest achievers, underachieving passives and mediocre passives. To determine if ear-

ly escapees have significantly less social engagement than the other early graduate groups with a diploma, we should refer to Table 5.7. This table summarizes the relevant findings from model 2 in Tables A.9-A.14 regarding these types of early graduates and their social engagement coefficients compared to the omitted normative group of on time graduates. Looking at the early escapee column in Table 5.4, we see that early escapees have significantly lower levels of social engagement compared to on timers for five of the six measures (*friendly* is not significantly different). We can also see that earnest achievers and underachieving passives are significantly lower than on timers for five of the six measures while mediocre passives are significantly lower than on timers across all six of the social engagement measures. This would suggest that, compared to on timers, early escapees are not clearly less socially engaged than the other early graduate groups with a diploma. The fifth hypothesis is therefore not supported.

Table 5.7 Summary of Social Engagement Variable Differences Between Early Graduate Groups with a Diploma and the Omitted Group of On Time Graduates

Table Source	Measure	Early Escapees	Earnest Achievers	Under-achieving Passives	Mediocre Passives
A.9	Attendance	-.29*** (.05)	.08 (.05)	-.34*** (.04)	-.41*** (.02)
A.10	Punctual	-.27*** (.04)	.14** (.05)	-.46* (.03)	-.52*** (.02)
A.11	School Spirit	-.21*** (.03)	-.09* (.04)	-.08** (.03)	-.12*** (.01)
A.12	Friendly	-.04 (.03)	-.18*** (.04)	-.07** (.03)	-.10*** (.01)
A.13	Racial Harmony	-.14*** (.03)	-.07* (.03)	.06** (.02)	-.02* (.01)
A.14	Activities	-.87*** (.24)	-.89** (.28)	-1.77*** (.20)	-1.25*** (.01)

Table 5.7 provides several other interesting comparisons that warrant discussion at this time. If we were to create a social engagement story that highlights the social engagement dif-

ferences across exiter types with a diploma, each measure row in Table 5.6 would have something to offer. Starting with the *attendance* row, earnest achievers are the only group to not be significantly lower than on timers. In terms of *punctual*, earnest achievers are again the only group to not be significantly lower than on timers, and are actually significantly higher (.14**). All four groups report significantly lower *school spirit* than on timers, with the early escapees' coefficient being almost twice as low (-.21***) as the next lowest group. The four groups are again significantly lower than on timers on the *friendly* dimension, with earnest achievers being almost twice as low (-.18***) as the next lowest group. All four groups are significantly lower than on timers in terms of their involvement in *activities*, with underachieving passives (-1.77***) and mediocre passives (-1.25***) being noticeably less involved than the other groups.

These findings allow us to create some initial conceptualizations for these groups with respect to social engagement. For example, early escapees are socially disengaged across all of the measures except for *friendly*, and are especially disengaged (relative to the other groups) in terms of *school spirit*. For earnest achievers, poor *attendance* is not an issue and their being *punctual* is actually a positive point of differentiation. These earnest achievers, however, are disengaged in terms of *school spirit*, *racial harmony*, *activities* and especially in their reported levels of *friendly*. Underachieving passives are actually reporting significantly higher levels of *racial harmony* than on timers (while the other groups are significantly lower than on timers on this measure). These underachieving passive students are, however, disengaged across the other five social engagement measures, especially when it comes to their involvement in *activities*. Mediocre passives are significantly disengaged across all six social engagement measures and stand out as being particular disengaged in terms of *attendance* and *punctual*.

5.4 Comments on Control Variables

The prior section intentionally focused on the comparisons of the different early graduate groups across academic and social engagement measures. The inclusion of control variables in model 2 of the Appendix A regression tables allows us to also identify several other interesting findings relating to different student demographics, family situations, school types and peer influences. Table 5.8 provides a summary of variable coefficients derived from model 2 in Tables A.1-A.4 and A.9-A.14. This summary shows the results of control variable comparisons across the early graduate groups (on timers, the normative group, are omitted). For example, we can tell from Table A.3 that female early graduate students are significantly higher than males early graduates (the omitted group) on *importance* (.07***), *homework* (.50***), *grades* (.26***) and

Table 5.8 Part One of Summary of Control Variable Coefficients Across the Different Engagement Measure Regressions with On Time Graduates Being the Omitted Group.

Table Source	Measure	Female	Race	Two Parents	Siblings	Income	Computer
A.1	Importance	.07*** (.01)	-.01*** (.01)	.01 (.01)	.01*** (.01)	-.01** (.01)	.01* (.01)
A.2	Homework	.50*** (.01)	.01*** (.01)	.04*** (.01)	-.02*** (.01)	.05 (.01)	.03*** (.01)
A.3	Grades	.26*** (.01)	.03*** (.01)	.18*** (.01)	-.02*** (.01)	.22*** (.01)	.07*** (.01)
A.4	Tests	.12* (.06)	.57*** (.02)	1.10*** (.06)	-.45*** (.02)	3.97*** (.04)	1.12*** (.03)
A.9	Attendance	-.16*** (.01)	-.05*** (.01)	.11*** (.01)	-.02*** (.01)	.08*** (.01)	.02*** (.01)
A.10	Punctual	-.10*** (.01)	-.01*** (.01)	.13*** (.01)	-.02*** (.01)	.03*** (.01)	.02*** (.01)
A.11	School Spirit	.01 (.01)	.03*** (.01)	.02*** (.01)	.01*** (.01)	-.02*** (.01)	-.01*** (.01)
A.12	Friendly	-.01 (.01)	.03*** (.01)	.05*** (.01)	-.01*** (.01)	.05*** (.01)	.03*** (.01)
A.13	Racial Harmony	.04*** (.01)	-.01*** (.01)	-.01 (.01)	.01* (.01)	-.02*** (.01)	-.01** (.01)
A.14	Activities	-.56*** (.04)	.25*** (.01)	.56*** (.04)	-.03* (.01)	.92*** (.03)	.17*** (.02)

tests (.12*). While female early graduates are significantly higher than male early graduates across all of the academic engagement measures, they are significantly lower than male early graduates on several social engagement measures, including *attendance* (-.16***), *punctual* (-.10***) and *activities* (-.56***). These female students do, however, report statistically significant higher levels of *racial harmony* (.04***) than male students.

In terms of race differences, non-white early graduates have lower levels of *importance* (.01***) and higher levels of *homework* (.01***), *grades* (.03***) and *tests* (.57***) compared to on timers. These higher level of academic engagement for non-white early graduate were not expected (especially in light of Ogbu's [1978, 1991a, 1991b, 1992] oppositional culture theory proclamations), however, it may be that non-white early graduate students are different than white on time graduates with respect to *homework*, *grades* and *tests*. The social engagement findings also offer some surprises for non-white early graduates since they report significantly higher levels of *school spirit* (.03***) and *friendly* (.03***) and have significantly lower levels of *attendance* (-.05***), *punctual* (-.01***) and *racial harmony* (-.01***) than on timers.

Having *two parents* at home (compared to the omitted group of not having two parents at home) results in a consistently positive influence across all the academic and social engagement measures. Only the *importance* measure (.01) for academic engagement and the *racial harmony* measure (-.01) for social engagement are statistically not significant. The *racial harmony* measure is likely beyond the direct influence of parents, so that particular finding of non-significance is not too surprising. The lack of significance for *importance*, however, is somewhat unexpected.

The presence of more *siblings* in an early graduate's home has a mixed influence on both academic and social engagement. A higher number of siblings at home is associated with signif-

icantly higher levels of *importance* (.01***) but significantly lower levels of *homework* (-.02***), *grades* (-.02***), and *tests* (-.45***). The sibling influence on social engagement is significantly positive for *school spirit* (.01**) and *racial harmony* (.01*) but is significantly negative for *attendance* (-.02***), *punctual* (-.02***), *friendly* (-.01***) and *activities* (-.03***). The generally lower levels of academic engagement and social engagement may be linked to prior theories that parental attention, encouragement, resources and supervision are diluted across larger family sizes (Downey 1994).

Early graduates who come from households with higher levels of financial resources, parental valuation of education and parental occupational prestige (reflected in the ELS composite measure *income*) have significantly higher *grades* (.22***) and *test* scores (3.97***) than on time graduates. These early graduates also have significantly higher levels of *attendance* (.08***), *punctual* (.03***), *friendly* (.05***) and *activities* (.92***) than on time graduates. These findings are consistent with the expectation that higher levels of *income* are associated with higher levels of parental economic resources (which can support a student's learning and attending schools with greater learning resources), higher levels of expectations to consistently show up to school and be prompt to each class and attending schools that may offer more activity options (as well as parents being able to economically support their child's participation, when necessary, in various extracurricular clubs and sports).

What is less intuitive are the significantly negative findings associated with *importance* (-1.01**), *school spirit* (-.02***), and *racial harmony* (-.02***). These results are unexpected since there is not any a priori reason to expect that higher levels of income would not result in more early graduate engagement across all of the academic and social engagement measures.

Apparently a rising tide (i.e., higher income) does *not* raise all ships (i.e., academic and social engagement measures).

The presence of a computer and internet connection at an early graduate's home (reflected in the measure *computer*) does correlate with higher levels of *importance* (.01*), *homework* (.03***), *grades* (.07***), and *tests* (1.12***). While having a computer at home is consistently associated with higher levels of academic engagement, it has a mixed correlation with an early graduate's social engagement levels. For example, early graduates with a computer have higher levels of *attendance* (.02***), *punctual* (.02***), *friendly* (.03***) and *activities* (.17***). There is not an obvious rationale regarding why the presence of a computer (with an internet connection) at home would correspond with these positive social engagement dynamics. Possible explanations might include students who have more academic engagement (such as early graduates with a computer at home) are also far less inclined to be absent, late or skip class. The student's use of a computer at home might also enable greater social connectivity with friends (e.g., email, instant messaging, gaming, file sharing, discussion of web sites or downloaded material, etc.). It is also possible that the types of school activities these students are participating in might utilize or promote computer skills. On the other hand, the significantly negative associations between *computer* and *school spirit* (-.01**) and *racial harmony* (-.01**) are not readily explainable.

Table 5.9 continues the summary of the early graduate groups and control variable comparisons. The presence of 50 or more *books* in the household has a positive and significant effect on all of the academic and social engagement measures with the single exception of *homework*. It could be that the types of books at home are not directly supportive or relevant for inspiring better reading, study skills or homework completion. Another possibility is that early graduates utilize the internet more than books for their homework. The significant positive relationship

between *books* and the other school engagement variables might be due to potential correlations between parents who support reading at home (as indicated by having 50 or more books) can serve as reading role models for their kids while also promoting pro-learning and pro-school attitudes and behaviors with their children.

The *PTA* variable, indicating that a student had at least one parent attend a PTA meeting during the school year, is associated with significantly higher levels of *importance* (.03***) and *homework* (.02**). *PTA* is also associated with significantly lower levels of *grades* and *tests*.

Table 5.9 Part Two of Summary of Control Variable Coefficients Across the Different Engagement Measure Regressions with On Time Graduates Being the Omitted Group.

Table Source	Measure	Books	PTA	Private	Urban	Suburb	Peers
A.1	Importance	.03*** (.01)	.03*** (.01)	-.01 (.01)	.02*** (.01)	-.01 (.01)	.13*** (.01)
A.2	Homework	.01 (.01)	.02** (.01)	.10*** (.01)	-.06*** (.01)	-.08*** (.01)	.11*** (.01)
A.3.	Grades	.07*** (.01)	-.03*** (.01)	.11*** (.01)	-.10*** (.01)	-.05*** (.01)	.09*** (.01)
A4	Tests	2.01*** (.08)	-1.19*** (.06)	1.89*** (.08)	-.35*** (.09)	0.07 (.08)	.60*** (.03)
A.9	Attendance	.04*** (.01)	.06*** (.01)	.11*** (.01)	-.05*** (.01)	-.04*** (.01)	.14*** (.01)
A.10	Punctual	.07*** (.01)	.02** (.01)	.19*** (.01)	-.28*** (.01)	.21*** (.01)	-.16*** (.01)
A.11	School Spirit	.04*** (.01)	.03*** (.01)	.12*** (.01)	-.01 (.01)	-.04*** (.01)	.12*** (.01)
A.12	Friendly	.02*** (.01)	-.01** (.01)	-.01 (.01)	-.05*** (.01)	.01 (.01)	.02*** (.01)
A.13	Racial Harmony	.03*** (.01)	.01 (.01)	.11*** (.01)	.07*** (.01)	.03*** (.01)	.06*** (.01)
A.14	Activities	.31*** (.05)	.48*** (.04)	.94*** (.05)	-.65*** (.06)	-.23*** (.05)	.78*** (.02)

These academic engagement associations seem paradoxical, however it could be the case that parental involvement with teachers and other parents could positively influence their child's attitude towards school (*important*) and preparation (*homework*), but not their child's actual

performance (*grades* and *tests*). In terms of the *PTA* associations with the social engagement measures, *PTA* is positively and significantly associated with *attendance* (.06***), *punctual* (.02**), *school spirit* (.03***), and *activities* (.48***). The negative and significant relationship between *PTA* and *friendly* (-.01**) is unexpected. Perhaps many parents of early graduates are attending *PTA* meetings as a result of perceiving that their child is in an unfriendly or alienating peer setting or attends a school with a demoralizing environment.

Early graduates who attend a *private* high school have significantly higher levels of *homework* (.10***), *grades* (.11***), and *tests* (1.89***), than their public school (the omitted category) early graduate counterparts. These higher academic engagement levels might be attributed to private schools possibly having more rigid policies and expectations and more resources available per student (e.g., lower student to teacher ratios, more learning resources per student). Another possibility is that private schools do not have to accept students who may be seen as underperforming or highly resource intensive. These private school early graduates are also experiencing higher levels of social engagement across all of the measures except for *friendly* (which is not statistically significant). The *activities* coefficient of .94*** could suggest that private school early graduates have more types of potentially interesting extracurricular activities to choose from compared to public school students, or that they may even be required (or highly encouraged) to participate in some form of extracurricular activity as part of their private school's policy or tradition.

Urban early graduates, compared to the omitted group of rural early graduates, have significantly higher levels of *importance* (.02***), but significantly lower levels of *homework* (-.06***), *grades* (-.10***), and *tests* (-.35***). This suggests that *urban* early graduates (claim to) place greater importance on education, yet are less prepared for class and earn lower grades

and test scores than their rural counterparts. These urban students also have relatively higher levels of *racial harmony* (.07***), yet are significantly lower than their rural counterparts across all other measures of social engagement.

Suburban early graduates also have significantly lower levels of *homework* (-.08***), *grades* (-.05***), *attendance* (-.04***), *school spirit* (-.04***) and *activities* (-.23***) than rural early graduates. These suburban students, however, also have significantly higher levels of *punctual* (.21***) and *racial harmony* (.03***) than rural early graduates. These school location comparisons suggest that rural early graduates are actually more likely to come to class with their homework completed and are earning higher grades than the urban and suburban early graduates. This is unexpected and challenges any preconceived notions that suburban schools are somehow “better” (e.g., because of expected higher tax bases in suburban settings that can presumably support better schools) or that rural schools are inferior. The significantly higher level of *activities* among rural early graduates is also unexpected, and may be linked to different forms of participation statuses, peer effects, parental expectations, or even different forms of activities being offered in rural high schools compared to urban and suburban schools.

The *peers* results for academic engagement are all significantly positive, indicating that the more an early graduate’s friends value education, the higher the early graduate’s levels of *importance* (.13***), *homework* (.11***), *grades* (.09***) and *tests* (.60***) will be. These peer effects are also significantly positive for all of the social engagement variables with the exception of *punctual* (-.16***). There is no apparent reason to expect *punctual* to be significantly negative, especially since we would expect higher levels of peer valuation of education to translate into pro-learning attitudes and behaviors among early graduates.

5.5 Conclusions

In terms of academic engagement, my findings suggest that we can think of the easy way outs, early escapees, mediocre passives and underachieving passives as comprising a cluster of early graduates that has lower academic engagement (*importance, homework, grades and tests*) than on time graduates (see discussion of hypothesis 1). This same cluster of early graduates also does not clearly distinguish itself academically from the performance of dropouts (see discussion of hypothesis 1b). The earnest achiever group stands apart from that cluster because (1) they are not significantly lower than on timers for any of the specific academic measures and actually outperform on timers on *homework* completion, *grades* and *tests* scores (see discussion of hypothesis 1a). The rationale for thinking about earnest achievers as being distinct is further supported by their being the only early graduate group that has significantly higher levels than dropouts for *homework, grades and tests*, further solidifying their distinction as the most academically engaged early graduate group (see discussion of hypothesis 3).

The easy way outs offer a bit of a surprise because they are not consistently the least academically engaged group. While easy way outs are significantly lower than on time graduates in terms of *homework, importance and grades*, they unexpectedly have a significantly higher standardized *test* score. This suggests that standardized tests may be measuring aptitude or effort that is different than those associated with traditional student attitudes (*importance*) processes (*attendance*) and procedures (*grades*). Another possibility is that easy way outs may simply be more effective test takers than the other groups.

In terms of social engagement, earnest achievers tend to be less distinctive than the other early graduate groups with a diploma. These four groups (easy way outs, earnest achievers, mediocre passives and underachieving passives) have a consistent pattern (i.e., in 83% of the com-

parisons) of lower social engagement measure levels than on time graduates (see discussion of the first part of hypothesis 2). Early graduates are also rarely higher than dropouts across the social engagement measures.

The early escapees are a bit surprising in that they are not clear standouts as the least socially engaged early graduate group. While early escapees have significantly lower levels of social engagement than on time graduates for five of the six measures, earnest achievers and underachieving passives also are significantly lower than dropouts for five of the six measures while underachieving passives are significantly lower across all six measures. This suggests that all early graduates with a diploma have significantly lower social engagement than on timers, however, no single early graduate group stands out as being the “least engaged” socially (see discussion of hypothesis 5).

This chapter also revealed several interesting findings regarding the influence of control variables on academic and social engagement among early graduates. For example, *female* early graduates tend to have higher academic engagement but lower social engagement than their male early graduate counterparts. The *race* findings reveal that minority early graduates actually have higher levels of academic engagement than white early graduates. The social engagement scores among minority early graduates suggests that *racial harmony* (significantly lower among minorities) is a very distinct concept compared to *school spirit* and sense of *friendliness* within the school (both of which are significantly higher among minorities). The *racial harmony* consideration also stands out as an aspect that does not significantly improve despite the presence of *two parents* in the household.

Having *two parents* at home significantly lifts all academic engagement measures except for the *importance* a student places on education (an unforeseen exception). Having more *sib-*

lings in the house actually correlates with an early graduate placing higher levels of *importance* on education, but it negatively correlates with all other academic engagement and most social engagement measures. Higher levels of household *income* correlate with higher academic performance (*grades* and *test* scores), however, higher *income* unexpectedly links to lower levels of *importance*, *school spirit* and *racial harmony* among early graduates. The presence of learning resources at home (*computer*, internet access, 50 or more *books*) has, as expected, an overall positive association with academic engagement, and there is also a positive relationship between these at home learning resources and higher levels of social engagement among early graduates. The *PTA* findings suggest that a parent's *PTA* participation may positively influence an early graduate's academic attitude and preparation (*importance*, *homework*), but not the student's actual performance (*grades* and *tests*). Not unexpectedly, early graduates in *private* schools show higher levels of academic and social engagement than public school early graduates. The adage of "pick your friends well" is clearly supported (as expected) by the findings. The influence of pro-school *peers* is consistently, significantly and positively associated with increased levels of all academic measures and all social engagement measures among early graduates with just one exception (*punctual*). Perhaps the biggest surprise among the control variable assessments is the finding that early graduates in rural schools tend to have higher levels of academic and social engagement than both urban and suburban early graduates. This finding challenges the stereotype of rural schools being less effective than suburban or urban schools.

In terms of how the control variables impact academic and social engagement differences between the early graduate groups, it is interesting that there is not a pattern of any specific control variable consistently having a mitigating effect on academic or social engagement gaps between early graduate groups and on time graduates or dropouts. There are several cases of the

control variables *peers* and *race* being linked to a decrease of an early graduate exiter group coefficient's explanatory power; however, there is not a noticeable pattern across exiter groups nor across specific academic or social engagement variables. This indicates that there is not a "magic bullet" mitigating control variable (such as *income*, *race* or *private*) that consistently erases significantly positive or negative academic and social engagement gaps between early graduates and on time graduates or dropouts.

This chapter has shown that there are many significant differences in the academic and social engagement levels between early graduates and on timers as well as between early graduates and dropouts. This chapter has also established that there are many academic and social engagement differences between the different early graduate groups. Now that we have established that academic and social engagement differences exist across the early graduate groups, we can determine if and how different levels of academic and social engagement can help to explain why some students choose to seek an early graduation pathway, which is the focus of Chapter 6.

6 DETERMINING IF LEVELS OF ACADEMIC AND SOCIAL ENGAGEMENT EXPLAIN WHY SOME STUDENTS SEEK EARLY GRADUATION

We saw in the prior chapter that there are differences in school engagement levels across the exiter groups. This chapter will provide insight into whether or not these academic and social engagement differences really matter in terms of explaining why some students seek an early high school graduation pathway in general as well their particular type of early graduate pathway (e.g., easy way out, earnest achiever, etc.).

The ELS data enable us to conduct a series of group comparisons (e.g., between early escapees and mediocre passives) to determine if the specific high school exiting pathways that a student pursues can be explained by meaningful differences in levels of academic or social engagement between students in those different groups. This in turn allows us to paint a clearer picture of which school engagement differences really matter in terms of predicting the particular high school exiting pathway a student will pursue. For example, we can determine if significantly higher levels of academic engagement proxies like *attendance*, *punctuality*, *grades* and standardized *test* scores really help us to predict whether or not a student would be more likely to be an early graduate at all rather than an on timer or dropout. Additionally, we can assess if these same academic engagement proxies will help us predict whether or not an early graduate exits high school as an earnest achiever rather than as an early escapee or other early graduate group. To further isolate the predictive strength of our different academic and social engagement measures in explaining different student exiter pathways, this chapter will also consider the degree to which theoretically relevant control variables (e.g., gender, race, parenting arrangement) also matter in terms of explaining school exiting pathways.

There are five sections within this chapter. The first section is a brief review of the measures and analytic strategy relating to this phase of my study. Because these topics were covered in detail in Chapter 3's discussion of data, methods and analytic strategy, I will briefly review them at a topline level in this section as a refresher. The second section explains my hypotheses regarding the influence of academic and social engagement on different school exiting pathways, the theory based rationale for each hypothesis. The third section focuses on the analytic findings relating to these hypotheses. The fourth section will address other interesting findings that are outside of the scope of my hypotheses. The fifth and final section will be a summary of my findings relating to the influences of academic and social engagement influences on high school exiting trajectories.

6.1 Review of Measures and Analytic Strategy Concerning the Influence of Academic and Social Engagement on High School Exiting Pathways

The main goal of this chapter is to determine if academic and social engagement influences help to explain why some students seek early graduation from high school. If significant engagement influences are identified, a related and important secondary goal will be to determine if their influences remain significant after controlling for other important explanatory variables that are theorized to influence early graduation pathways. To achieve these outcomes, I have created a series of nested multinomial logistical regression models. These models treat the different types of school exiters (i.e., on time, easy way outs, early escapees, earnest achievers, underachieving passives, and mediocre passives) as dependent variables in different iterations of the models while controlling for the effects of other theoretical influences of early graduation. Dropouts are intentionally excluded from this particular analysis because my focus is on comparisons between different types of early graduates and on time graduates (i.e., the normative group from which the early graduates are deviating).

The flow of this nested modeling approach starts with an assessment of a student's demographic background (*sex* and *race*) in model 1 (see Table 6.1). These are the same measures that were introduced in Chapter 4's discussion of demographic comparisons across early graduate groups. *Sex* has been coded such that female is the observed gender category and male is the omitted category. *Race* has been coded such that Native American, Asian, black, Hispanic and multi-racial students are the observed categories and white students are the omitted category.

Once a variable has been included in a model, it will remain included throughout the remaining regression iterations (with the sole exception of model 6, in which academic engagement variables are withheld to enable a focus on social engagement results). Model 2 will therefore also include a student's *sex* and *race* and add measures of the student's family characteristics. These family characteristics include the presence of two parents in the household (*two parents*), the number of siblings a student has (*siblings*), a composite variable proxy for a student's household income, parents' occupational prestige and the degree to which parents value education (*income*) and the family's levels of cultural (*computer, books*) and social (*PTA*) capital. The proxy *two parents* has been coded such that the presence of both a mom and a dad at home is the observed category and any other arrangement (e.g., one parent only, mom and another adult who is not the student's father, etc.) is the omitted category. *Siblings* measures the number of brothers or sisters that the student lives with. *Income* is an ELS composite measure that serves as a proxy for household socioeconomic status and parental valuation of education. *Computer* is a composite variable comprised of the component variables *family has a computer* and *family has access to the internet*. *Books* is a variable that indicates whether or not the family has 50 or more books in the household. These cultural capital proxies reflect theorized family encouragement of learning and access to learning resources and are coded as yes or no responses. *PTA* is a social

Table 6.1 Summary of Nested Logistical Regression Model Variables

	Observed Category (if applicable)	Omitted Category (if applicable)	Present in Model Iteration						
			1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Student Characteristics			X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Sex	Female	Male	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Race	Native American, Asian, black, Hispanic, multi-race	white	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Family Characteristics				X	X	X	X	X	X
Two Parents	Mom and dad both present	Mom and dad not both present		X	X	X	X	X	X
Siblings				X	X	X	X	X	X
Income				X	X	X	X	X	X
Computer	Yes	No		X	X	X	X	X	X
Books	Yes	No		X	X	X	X	X	X
PTA	Yes	No		X	X	X	X	X	X
School Type					X	X	X	X	X
Private	Private	Public			X	X	X	X	X
Neighborhood	Urban, suburban	Rural			X	X	X	X	X
Peer Influences						X	X	X	X
Friends						X	X	X	X
Academic Engagement							X		X
Importance							X		X
Homework							X		X
Grades							X		X
Tests							X		X
Social Engagement								X	X
Attendance								X	X
Punctual								X	X
School spirit								X	X
Friendly								X	X
Racial Harmony								X	X
Activities								X	X

capital measure that indicates if a parent has supported their child's educational engagement by attending at least one parent-teacher association meeting during the current school year. This variable is also coded as a yes or no response for each student.

Model 3 introduces the student's school characteristics. *Private* is a school type classification that recognizes if a student attends a public or a private school, with private schools being the observed school type category and public schools being the omitted category. Whether a school is in an urban, suburban or rural neighborhood is controlled for by the observed variables *urban* and *suburban* (*rural* is the omitted neighborhood category).

The fourth model introduces peer effects. *Peers* is a composite variable that measures the importance of education among the student's closest friends. The *peers* variable reflects a student's self-reporting of the importance to their friends to *attend school, study, get good grades, finish high school, and continue their education.*

The first four models are sequenced to introduce theoretically important control variables in an intuitive order; e.g., a student enters school with established demographics and family influences, the school that is entered into is public or private, and other students (friends) who also attend that same school can exert positive or negative influences on a student's likelihood of remaining on time in school. The remaining two models introduce the engagement variables. The fifth model introduces the same academic engagement variables from Chapter 6, which include *importance* (importance of getting a good education), *homework* (how often goes to class with their homework completed), *grades* (grade point average), and *tests* (standardized test scores).

The sixth model introduces the same social engagement variables from Chapter 6. These variables include measures of a student's school attendance (*attendance*), being on time and not skipping classes (*punctual*), participation in extracurricular activities (*activities*) and the degree to which a student perceives their school as having a lot of spirit (*school spirit*), a sense of friendliness (*friendly*) and good race relations (*racial harmony*) within their school. While the prior models each retain the variables that were introduced in the preceding iterations, I want to

exclude model 5's academic engagement variables from model 6 so that I can assess the influence of the control variables introduced in models 1 through 4 on social engagement. Just as model 5 includes control variables and academic engagement variables without social engagement influencers, model 6 includes control variables and social engagement variables without academic engagement influencers. Model 7 will include all of the prior control variables as well as the academic variables from model 5 and the social engagement variables from model 6. These seven nested models will be run for each of the six school exiter types included in this analysis. Table 6.2 shows a breakdown of each dependent variable (high school exiter type) and the corresponding omitted school exiter groups for each iteration of my analysis. A total of 15 school exiter group comparisons are needed to complete this multinomial logistical regression analysis. These 15 exiter group comparisons are shown in Table 6.3. The sequence of the 15 tables listed in Table 6.3 does not, by design, reflect any particular prioritization of comparisons

Table 6.2 Overview of School Exiter Type Dependent Variables and Omitted Groups

Dependent Variable of Interest			Omitted School Exiter Groups						
Iteration	Dependent Variable	Dependent Variable Count	On timers	Easy Way Outs	Early Escapees	Earnest Achievers	Underachieving Passives	Mediocre Passives	Omitted Total
1	Easy Way Outs	135	12,873	--	99	67	108	79	13,226
2	Early Escapees	99	12,873	135	--	67	108	79	13,262
3	Earnest Achievers	67	12,873	135	99	--	108	79	13,294
4	Underachieving Passives	108	12,873	135	99	67	--	79	13,253
5	Mediocre Passives	79	12,873	135	99	67	108		13,282
6	On Time	12,873	--	135	99	67	108	79	488

between the early exiter types. Since each of the 15 rounds of group comparisons involves seven nested models, this process will generate output for 105 separate regression models. The output

for all of these models is shown in Appendix B. Because of the sheer size of output that emerges from this analysis, I will focus my reporting (in the third section of this chapter) on analysis results that are particularly relevant in addressing my hypotheses and ongoing expectations that are described in the second section of this chapter.

Table 6.3 Overview of the 15 Nested Multinomial Logistical Regression Comparison Tables in Appendix B that Support the Analysis of Whether Levels of Academic and Social Engagement Explain Why Some Students Seek Early Graduation.

		Group Being Compared To					
		Easy Way Outs	Early Escapees	Earnest Achievers	Under-achieving Passives	Mediocre Passives	On Timers
Reference Group	Easy Way Outs		1	2	3	4	5
	Early Escapees			6	7	8	9
	Earnest Achievers				10	11	12
	Under-achieving Passives					13	14
	Mediocre Passives						15
	On Timers						---

Sample Interpretation: The analytic comparisons between early escapees and the reference group of easy way outs can be found in Table 1 in Appendix B.

6.2 Hypotheses and Expectations Relating to Academic and Social Engagement Levels

Hypotheses 1: On time graduates have higher levels of (1a) academic engagement and (1b) social engagement compared to early graduates.

I expect on time graduates to have higher levels of academic engagement than all of the early graduate groups, even after accounting for the effects of control variables. My rationale is that on time graduates, unlike early graduates, have chosen to adhere to the traditional high school matriculation path. This suggests that on time students are able to maintain sufficient lev-

els of academic and social engagement with their school and its processes (Rumberger 1983; 2004; Rumberger and Larson 1998; Heck and Mahoe 2006).

Hypotheses 2: Easy way outs have lower levels of (2a) academic engagement and (2b) social engagement compared to the other early graduate groups and on time graduates.

My rationale for both parts of the second hypothesis is that easy way out students (who earned a GED instead of a traditional diploma) may have lacked the desire or ability to remain on the traditional high school matriculation path. In situations where the easy way out students were academically passing, their decision to leave high school early may stem from a lack of feeling connected with their schools, indicating low social engagement (Collins 1979; Rumberger 1983; Heckman, Hsee and Rubinstein 1999; Bowles and Gintis 2002; Civic Enterprise/Gates Foundation Studies 2004; Rumberger 2004).

Hypothesis 3: Early escapees will have lower levels of social engagement compared to the other exiter groups.

The rationale for this third hypothesis relates to the classification requirements for being an early escapee. First, a student has to graduate early with a diploma (rather than a GED). Second, that same student would have to report experiencing higher levels (i.e., more than one standard deviation) of disruptions compared to all students in general. Third, we know that early escapees can include a wide variance of academic achievers, ranging from students with low grades to those who have earned very high grades since classification as an early escapee precedes classification as an earnest achiever. Early escapees have a mean GPA of 2.37, which indicates an above average academic performance from a grades standpoint. This implies that their motivations for leaving school early are more likely linked to non-academic concerns relating to lower social engagement. Fourth, many of the early escapee students may be more interested (by choice or necessity) in outside of school concerns such as paid work, family support,

moving to a new location, or parenting (Rumberger 1983; Bickel & Papagiannis 1988; Bickel 1989; Bickel, Weaver, Clark 1992; Berkhold, Gies and Kaufman 1998; Giele and Elder 1998; Anisef, Axelrod, Baichman-Anisef and Turittin 2000; Warren 2000; Mortimer 2004; Rumberger 2004).

Hypothesis 4: Earnest achievers will have (4a) higher levels of academic engagement and (4b) lower levels of social engagement compared to all of the other exiter groups.

I expect earnest achievers to be the early graduation group with the highest levels of academic engagement because (1) they may be aggressively seeking to transition to post-high school education (e.g., college), and this reflects pro-learning attitudes and behaviors and (2) the act of aggressive matriculation likely requires students to be more involved in understanding the academic processes and procedures of their high school since the early graduation pathway is non-traditional compared to the norm of on time graduation. Yet, despite the expectation of strong academic performance, these students are choosing to leave high school early. This suggests that these students may not have sufficient social connectivity with their schools, either in an absolute sense (e.g., lack of participation in activities, lack of strong friendships) or in a relative sense (i.e., their social engagement levels are lower than the levels of the other exiter groups). (Rumberger 1995; Mehan 1997; Rumberger and Larson 1998; Swanson and Schneider 1999; Rumberger 2004; Heck and Mahoe 2006).

Hypothesis 5: Neither underachieving passives nor mediocre passives will have higher levels of (5a) academic engagement or (5b) social engagement compared to the other exiter groups.

My rationale for the fifth and final hypothesis stems from several considerations. First, both of the passive early graduation groups are receiving a diploma rather than a GED. Second, students in both groups report levels of disruptions that are similar (within one standard devia-

tion) of the total ELS sample. Third, by design, all of the students in either group have a GPA of less than 3.0. Cluster analysis results (in chapter 3) show that underachieving passives have a mean GPA of below 2.0 while mediocre passives are averaging a GPA of 2.3. We also saw that the mediocre passives are reporting more disruptions than underachieving passives, however both groups are within a normal range (i.e., within one standard deviation) in their disruption levels. There is no reason to expect either passive group to outshine any of the other exiter groups. Both easy way outs (GED status) and early escapees (diploma plus high level of reported disruptions) were sorted before any GPA thresholds were introduced into the sorting process, therefore both groups are eligible to have high achieving students. By definition, earnest achievers are earning high grades, which leaves us with no reason to expect either of the passive groups to be more academically engaged than these other groups.

6.3 Findings Relating to Academic and Social Engagement Levels

Hypothesis 1

The first hypothesis is that on time graduates have higher levels of academic engagement (part 1a) and higher levels of social engagement (part 1b) compared to early graduates. The analytic results that are relevant in addressing this academic engagement hypothesis are found in Appendix B, Tables B.5, B.9, B.12, B.14 and B.15. To simplify reporting, specific table rows correspond to the variable names (e.g., *tests*, *racial harmony*) that I will be referencing and specific columns will match models (e.g., model 7) within a given comparisons table (e.g., Table B.1). The final model in each table is model 7, which includes all academic and social engagement variables as well as all of the previously introduced control variables. The term “prior model” in this section refers to the next to last model for academic engagement (model 5) and social engagement (model 6). Coefficients are reported with levels of significance indicated by

* (95%), ** (99%), and *** (99.9%). Discussions of findings relating to hypothesis 1a (regarding academic engagement) and hypotheses 1b (relating to social engagement) will reference the same table and model within each of the comparisons between on timers and the five different early graduate groups. For this reason, I will discuss both academic and social engagement within each group comparison before moving onto the next group comparison.

To see how well my academic and social engagement expectations for on time graduates hold up, we will start with Table B.5's comparison of on timers with the reference group of easy way outs (who graduated early with a GED). As expected, on timers have significantly higher levels of *importance* (.54***) and *grades* (1.28***). Their significantly lower *tests* score compared to easy way outs (-.06***) is the sole significant academic engagement that is unexpected. This surprise finding may link to standardized test performance being less contingent on the day-to-day behaviors that support higher grades or to the possibility that easy way out students happen to be good test takers.

The social engagement differences between on timers and easy way outs is essentially as expected, with on timers having significantly higher levels of *attendance* (.16***), *punctual* (.25***), school friendliness (*friendly*) (.39***), and *activities* (.03***) compared to easy way outs. *Racial harmony* is the one significant social engagement variable that has a negative relationship (-.20***), indicating that on timers report less racial harmony in their school than easy way outs. This is unexpected since an intuitive reason for easy way outs to leave school early without a diploma might be that they are experiencing more reported racial tension than on time graduates. There is no clear reason for this particular finding. Perhaps there are differences in how easy way outs subjectively think about 'what is normal' in terms of levels of racial harmony within their school compared to on timers in their school context. It may be that easy way out

students are experiencing school settings with different levels or forms of racial mixes compared to on timers. Another possibility is that the manifestations and context of racial disharmony that would push a student to leave school early are not being encapsulated effectively in the ELS survey's *racial harmony* measure.

Table B.9 shows that the comparisons between on timers and early escapees (who have higher than average levels of reported stressors) are consistent with the expectations that on timers have higher *grades* (.37***) and *tests* (.01*), even after all the control variables and engagement effects are considered (see model 7). Also consistent with expectations is the significantly higher social engagement scores for *attendance* (.12*), *spirit* (.27***), and *racial harmony* (.25***) among on timers compared to early escapees.

The school engagement differences (Table B.12, model 7) between on timers and earnest achievers (who have relatively normal levels of reported stressors and a GPA of 3.0 or higher) shows that on timers have significantly higher levels of *importance* (.67***) and *tests* (.03***), yet have significantly lower *grades* (-2.79**) compared to earnest achievers. As discussed in chapters 4 and 6, any comparison of *grades* between earnest achievers and other exiter groups needs to be tempered with a reminder that grade point average (along with attainment of a diploma rather than a GED and the level of reported disruptions) was used as early graduate group sorting criteria. In this case, the criteria that would classify an early graduate with a diploma as being an earnest achiever required that the students has reported relatively low levels of disruptions and also carried a GPA of at least 3.0. Because on timers are comprised of all students (regardless of GPA) who graduated on time, it is not unexpected to see that earnest achievers have a relatively higher GPA than on timers. Socially, on timers are more *punctual* (.24**), report higher levels of friendliness at school (*friendly*, .43***) and participation in *activities* (.06***)

than earnest achievers. This suggests that, compared to earnest achievers, on timers are more aligned with school processes and participation opportunities while also experiencing friendlier school settings, all of which can help on timers to remain on a traditional matriculation pathway.

Most of the significant engagement differences (Table B.14, model 7) between on timers and underachieving passives (who are earning a diploma, report relatively low stress levels and have a GPA below 2.0) are in line with expectations. These differences include higher levels for on timers across *grades* (.96***), *punctual* (.17***), *friendly* (.12*, down from .16*** in the prior model) and *activities* (.05***). One unexpected finding in this comparison is the significantly lower level of *racial harmony* (-.19***) among on timers compared to underachieving passives. As discussed in the easy way out comparison, there is no clear rationale for this *racial harmony* finding. It may be the case that underachieving passives have different subjective baselines for what is normal regarding racial harmony. The student composition mix and school setting contexts might also be quite different for underachieving passives compared to on timers. It could also be the case that *racial harmony* does not really factor too heavily compared to other considerations in terms of whether or not a student adheres to traditional pathways. Another possibility is that in order for racial harmony level differences to truly influence a student's high school exiting trajectory, such differences may have to cross a threshold level of magnitude to really make a difference.

Differences in academic engagement between on timers and the other passive group, mediocre passives (who have a GPA just above 2.0 and report more disruptions than underachieving passives) are shown in Table B.15, model 7. Two of the three significant academic engagement differences, *importance* (.12***) and *grades* (.92***), are positive as expected, indicating that on timers place more importance on education and earn better grades than mediocre pas-

sives. An unexpected academic engagement finding is that on timers have a significantly lower level of *homework* completion (-0.05*) compared to mediocre passives. This outcome is unexpected; however it might be the case that mediocre passives are more likely than on timers to show up for class prepared, despite seeking an early exit. It is also very likely that the on time group contains a wide mix of student types, including lesser performing or less disciplined students. The social engagement differences are not surprising, with on timers having higher levels of *punctual* (.21***), *spirit* (.09)***, *friendly* (.16***), and *activities* (.02***) compared to mediocre passives.

Now that we have reviewed five rounds of academic and social engagement comparisons between on timers and the early graduate groups, we can determine if the findings support both parts of hypothesis one. To help us to boil down the complexity of the many group comparison results, we can look at Table 6.4. This table shows *only* those cases (along with coefficient signs) where there are statistically significant differences between on timers and each respective early graduate group. Blank cells in Table 6.4 indicate a lack of statistical significance (at the 95% or higher level) between the compared groups for a particular measure.

Hypothesis 1a is that on time graduates have higher levels of academic engagement compared to early graduates. Table 6.4 shows us that there are 20 potential academic engagement comparisons between on timers and the different early graduate groups (i.e., four measures times five group comparisons). 13 of the 20 comparisons (65%) result in statistically significant differences, and 10 of these 13 comparisons are directionally consistent with hypothesis 1a since they show higher academic engagement levels for on timers. While 50% (10 out of 20 possible cases) of these findings offer clear support for hypothesis 1a, we need to also consider some additional results from Table 6.4 that are not as supportive of the on timer academic engagement

hypothesis. First, there is not a single case among the five sets of column comparisons between on timers and early graduate groups in which *all* of the academic engagement proxy variables are statistically significant, which indicates that on timers are not completely more academically engaged than any of the early graduate groups. Second, with the exception of the caveated *grades* comparisons, there are no row comparison cases where on timers outperform all or even

Table 6.4 Summary of Statistically Significant Comparisons Between On Time Graduates and Early Graduation Groups Across Academic and Social Engagement Measures

	Easy Way Outs	Early Escapes	Earnest Achievers	Underachieving Passives	Mediocre Passives
Academic Engagement					
Importance	.54*** (.08)		.67*** (.15)		.12*** (.04)
Homework					-.05* (.02)
Grades	1.28*** (.06)	.37*** (.08)	-2.79*** (.13)	.96*** (.06)	.92*** (.03)
Tests	-.06*** (.01)	.01* (.01)	.03*** (.01)		.01* (.01)
Social Engagement					
Attendance	.16*** (.05)	.12* (.05)			
Punctual	.25*** (.05)		.24*** (.09)	.17*** (.09)	.21*** (.02)
School Spirit		.27*** (.06)			.09*** (.02)
Friendly	.39*** (.05)		.43*** (.08)	.12* (.05)	.16*** (.03)
Racial Harmony	-.20*** (.06)	.25*** (.06)		-.19*** (.06)	
Activities	.03*** (.01)		.06*** (.01)	.05*** (.01)	.02*** (.01)
*Example interpretations: On timers have a statistically significant higher level of the academic engagement variable <i>importance</i> (.54***) compared to easy way outs.					

four of the five early graduate groups on a specific academic engagement measure. Third, there are a few unexpected and directionally inconsistent signs associated with a few significant coef-

ficients (i.e., on timers having lower *tests* scores than easy way outs and lower *homework* completion levels than mediocre passives). Fourth, half (10 of the 20 cases) show on timers having similar or lower levels of academic engagement relative to the other groups. Overall, the academic comparison stories emerging from Table 6.4 offer directional support for on timers having higher levels of academic engagement than the early graduate groups. This directional support gets stronger if we keep in mind that in the 13 cases that resulted in significant differences in academic engagement levels, the vast majority (77%) indicate that on timers are more academic engagement than early graduates.

Hypothesis 1b is that on time graduates will have higher levels of social engagement compared to early graduates. The bottom half of Table 6.4 shows us that there are 30 social engagement level comparisons stemming from our six proxies across five early graduate groups. We can also see that 19 of these 30 comparisons result in a finding of statistically significant social engagement differences between on timers and early graduates. The vast majority (17 out of 19) of these significant differences are positive and therefore in line with hypothesis 1b since they show on timers having higher social engagement levels. On the other hand, we also see that there are no cases of on timers having completely higher levels for all six social engagement proxies relative to any of the other groups. There is also not a single case of on timers having higher social engagement levels for any specific proxy within a row across the early graduate groups (as was also the case in the academic engagement findings). On timers tend to have higher social engagement than early graduates if we only consider the proxies of *punctual*, *friendly* and participation in *activities*. The story changes, however, if we focus on levels of *attendance*, *school spirit* and *racial harmony*, for which on timers tend to not be significantly higher than the early graduate groups. Overall, there is directional support for hypotheses 1b

since on timers tend to outpace early graduates in about half (57%) of the social engagement comparisons. As was the case with the academic engagement findings, the social engagement results offer stronger support for this hypothesis if we consider that of the 18 cases of statistically significant difference between on timers and early graduates, 89% (16 of 18) of these cases show on timers having significantly higher levels of social engagement.

Hypothesis 2

The second hypothesis is that easy way outs will have (1) lower levels of academic engagement and (2) lower levels of social engagement compared to the other early graduate groups and on time graduates. The analytic findings relevant for this discussion are in Tables B.1 through B.5. Because these particular analytic tables show comparison results using easy way outs as the reference group, the coefficient signs need to be reversed when discussing how easy way outs compare to each respective comparison group. To simplify matters, I have created Table 6.5, which shows the comparison results for model 7 from Tables B.1 – B.5, with the coefficient signs reversed so that we can more easily speak about how easy way outs differ from each of the other comparison groups. To make things even more clear, I have eliminated all statistically non-significant coefficients from Table 6.5 so that we can better focus on the easy way outs' academic and social engagement stories.

Easy way outs, not unexpectedly, place lower value on the *importance* of education compared to on timers and all of the other early graduate groups except earnest achievers (for whom no difference was found). A significantly lower valuation of the importance of education among the easy way outs makes sense since they are leaving school early and are earning a GED credential rather than a traditional diploma. The lack of a significant difference between easy way outs and earnest achievers is unexpected. Perhaps easy ways outs and earnest achievers report

similar levels regarding the importance of education, however their respective interpretations of what the ‘importance of education’ really means may be quite different. For example, easy way outs may think about the importance of education as being more contingent on the learning that occurs outside of high school, such as in a vocational or work training program. It may also be the case that earnest achievers, despite having relatively high grade point averages (of at least 3.0), are not necessarily as “pro learning” as I had earlier theorized.

Table 6.5 Summary of Statistically Significant Comparisons Between Easy Way Outs and the Other Graduation Groups Across Academic and Social Engagement Measures.

	Early Escapees	Earnest Achievers	Under achieving Passives	Mediocre Passives	On timers
Academic Engagement					
Importance	-.68*** (.13)		-.50***	-.42***	-.54***
Homework					
Grades	-.91** (.10)	-4.07***	-.31***	-.36***	-1.28***
Tests	.07** (.01)	.09***	.06***	.06***	.06***
Social Engagement					
Attendance	-.03*** (.07)		-.17**	-.14**	-.16***
Punctuality	-.19* (.08)				-.25***
School Spirit	.21* (.07)				
Friendly	.38* (.08)		-.27***	-.23***	-.39***
Racial Harmony	-.45** (.09)	.31**		.21***	.20***
Activities					.03***
*Example interpretations: Easy way out exiters have a statistically significant lower level of the academic engagement variable <i>importance</i> (-.68***) compared to early escapees.					

It is not surprising that easy way outs have significantly lower *grades* than all of the other exiter groups since students who earn higher grades are likely more conforming to traditional

school processes and policies. Such behaviors are not expected from easy way outs since they are likely to be the least conforming high school exiter group because they are seeking both an early graduation and receiving the less traditional and less school process oriented GED certification.

While the easy way outs' academic engagement comparison findings for *importance* and *grades* follow expectations, the other two academic engagement measure findings are unexpected. We see that there are no significant *homework* completion differences between easy way outs and any of the other early graduate groups or on timers. This suggests that easy way outs are no more or any less likely than the other exiter groups to show up prepared for class. It may be the case that, compared to the other exiter groups, easy way outs are taking different levels of courses (e.g., basic versus advanced placement) that involve different homework completion expectations or less overall difficulty inherent in the homework assignments. The lack of a significant homework completion difference might also be accounted for by the fact that the ELS survey addresses homework completion by asking each student to self-report how often they go to class without their homework done. It may be the case that easy way outs inflate their self-reporting of homework completion. It may also be the case that some or all of the exiter groups inflate their frequency of homework completion such that no differences between the groups result.

It is very interesting and unexpected that easy way outs would have significantly higher *test* scores than all of the other exiter groups with the exception of early escapees (where no difference was found). This suggests that easy way outs and early escapees are able to perform well on academic measures that do not require as much adherence or consistent adherence to school processes and norms.

When we look at the social engagement comparisons, we see that *attendance* is the only measure for which easy way outs consistently have significantly lower levels than the other exit-er groups with the exception of earnest achievers (where there was no difference). It is not unforeseeable that easy way outs would have significantly lower *attendance* than most of the other exit-er groups since we have reason to expect them to be less compliant than the other exit-er groups in adhering to school policies and norms. These policies and norms would include high levels of ‘seat time’ and participation in the classroom, both of which are expected to be lower for easy way outs. It is unexpected that they are not significantly lower than earnest achievers in their level of *attendance*. There is not a clear reason for this finding. It is possible that a student can earn high grades even if that student has lower levels of attendance. It could also be that easy way outs may have lower attendance levels in a relative sense, however, these levels may not have been so low in an absolute sense as to actually impair an earnest achiever’s GPA performance. Another explanation is that earnest achievers would likely have earned even higher grade point averages had they attended class more frequently.

There is also a social engagement pattern of easy way outs generally reporting a significantly lower level of school being a *friendly* place while they are also reporting higher levels of *racial harmony*. It may be that easy way outs are experiencing a greater sense of loneliness, isolation or alienation, which could lead to their lower self-reported ratings of *friendliness*.

Easy way outs report greater levels of *racial harmony* compared to earnest achievers (.31**), mediocre passives (.21***) and on timers (.20***). It could be that easy way outs are more likely to attend schools with different student and faculty racial compositions. Another possibility is that easy way outs may themselves be more positive in their perceptions of *racial harmony* due to their having different values, expectations, community settings, school resources

or familiarity and comfort levels with people (including students) of different races. Another possibility is that students may think of a school's racial composition as being more of a structural aspect and therefore beyond their control or influence.

The academic engagement hypothesis (hypothesis 2a) under consideration is that easy way outs will have lower levels of academic engagement compared to the other early graduate groups and on time graduates. For hypothesis 2a to be supported, we would need to find a pattern of statistically significant and negative coefficients for the comparisons between easy way outs and the different exiter groups reported in Table 6.5. We can see from the top part of the Table 6.5 that there are 20 academic engagement related comparisons between easy way outs and the other exiter groups. Of these 20 comparisons, there are nine cases in support of hypothesis 2a since their results show significantly lower academic engagement measure levels for easy way outs compared to the other groups. In six of the 20 cases, there is no difference between easy way outs and the other exiter groups. In the remaining five cases, all of which relate to *test* scores, we find significantly higher academic engagement differences in favor of the easy way outs. Overall, these findings do not support hypothesis 2a that easy way outs are less academically engaged than the other exiter groups.

To see if there is a social engagement story that supports hypothesis 2b (that easy way outs will have lower levels of social engagement compared to the other early graduate groups and on time graduates) we should look at the bottom portion of Table 6.5. We see that there are 30 social engagement related comparisons (derived from six measures across five comparison groups). Of these 30 comparisons, only 10 (33%) support the hypothesis that easy way outs have lower social engagement compared to the other exiter groups. Most of these supporting cases relate to easy way outs having significantly lower levels of *attendance* and perceived levels of

school *friendliness*. In almost half the cases (14 of the 30 comparisons) we see that there are no significant differences between easy way outs and the other exiter groups. The absence of any significant differences is most apparent for the measures *punctuality*, *school spirit* and participation in *activities*. The remaining six cases actually show that easy way outs have significantly higher levels of social engagement than the other groups, and three of these six cases relate to the measure *racial harmony*. Since only a third of the comparisons show lower levels of social engagement for the easy way outs, these findings do not support hypothesis 2b that easy way outs are less socially engaged academically than the other early graduate groups.

Hypothesis 3

The third hypothesis is that early escapes will have lower levels of social engagement compared to the other exiter groups. Table 6.6 shows the comparison results for model 7 from Tables B.1 and B.6 – B.5. I have reversed the coefficient signs for the results from Tables B.6-B.9 because early escapees were the reference group in the comparisons relating to those tables. I have also eliminated all statistically non-significant coefficients from Table 6.6 to help simplify things.

When it comes to *attendance*, early escapees are significantly lower than underachieving passives (-.14*) and on timers (-.12*) but they are not different from earnest achievers and mediocre passives and are actually higher than easy way outs (.03***). Compared to other exiter groups, early escapees are experiencing more disruptions and may have more non-school based factors (like paid work or family care) pulling them out of school more frequently. I would therefore expect early escapees to have lower *attendance* than the other early graduate groups, with the possible exception of easy way outs. The higher level of early escapee *attendance* relative to easy way outs might be linked to easy way outs being more absent because they may be

experiencing greater alienation or disinterest in school processes and norms, which could influence an easy way out student to seek the less ‘seat time’ required GED pathway.

Table 6.6 Summary of Statistically Significant Comparisons Between Early Escapees and the Other Graduation Groups Across Academic and Social Engagement Measures

	Easy Way Outs	Earnest Achievers	Under achieving Passives	Mediocre Passives	On Timers
Social Engagement					
Attendance	.03*** (.07)		-.14* (.70)		-.12* (.05)
Punctuality	.19* (.08)			.15* (.06)	
School Spirit	-.21* (.07)	-.18* (.09)	-.21** (.07)	-.18** (.06)	-.27*** (.06)
Friendly	.38* (.08)	.18*** (.09)		.15* (.07)	
Racial Harmony	-.45** (.09)		-.43** (.09)	-.24** (.07)	-.25*** (.06)
Activities		.04** (.01)	.03* (.01)		

*Example interpretations: Early escapees have a statistically significantly higher level of the social engagement measure *attendance* (.03***) compared to easy way outs.

Early escapees have a level of *punctuality* that is not different from earnest achievers, underachieving passives and on timers and actually have a higher *punctuality* level than easy way outs (.19*) and mediocre passives (.15*). Among all of the social engagement measures, the early escapee comparisons for *school spirit* are the most supportive of hypothesis 3 since they show that early escapees have significantly lower levels of *school spirit* compared to all of the other exiter groups. This makes sense when we consider that early escapees may have a harder time feeling positive about their school environment since they are experiencing more stressors. This explanation, however, is challenged when we consider the early escapee comparison findings for *friendly and racial harmony*. It turns out that early escapees have similar or even higher levels of reporting school as a place to meet friends (*friendly*) as the other exiter groups. Early escapees

are similar to underachieving passives and on timers in terms of their *friendly* ratings, and have higher *friendly* ratings compared to easy way outs (.38*), earnest achievers (.18****) and mediocre passives (.15*). The higher early escapee ratings for *friendly* make sense when compared to easy way outs, who may be more alienated and less socially engaged with peers and faculty.

There is no clear reason why early escapees would report higher levels of school being *friendly* compared to earnest achievers or underachieving passives. While earnest achievers have relatively normal levels of reported stressors and high grade point averages, they may be attending schools settings that do not particularly support perceived *friendliness*. It may also be the case that earnest achievers are seen as ‘different’ (e.g., nerds, geeks) by other students and therefore have less connectivity with other students. A possible explanation for the underachieving passives findings is that these students may be experiencing less engaging school settings with fewer positive peer interactions compared to early escapees.

We can also see in Table 6.6 that early escapees report lower levels of *racial harmony* compared to easy way outs (-.45**), underachieving passives (-.43**), mediocre passives (-.24**) and on timers (-.25**). It is possible that early escapees attend school settings that have less *racial harmony*, and this potential racial discord may be a reason that early escapees report more than normal levels of stressors than the other groups. These significantly lower levels of *racial harmony* among the early escapees mirror the lower early escapee levels of *school spirit*. To reconcile positive early escapee comparison results for *friendly* with the negative results for *school spirit* or *racial harmony*, we need to consider the possibility that a student could form a series of voluntary friendships within their school, even if that same student perceives a low level of *school spirit* or limited *racial harmony* within their school.

Early escapees do not have lower levels of participation in *activities* compared to any of the other exiter groups. They have similar levels of *activity* participation as easy way outs, mediocre passives and on timers, and have significantly higher *activities* participation relative to earnest achievers (.04**) and underachieving passives (.03*). This suggests that early escapees may have more discretionary time than initially theorized; i.e., even if they are working for pay, taking care of family, or other out of school undertakings, there is still time to participate in the school activities they are interested in. Another explanation might be that while an early escapee is experiencing higher levels of school stressors than other groups, they do have agency in terms of participating in extracurricular activities that they are interested in and likely have peer connections with students they like who also share similar interests.

To determine if early escapees actually have lower levels of social engagement compared to the other exiter groups, we need to consider the overall story emerging from the 30 early escapee comparisons in Table 6.6. Those findings show that 11 of those 30 cases (37%) support hypothesis 3 since they show that early escapees have significantly lower social engagement measurement levels across the groups. These 11 cases include five *school spirit* comparisons that result in negative coefficients, indicating lower *school spirit* for the early escapees. Since early escapees are experiencing higher levels of disruptions and may also need or want to focus on outside of school activities (such as paid work or family care), it makes sense that they would have relatively less *school spirit* than the other exiter groups. Overall, these findings do not support the third hypothesis since two thirds of the comparison findings show that early escapees do not have significantly lower levels of social engagement than the other early graduate groups.

Hypothesis 4

The fourth hypothesis is that earnest achievers will have (4a) higher levels of academic engagement and (4b) lower levels of social engagement compared to all of the other exiter groups. Table 6.7 shows the comparison results for model 7 from Tables B.2, B.6, and B.10-B.12. I reversed the coefficient signs for the results from Table B.6 and B.10-B.12 because earnest achievers were the reference group in the comparisons relating to those tables. All statistically non-significant coefficients have been removed from this table to help simplify reporting.

Table 6.7 Summary of Statistically Significant Comparisons between Earnest Achievers and the Other Graduation Groups Across Academic and Social Engagement Measures

	Easy Way Outs	Early Escapees	Under achieving Passives	Mediocre Passives	On timers
Academic Engagement					
Importance		-.82*** (.18)	-.63*** (.17)	-.56*** (.25)	-.67*** (.15)
Homework					
Grades	4.07*** (.14)	3.16*** (.15)	3.75*** (.15)	3.71*** (.14)	2.79*** (.13)
Tests	-.09*** (.01)	-.02* (.01)	-.03*** (.01)	-.03*** (.01)	-.03*** (.01)
Social Engagement					
Attendance					
Punctuality					-.24** (.09)
School Spirit		.18* (.09)			
Friendly		.18*** (.09)	-.31*** (.09)	-.27*** (.08)	-.43*** (.08)
Racial Harmony	-.31** (.10)		-.30** (.10)		
Activities		-.04** (.01)			-.06*** (.01)
*Example interpretations: Earnest achievers have a statistically significantly higher grade point average (<i>grades</i> , 4.07***) compared to easy way outs.					

We can see from the top part of Table 6.7 that when it comes to academic engagement measures, earnest achievers actually place significantly less *importance* on education compared to all of the other exiter groups except easy way outs. This was not expected and suggests that earnest achievers are not ‘earnest’ in terms of pro-learning attitudes, yet they still are able to have a 3.0 or higher GPA. It is possible that their relatively weaker attitude towards the *importance* of education has actually hindered them from earning even higher grades. As was the case in the hypothesis 1 discussion of easy way outs, it may be the case that earnest achievers do not necessarily place high value on the importance of education in the context of their high school experience, yet they may envision that education based in college learning, technical training or on-the-job experience is valuable. It may also be that these earnest achiever students have different forms of family support (including economic assistance) that they assume they can fall back on should they ever need it. It could also be that the lower importance that earnest achievers place on education could be linked to negative social engagement influencers that are affecting their opinion.

The *homework* measure findings indicate that earnest achievers are no more or no less likely than the other groups to come to class with their assignments completed. I would intuitively expect earnest achievers to have higher levels of homework completion since such behavior would support higher grades. It could be that earnest achievers are attending schools where grades may be less contingent on homework completion in favor of greater weighting on aspects like class participation, tests, or major projects. It could also be the case that high school students in general are similar, regardless of their exiter group, in terms of their likelihood of ‘doing what they are supposed to do’ (including their homework).

When it comes to *grades*, we know that earnest achievers have a GPA of at least 3.0, however, two other early graduate groups (easy way outs and early escapees) could also contain students with a GPA of 3.0. Since the first sorting criterion for early graduates into the different groups was the earning of a GED instead of a diploma, it would be possible for the easy way outs group to contain students with high grades. The second sorting criteria was whether or not a student reported a high level of disruptions, and students reporting higher counts of disruptions are placed into the early escapee group, regardless of their GPA. Since the underachieving passives and mediocre passives groups include early graduates who earned a diploma, did not have more than average counts of disruptions and earned a GPA of less than 3.0, we know going in that these two groups would have GPA levels below those of earnest achievers.

The *grades* comparisons show a consistent pattern of earnest achievers earning higher grades than all of the other exiter groups. The difference is greatest in the comparison of earnest achievers with easy way outs (4.07***), which makes sense since I expected easy way outs to be less concerned about grades since they are pursuing a GED certificate instead of a diploma. The higher *grades* among earnest achievers compared to early escapees makes sense since I would expect early escapees to have a harder time focusing, studying or performing in the classroom amid higher levels of disruption. Additionally, the early escapees may be less concerned about grades since they may be already thinking that they will be pursuing paid work, family care or other post high school transitions other than college after graduation. The higher *grades* for earnest achievers compared to underachieving passives and mediocre passives are expected given the sorting criteria for all three groups. While earnest achievers do have higher grades than on timers (2.79***), it is the lowest coefficient across all of the group comparisons. This makes sense since on time students are more aligned with traditional school pathways and processes

relative to any of the early graduate groups, and unlike the earnest achievers, the on time group includes a mix of high, average and low achieving students.

Unlike the *grades* comparison, *test* scores are not part of any of the group sorting criteria. It turns out that earnest achievers have lower standardized *test* scores relative to all of the other exiter groups. Compared to *grades*, standardized *test* scores are less contingent on school processes, norms and subjective teacher assessments of a student's performance, so it is possible that *grades* and *tests* are reflective of very different manifestations of academic capability or performance. This raises the possibility that future studies might consider re-conceptualizing s earnest achievers by using a mix of grade point average and standardized test scores in the sorting criteria.

While 14 of the 20 academic engagement comparisons in table 6.7 result in significant differences between earnest achievers and the other groups, only five of these cases show earnest achievers having significantly higher levels. Furthermore, each of those five cases relate to differences in *grades*. When we control for the fact that both passive groups, by definition, have lower grades than earnest achievers, we are only left with such three cases (out of a possible 18 cases). These findings do not support the first part of hypothesis 4 that earnest achievers have higher overall levels of academic engagement.

The second part of hypothesis four is that earnest achievers will have lower levels of social engagement than the other exiter groups. We can see in table 6.7 that there is not a case where earnest achievers have lower social engagement than the other groups for at least four (i.e., a majority) of the six measures. There are no significant *attendance* differences between earnest achievers and the other groups. The sole significant *punctual* difference is that earnest achievers are lower than on timers (-.24**). We do see that earnest achievers have a lower

friendly rating than underachieving passives (-.31***), mediocre passives (-.27***) and on timers (-.43***) while they exceed early escapees (.18***) for this measure. Earnest achievers are lagging easy way outs (-.31***) and underachieving passives (-.30***) in their ratings of *racial harmony*. Earnest achievers are also less involved in *activities* than early escapees (-.04**) and on timers (-.06). Overall, only 27% (8 cases out of a possible 30) offer support for a hypothesis that earnest achievers have less social engagement than the other exiter groups, therefore this part of hypothesis 4 is also rejected.

Of the 30 potential group comparisons in Table 6.7, only 10 are significantly different. Eight of those 10 cases show earnest achievers having significantly lower levels of social engagement. Since 73% (22 out of 30) of the comparisons result in earnest achievers being the same or even higher than the other exiter groups in terms of social engagement, I find that the second portion of hypothesis 4 is not supported. This leads me to reject hypothesis 4 as a whole.

Hypothesis 5

The fifth hypothesis is that (5a) neither underachieving passives nor mediocre passives will have higher academic engagement or (5b) higher social engagement than the other exiter groups. Table 6.8 shows the underachiever passives comparison results for model 7 in Tables B.3, B.7, B.10, and B.13-B.14. I reversed the coefficient signs for the results from Tables B.13 and B.14 since underachieving passives were the reference group in the comparisons relating to those Tables. Similarly, Table 6.9 shows the mediocre passives comparison results for models B.4, B.8, B.11, B.13 and B.15 (I reversed the coefficient signs for Table B.15 because mediocre passives were the reference group in that table). All statistically non-significant coefficients have been removed from tables 6.8 and 6.9.

This discussion of the fifth hypothesis is the most challenging because it involves an assessment of four distinct components; two types of passive groups (underachieving and mediocre) and two forms of engagement findings (academic and social). We can start with the academic engagement findings for underachieving passives, followed by their social engagement findings and then do the same for mediocre passives. We see in table 6.8 that underachieving passives have similar levels of *importance* of education as three of the five other exiter groups. The higher levels of *importance* among underachieving passives relative to easy way outs (.50***) and earnest achievers (.63***) may be due to differences in how students in these groups think about ‘what really matters’ in terms of education (e.g., on the job training for easy way outs, college level learning for earnest achievers), school processes and post-high school expectations for their lives.

There are no differences in the *homework* completion levels between underachieving passives and the other exiter groups. It may be that homework completion levels really don’t differ across groups. Another possibility is that there may be a propensity among some (or all) of the exiter groups to overstate their levels of homework completion in terms of frequency or quality of completion.

Underachieving passives have higher *grades* than easy way outs (.31***), despite the fact that easy way out students could potentially have a high GPA while underachieving passives must have a GPA of below 3.0 due to that group’s classification criteria. Since we know that underachieving passives have a low mean GPA to begin with (i.e., sub 2.0), it may be that easy way outs lack the desire, ability or necessary support to productively adapt or adhere to school processes and norms. The lower grades among underachieving passives relative to early escapees (-.59***), earnest achievers (who by definition must have a GPA of at least 3.0) and on timers

(-.96***) are not surprising since all three groups are, from a classification standpoint, eligible to contain diploma earning students with high grades.

Table 6.8 Summary of Statistically Significant Comparisons Between Underachieving Passives and the Other Graduation Groups Across Academic and Social Engagement Measures.

	Easy Way Outs	Early Escapees	Earnest Achievers	Mediocre Passives	On Timers
Academic Engagement					
Importance	.50*** (.11)		.63*** (.17)		
Homework					
Grades	.31*** (.09)	-.59*** (.10)	-3.75*** (.15)		-.96*** (.06)
Tests	-.06*** (.01)		.03*** (.01)		
Social Engagement					
Attendance	.17** (.06)	.14* (.07)			
Punctuality					-.17*** (.05)
School Spirit		.21** (.07)			
Friendly	.27*** (.07)		.31*** (.09)		-.12* (.05)
Racial Harmony		.43** (.09)	.30** (.10)	.19** (.06)	.19*** (.06)
Activities		-.03* (.01)		-.03** (.01)	-.05*** (.01)
*Example interpretations: underachieving passives have a statistically significant higher level of the academic engagement variable <i>importance</i> (.50***) compared to easy way outs.					

Underachieving passives have lower *test* scores than easy way outs yet are outperforming earnest achievers. This is further reason to suspect that grades and standardized test scores are measuring distinctly different forms of academic performance. A student earning high grades is expected to be more likely to adhere to traditional school rules, expectations and processes over a long period. On the other hand, high standardized test scores reflect a student's grasp of

knowledge and reasoning within a single period of time and are less subject to traditional school norms or subjective assessments by teachers.

Interestingly, underachieving passives are not significantly different than mediocre passives for any of the academic engagement measures. We also find that there is not a consistent pattern of how underachieving passives compare to other exiter groups with respect to any specific academic engagement measure. There is also not a clear pattern that emerges for how underachieving passives compare to a specific exiter group across all four of the academic engagement variables.

In the end, we have 20 possible academic engagement comparisons, of which only four (20%) result in underachieving passives having significantly higher academic engagement. Since the remaining 80% of cases show that underachieving passives have similar or significantly lower levels of academic engagement than the other exiter groups, I find that this portion of the fifth hypothesis is supported.

The social engagement findings for underachieving passives also show an inconsistent pattern among the comparisons (see Table 6.8). We also see that the *racial harmony* comparisons, for which underachieving passives report significantly higher levels than early escapees (.43**), earnest achievers (.30**), mediocre passives (.19**) and on timers (.19***), represent the first noticeable pattern of consistent engagement level differences for underachieving passives. There is no known reason to expect any difference in these *racial harmony* comparisons. Underachieving passives are also reporting significantly lower levels of participation in *activities* compared to early escapees (-.03*), mediocre passives (-.03**), and on timers (-.05***). It may be the case that underachieving passives, who as a group have a mean GPA below 2.0, might not be academically eligible to partake in some school activities based on their school's policies.

The differences between underachieving passives and mediocre passives are limited to their levels of reported *racial harmony* and participation in *activities*. In thinking through these findings, we can see that about half (14 out of 30 cases) of the social engagement comparisons result in statistically significant findings, of which nine show underachieving passives having higher levels of social engagement. This means that the other 70% (21 out of 30) of cases indicate that underachieving passives have social engagement levels that are similar to or lower than the other exiter groups. These findings are directionally supportive of hypothesis 5 since they tend to show that underachieving passives do not have higher levels of social engagement compared to the other groups.

Turning our attention to the mediocre passive comparisons, the findings in table 6.9 show that mediocre passives are following an academic engagement story similar to that of the underachieving passives. There is also not a noticeable pattern for how mediocre passives compare to any of the other groups across all four of the academic measures. We know from our prior underachieving passive discussion that there are no significant academic engagement differences between the two passive groups. A combined view of Tables 6.8 and 6.9 shows that there are some consistent comparison patterns between the two passive groups. Both of the passive groups place significantly higher *importance* on the value of education compared to easy way outs and, unexpectedly, earnest achievers. It may be the case that earnest achievers simply do not deserve the “academic halo” suggested by fictional popular culture depictions of such students.

Both of the passive groups also have significantly higher *grades* than easy way outs and significantly lower *grades* than early escapees. The easy way out comparison results could link to easy way outs being less inclined or able to endure school processes and expectations. There

Table 6.9 Summary of Statistically Significant Comparisons Between Mediocre Passives and the Other Graduation Groups Across Academic and Social Engagement Measures

	Easy Way Outs	Early Escapees	Earnest Achievers	Underachieving Passives	On Timers
Academic Engagement					
Importance	.42*** (.08)	-.26* (.11)	.56*** (.15)		-.12** (.04)
Homework					.05* (.02)
Grades	.36*** (.07)	-.55*** (.08)	-3.71*** (.14)		-.92*** (.03)
Tests	-.06*** (.01)		.03*** (.01)		-.01* (.01)
Social Engagement					
Attendance	.14*** (.05)				
Punctuality		-.15* (.06)			.21*** (.02)
School Spirit		.18** (.06)			.09*** (.02)
Friendly	.23*** (.06)	-.15* (.07)	.27*** (.08)		.16*** (.03)
Racial Harmony	-.21*** (.07)	.24** (.07)		-.19** (.06)	
Activities				.03** (.01)	.02*** (.01)
*Example interpretation: Mediocre passives have a statistically significant lower standardized test scores (-.06***) compared to easy way outs.					

is not a clear explanation for the early escapee comparison result other than the likelihood that there are many high GPA students who were initially categorized into this group since the first sorting criteria to be an early escapee was based on the level of reported stressors rather than grades.

We also see that both passive groups have significantly lower *test* scores than easy way outs and significantly higher *test* scores than early escapees. The higher *test* scores found among the easy way outs may be an indication that easy way outs actually perform better on academic performance measures (like standardized *tests*) that are episodic in nature rather than requiring

long term seat time and tight adherence to school processes. There is not a clear explanation for the early escapee comparison results for *tests* other than the possibility that early escapees may be experiencing more distractions (due to stressors or outside of school concerns) that may adversely impact their performance on standardized *test* scores.

Of the 20 mediocre passive academic engagement comparisons in table 6.9, only five (25%) result in mediocre passives having significantly higher academic engagement levels than the other groups. The other 75% of findings show that mediocre passives are similar to or lower than the other groups regarding academic engagement. Overall, these findings support the fifth hypothesis since they show that mediocre passives do not tend to have higher levels of academic engagement compared to the other groups.

The mediocre passive social engagement findings (also in table 6.9) show that mediocre passives have higher levels of *attendance* (.14***), school *friendliness* (.23***) and less *racial harmony* (-.21***) than easy way outs. It makes sense that easy way outs would have lower *attendance* than those early graduates who are staying in school to earn a diploma (rather than a GED). The lower ratings of *friendliness* among easy way outs could be a reason for their seeking to leave the traditional high school pathway to pursue a GED, however, there is no apparent reason to expect students remaining in school (like mediocre passives) to report lower levels of *racial harmony* than easy way outs.

The comparisons between mediocre passives and early escapees result in mediocre passives having significantly higher levels of *school spirit* (.18**) and *racial harmony* (.24**) but lower levels of *punctuality* (-.15*) and *friendliness* (-.15*). The *school spirit* and *racial harmony* findings are consistent with a narrative that many early escapees may be socially alienated from their school, and perhaps some of this alienation is links to lower levels of *school spirit* and *ra-*

cial harmony. The two passive groups (along with earnest achievers) had to (by definition) report having no more than an average number of disruptions, but even that caveat would not explain why mediocre passives report lower levels of *friendliness* or why they are less *punctual* than early escapees (but not lower than any other exiter group).

The social engagement comparisons between mediocre passives and the other groups results in mediocre passives having significantly higher levels of social engagement in one-third of the cases (10 out of 30). This means that in 67% of the comparisons, mediocre passives are similar to or lower than the other groups in terms of social engagement. These findings are directionally supportive of the fifth hypothesis since they show that mediocre passives tend not to have higher levels of social engagement than the other groups. We have reviewed four groups of comparisons involving the academic and social engagement levels of the two passive groups. The findings from each of the four group comparisons support the fifth hypothesis that neither of the passive groups have higher school engagement levels than the other exiter groups.

6.4 Comments on Control Variables

In addition to the academic and social engagement comparison results that were addressed in the prior section, there are several interesting findings that are outside the scope of my hypotheses that warrant mention. First, there seems to be a potential story about gender differences and earnest achievers. Of the five statistically significant gender findings across the 15 group comparisons, four involve comparisons with earnest achievers. Earnest achievers are more likely than easy way outs (*female*, Table B.2), early escapees (*female*, Table B.6), underachieving passives (*female*, Table B.10) and on timers (*female*, Table B.12) to be male. There is no apparent reason why earnest achievers would be relatively more male skewed than the other

groups. Perhaps different gender norms or school processes (including administrative support) somehow assist (or less impede) earnest achiever students who are male

A second interesting story these findings support relates to racial differences among the early graduates. Asian students are significantly less represented among easy way outs compared to early escapees (*Asian*, Table B.1), earnest achievers (*Asian*, Table B.2), and on timers (*Asian*, Table B.5). Asian students are also less likely to be represented among early escapees compared to earnest achievers (*Asian*, Table B.6), underachieving passives (*Asian*, Table B.7), mediocre passives (*Asian*, Table B.8), and on timers (*Asian*, Table B.9). Black students are more represented among easy way outs compared to early escapees (*Black*, Table B.1), and are also more represented among easy way outs than among earnest achievers (*Black*, Table B.2), underachieving passives (*Black*, Table B.3) and on timers (*Black*, Table B.5). Black students are also more represented among earnest achievers (*Black*, Table B.6), underachieving passives (*Black*, Table B.7), mediocre passives (*Black*, Table B.8) and on timers (*Black*, Table B.9) than among early escapees.

The story of Hispanic early graduates is interesting because 13 of the 15 group comparisons result in significant differences in their representation, the most for any of the non-white racial groups. Hispanics are significantly more represented among earnest achievers relative to their composition of easy way outs (*Hispanic*, Table B.2), early escapees (*Hispanic*, Table B.6), underachieving passives (*Hispanic*, Table B.10), and on timers (*Hispanic*, Table B.12). Hispanics are also significantly more represented among early escapees compared to each of the other exit groups (*Hispanic*, Tables B.1, B.6-B.9). In thinking through whether or not these race findings support the student resistance theory advocated by Obgu (1978, 1991a, 1991b, 1992), we need to reconcile the mixed findings of black student representation among the different exit-

er groups (since Ogbu characterized black students as being ‘involuntary’ minorities and therefore more likely to resist school norms). While my research was never intended to test Ogbu’s oppositional cultural theory, the finding that black students are more represented among easy way outs relative to earnest achievers, underachieving passives and on timers does fall in line with Ogbu’s expectation that black students would be less engaged with school. On the other hand, the finding that blacks are less likely to be early escapees than they are to be earnest achievers, underachieving passives, mediocre passives or on timers runs counter to Ogbu’s oppositional culture argument.

The *income* control variable is significantly lower among easy way outs than among early escapees (B1), underachieving passives (B3), mediocre passives (B4) and on timers (B5). Intuitively, this makes sense since the *income* variable is a composite measure that reflects the income, educational background of the parents and the degree to which parents value education. These findings indicate that the easy way out students, who are seeking a GED and leaving the structured settings of their high schools early, have parents who have less income and education or who place a lower value on education.

There is another interesting potential story to be found among the comparison results for school type. Early escapees are significantly more likely to attend private schools (*private*, Tables B.1, B.6-B.9) than any of the other exiter groups. Since early escapees have reported a higher than average number of school stressors, one possible interpretation of the comparison results is that there may be differences in the types or magnitude of stressors that these students encounter in the context of private schools relative to public schools.

The engagement comparisons between our two ‘passive’ groups of early graduates resulted in findings of no differences in academic engagement levels and just two significant social

engagement differences (i.e., underachieving passives report more racial harmony while mediocre passives report more involvement in activities). A closer look at Table B.13 shows that there are some demographic differences between these two passive groups. It turns out that underachieving passives are more likely to be Hispanic (.38***), have a parent attend a PTA meeting (.18*), attend a private school (.37*) and live in a suburban neighborhood (.40***). These differences provide us with a little more context for differentiating these two ‘default/miscellaneous’ groups that were identified in Chapter 3’s ELS early graduate sample discussion.

6.5 Conclusions

This chapter began with the question of whether or not levels of academic and social engagement explain why some students seek an early graduation. When I consider the findings as a whole, it turns out that there is not a clear pattern. When we compare school engagement levels of on timers (the normative group) to those of a grouping of all early graduates, there are many (but not a completely array) of significant academic and social engagement differences between the on timers and early graduates. In the vast majority of cases, these differences show that early graduates have significantly lower levels of academic and social engagement than on timers.

When we look deeper into the different groups within the overall early graduate sample, things get more complicated. To understand the influences of school engagement on a student’s likelihood of being a particular type of early graduate, it is important to recognize that the comparison results for each group of early graduates includes specific engagement measure ‘surpluses’ and ‘deficits’ relative to the other groups. In other words, there is not a story in which all of the academic or social engagement comparisons are significant or directionally consistent between any of the early graduate groups or between any early graduate group and on timers. The

reality of school engagement differences across these groups requires that we consider each group individually. For example, it is clear that easy way outs place less importance on the value of education as it relates to high school (although we do not know at this point if they may have a different interpretation of ‘what really matters’ in terms of education or skills training compared to the other groups). Easy way outs are more likely to have lower levels of attendance and lower ratings of school being a friendly place. The positive academic story of easy way outs having significantly higher test scores still remains even after considering the effects of the control variables.

The early escapees engagement stories include their having lower ratings of school spirit and racial harmony relative to the other groups while unexpectedly tending to not have any other significantly lower social engagement measure levels. The earnest achievers have a less clear engagement story since they are only positively standing out for their higher grades (which is only relevant in comparison with two of the other early graduate groups and on timers). It turns out that the bigger story might be that despite their good grades, earnest achievers tend to place less importance on education and earn lower test scores than the other groups.

The two ‘passive’ early graduate groups represent students who graduated early with a diploma who report normal levels of disruptions while earning a sub 3.0 GPA. Since these two groups were created as a means to represent early graduates who did not qualify for any of the early graduate groups, I did not know what to expect regarding their school engagement stories. It turns out that underachieving passives tend to have similar levels of academic engagement as on timers, early escapees and mediocre passives while not standing out for any specific academic engagement measure. The mediocre passives follow a similar academic engagement pattern and are not differentiating themselves for any particular measure. The only discernable social en-

agement pattern among the two passive groups belongs to underachieving passives and their higher levels of racial harmony relative to the other groups (caveated by a finding of no difference relative to easy way outs). The lack of clear engagement patterns for these two passive groups is not too surprising in light of the reasons and processes relating to the construction of these two ‘all other’ groups.

This chapter has shown that while there is not a simplistic and clear cut pattern linking levels of academic and social engagement to different high school exiting pathways, there are many distinct engagement dimensions that do stand out among particular groups. Overall, these findings support a conclusion that differences in the levels of academic and social engagement at least partially explain why some students seek a particular early graduation pathway. The next question to consider is whether or not these different early graduate pathways link to differences in the post-high school lives of these students. The next part of my study, presented in Chapter 7, will assess if there are significantly different initial post-high school educational, occupational and family transitions and trajectories across the early graduate groups.

7 INITIAL POST-HIGH SCHOOL OUTCOME DIFFERENCES ACROSS STUDENT EXITER GROUPS

This final analytic chapter of my study addresses the two main questions. The first question is “do the preliminary post-high school outcomes (e.g., college, paid work, marriage, parenthood) of the various early graduate groups differ from each other?” The second question is “do the initial post-high school outcomes of early graduates differ from those of the normative group of on time graduates?” This chapter describes patterns of educational, occupational and family transitions across the different school exiting groups based on information gathered in the second ELS follow-up survey. This second follow-up survey was fielded four years after the initial survey (which took place in Spring of 10th grade) and two years after the fielding of the first follow-up survey (in the Spring of 12th grade). The longitudinal nature of the ELS data enables tracking of students across the different exiter groups to determine the frequency and types of post-secondary schooling, paid work and family statuses (e.g., if married, if a parent). This chapter in particular will help to assess the degree to which the previously mentioned popular culture stereotypes of early graduates (e.g., earnest achievers seeking to fast track their college entry, the GED earning easy way outs are less likely to be in college) actually align with the ELS data findings.

The first section of this chapter follows the flow of the prior analytic chapters by offering a brief review of the data, measures and analytic strategy that I use in this phase of my research. Since a more thorough description was provided in Chapter 3, this section is meant as a refresher and is intentionally relatively brief. The second section explains my hypotheses regarding the different life course statuses and transitions that I expect to find across the different exiter groups two years after the on timers have graduated from high school. The third section reports on the

actual findings and how they compare to my expectations. The fourth section highlights interesting findings that are outside the scope of my hypotheses. The fifth section will connect the findings to life course perspective considerations. The sixth and last section of this chapter will be a summary of my findings about the initial post-high school outcomes of the different early graduate groups.

The assessment of differences in post-high school circumstances across the early graduate groups will provide us with initial life course snapshots of the early graduates' statuses, transitions and trajectories. Future ELS follow-up survey waves will enable us to determine the degree to which the early graduates adhere to or deviate from these initial statuses, transitions and trajectories. Conclusions regarding these findings from these analytic sections will be summarized and discussed in Chapter 8.

7.1 Review of Measures and Analytic Strategy Concerning Post-High School Outcomes of the Different Early Graduate Groups

This analysis involves chi-square tests of significance to determine if there are significant differences in the educational, paid work, marital and parenthood statuses across the different high school exiter types. Any significant differences that I identify through the bivariate means testing will be further investigated through a nested logistical regression approach to determine if these differences remain significant after controlling for other theory-based factors.

The data for this chapter come from the second ELS follow-up study, fielded two years after what would have been the Spring of 12th for the on time students. I recoded the ELS data to create several new post-high school educational status measures. *School apex* is a measure denoting the highest level of post-high school education that a student has attempted so far (e.g., four-year college, two-year college, less than a two year college program) for those students who have attended any formal education after they left high school. Among those who have attempt-

ed formal post-high school education, I will assess their student status with the measure *full time*, which indicates if a student has always been a full time (versus part time or a mix of full and part time) student in their post-high school educational pursuits.

My assessment of post-high school “work for pay” statuses is supported by the measures *have worked*, *now working*, and *hours work*. *Have worked* is a binary variable that indicates whether or not a student has ever worked for pay since high school. *Now working* is a variable that indicates if a student is currently working for pay. Among those who are currently working for pay, I measure the number of hours worked per week with the measure *work hours*.

I will also assess potential family status differences among the early graduate groups. A student’s current marital status (married or not married) is measured through the variable *married*. Whether or not a student has biological children is measured through the binary variable *has kids*. Among those students who are parents, I will track how many children they have with the measure *number kids*.

7.2 Hypotheses and Expectations Relating to Post-High School Outcomes

Hypothesis 1: Easy way outs are the least likely early graduate group to be enrolled in a four year college.

The reasoning behind this hypothesis is that since easy way outs earned a GED rather than a diploma, they may lack the ability or the desire to adhere to traditional academic school processes. The GED certification may imply a lack of “seat time” among the easy way outs (i.e., willingness to go through traditional schooling processes), and such a pattern of resistance toward traditional high school matriculation processes may continue after high school as well. If they are pursuing post-high school education, it is expected that they will skew toward shorter programs (i.e., 2 years or less) rather than a longer four year degree (Collins 1979; Finn 1989; Newman et al., 1992; Cameron and Heckman 1993; Rumberger 1995; Bartley et al., 1997;

Mehan 1997; Berkhold, Gies and Kaufman 1998; Giele and Elder 1998; Rumberger and Larson 1998; Heckman, Hsee and Rubinstein 1999; Swanson and Schneider 1999; Day and Newbeger 2002; Pallas 2003; Rumberger 2004; Bowles and Gintis 2002; Civic Enterprise/Gates Foundation Studies 2004; Heck and Mahoe 2006; Settersen 2008).

Hypothesis 2: Earnest achievers are the most likely early graduate group to attend a post-high school educational institute full time

The rationale behind this hypothesis is that earnest achievers are expected to be no less academically engaged than traditional on-time graduates and may be seeking an earlier transition to post-high school full time schooling to get a jump start on their desired career path and future earnings (Finn 1989; Newman et al., 1992; Cameron and Heckman 1993; Rumberger 1995; Bartley et al., 1997; Mehan 1997; Rumberger and Larson 1998; Swanson and Schneider 1999; Berkhold, Gies and Kaufman 1998; Giele and Elder 1998; Day and Newbeger 2002; Pallas 2003; Rumberger 2004; Heck and Mahoe 2006; Settersen 2008).

Hypothesis 3: Earnest achievers are the least likely early graduate group to be currently working for pay.

This third hypothesis is based on several expectations, including (1) earnest achievers are expected to be more academically engaged with post-high school education full time rather than working for pay, (2) earnest achievers may be more likely to see the connections between greater levels of near term education and greater eventual economic returns over their lifetime, and (3) earnest achievers are expected to not need to work for pay two years after high school since they likely come from families with higher incomes (which presumably helped earnest achievers to attend better resourced high schools that could help enable them to consider an early graduation option) (Finn 1989; Newman et al., 1992; Cameron and Heckman 1993; Haveman and Wolfe 1994; Rumberger 1995; Bartley et al., 1997; Mehan 1997; Rumberger and Larson 1998; Swan-

son and Schneider 1999; Berkhold, Gies and Kaufman 1998; Giele and Elder 1998; Day and Newbeger 2002; Pallas 2003; Rumberger 2004; Heck and Mahoe 2006; Settersen 2008).

Hypothesis 4: Early escapees are the most likely early graduate group to have ever been married and, separately, to be a biological parent.

This fourth hypothesis is based on the likelihood that many early escapees may have sought early graduation from high school because of life events like marriage, parenthood or the related need to support a child or family. Data limitations within the ELS base year and first follow-up surveys preclude us from knowing if these types of life events were present among early escapees while in high school, but we can learn if, four years after 10th grade, early escapees are more apt to be married or biological parents relative to the other early graduate groups (Rumberger 1983; Bickel & Papagiannis 1988; Bickel 1989; Finn 1989; Clark 1992; Newman et al., 1992; Bickel, Weaver, Williams and Lange 1997; Mehan 1997; Berkhold, Gies and Kaufman 1998; McNeal 1997, 1999; Giele and Elder 1998; Anisef, Axelrod, Baichman-Anisef and Turitin 2000; Warren 2000; Mortimer 2004; Rumberger 2004; Heck and Mahoe 2006).

7.3 Findings Relating to Post-High School Outcomes

Before we begin our discussion of findings relating to the post-high school lives of early graduates, it is important to recognize some learnings relating to the second ELS follow-up survey (FU2) process that was fielded two years after 12th grade. There is a noticeable drop in the number of early graduate respondents represented in the FU2 data (see table 7.1). The good news is that the FU2 survey sample sizes (which reflect post multiple imputation results) still allow for the emergence of statistically significant and interesting directional findings. I found, after a deeper examination of the NCES ELS survey process documentation, several reasons that help to explain the early graduate sample drop off. The FU2 survey fielding process was much

more challenging for the ELS team than the base year and FU1 surveys for two main reasons; (1) locating past respondents and (2) gaining survey participation from those past respondents that the ELS team could locate. Both of these reasons make a lot of sense when we consider that the initial base year and FU1 surveys were fielded when the bulk of the respondents were still in high school (or very recently had been). This made the location of sample participants relatively easy since the ELS team had access to the various high school student enrollment lists and home address information. Respondent participation was also relatively easy for these same surveys since they were fielded in the context of a structured and supervised high school setting. The FU2 survey, on the other hand, was fielded when the respondents were no longer in high school and may not necessarily live at the same address they did while in high school. Furthermore, these respondents were no longer in a structured and supervised high school environment where they were expected to participate and complete an ELS survey. The ELS team anticipated these challenges and had some success in gaining participation among those respondents they could find because they could now offer respondents multiple means of survey access, including hard copy, web-based, computer assisted telephone interviews (CATI) or computer assisted personal interviews (CAPI).

Table 7.1 Comparison of ELS Follow-up Surveys Sample Counts

ELS Survey Wave	Fielding Timing	Easy Way Out	Early Escapee	Earnest Achiever	Under achiever Passive	Mediocre Passive
FU1	Spring of 12 th Grade	135	99	67	108	79
FU2	Two Years after FU1	44	30	30	38	29

Despite the offering of different survey platforms, the ELS team was still hindered by the reality that a respondent had to first be located and then agree to survey participation before they can be expected to complete a survey. The ELS documentation reveals that dropouts were especially challenging to locate, however, extra efforts were made to sample this group because of important policy implications. Unfortunately, the ELS team does not focus on early graduates (which is a term I use that is grounded in specific ELS survey item responses that never make specific mention of “early graduates” per se) as an important student group, therefore they made no extra effort was made to locate this type of “off time” student. Another hard reality check for the ELS team was the refusal of contacted “gatekeepers” (e.g., parents, spouses, partners) to provide updated contact information or access to the prior respondents. In other cases the prior respondent requested they be removed from the survey list. Interestingly, the ELS documentation does not count such “could not locate” or “could not gain compliance” respondents in their published survey participation rates since they only consider the percentage of respondents for whom a survey was fielded (which implies the respondent was located and consented to take the new survey) in their participation rates.

The ELS team will continue supporting future ELS survey studies through ongoing efforts to locate and update contact information for all past ELS respondents that completed at least the base year or the FU1 survey. This means that early graduate respondents who were included in the FU1 survey process (which is the survey wave that tells me if a student is an early graduate) but did not take the FU2 survey (because they could not be found) might be found in future ELS survey attempts. In the absence of any better data option, we still can and should explore potential directional and significantly significant comparison differences between the early

graduate groups, on timers and dropouts based on the FU2 data that are available, starting with a discussion of findings relating to our first hypothesis.

Hypothesis 1

The first hypothesis is easy way outs are the least likely early graduate group to be enrolled in a four year college. Table 7.2 shows the results of chi-square tests of significance (at the 95% or higher level) between the different exiter groups across each of the post-high school education, work and family measures. We can see that about 1 out of 5 (i.e., 20.3%) of all easy way outs have enrolled in a four year college in the two years since the on timers graduated. This is the lowest four year college enrollment level for any of the early graduate groups, and is significantly lower than the 57.9% earnest achiever level and the 60.0% on timer level. On the other hand, we can also see that 34.1% of all easy way outs have enrolled in a two year college, which is the highest two year college rate among any of the exiter groups and is significantly higher than the rates of earnest achievers and on timers. It is not surprising that the easy way outs would have the lowest four year college enrollment level, and it makes sense that they would also have the highest level of two year college enrollment (34.1%) for any of the groups since this schooling option requires far less ‘seat time’ and may appeal to an easy way out’s wish to get started on a job path that requires technical training or at least an associate’s degree.

To determine if the easy way outs’ significantly lower level of four year college enrollment persists after accounting for the influences of other theoretically important control variables, I ran a regression models that used the four year college attendance measure as dependent variables. Table 7.3 shows an “uncontrolled” model (model 1) that contains only the different

Table 7.2 Assessing Differences in Post-High School Educational Trajectories Across Student Segments

		High School Exiter Type							
			A	B	C	D	E	F	G
	Variable	Values	Easy Way Out	Early Escapee	Earnest Achiever	Under achiever Passive	Mediocre Passive	On Time	Drop outs
Post-High School Education	Level School (Apex)	Four Year College	20.3	39.4	57.9 ^{AD}	25.0	46.9	60.0 ^{ADEG}	31.3
	Post- High School Institution Type Attended	Two Year College	34.1 ^{CF}	22.2	14.9	30.6 ^{CF}	27.9	16.3	21.1 ^F
		Less Than 2Yr College	2.6	2.0	1.5	2.8	2.5	0.7	2.4
		None	42.6	36.4	23.9	41.6	22.7	23.0	45.2
		Total	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%
	FullTime Always Student Type	Full Time	62.9	64.2	77.1	51.1	65.3	80.5 ^{AD}	68.4
		Part Time or Mix of Part/Full Time	37.1 ^F	35.8	22.9	48.9 ^F	34.7	19.5 ^D	31.6
			100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%

Note: Potentially low sample sizes for some cells.

^aSource: National Center for Education Statistics Education Longitudinal Survey 2002/04 Data Files and Electronic Codebook System, First Follow-Up.

^bSample interpretation: 60% of on timers (group F) have attended a four year college. This percentage of on timers attending four year colleges is statistically higher (at the 95% level) than the four year college attendance levels of easy way outs (group A), underachieving passives (group D), mediocre passives (group E) and dropouts (group G).

school exiter groups as independent variables while a second model (the “controlled” model) contains additional relevant theory-based control variables that were discussed in detail in Chapter 3. On timers, the normative group, are omitted from these models.

The results in Table 7.3 indicate that when compared to on timers (the normative and omitted group), easy way outs are significantly less likely to attend four year colleges even after we control for other theoretical influencers. Table 7.3 also shows that all of the other early graduate groups except for earnest achievers are significantly less likely than on timers to attend four

year colleges. The model 2 coefficients for easy way outs and underachieving passives is $-.20^{***}$, which is twice as strong as the next closest coefficients for the other early graduates groups besides earnest achievers. These initial post-high school education findings are supportive of the first hypothesis that easy way outs are the least likely early graduate group to pursue a four year degree.

Hypothesis 2

The second hypothesis is that among those early graduates pursuing post-high school education, earnest achievers are the most likely to attend post-high school education full time. We can see in Table 7.2 that the majority (57.9%) of earnest achievers have enrolled in four year colleges, while an additional 14.9% have enrolled in a two year college and another 1.5% have enrolled in a program that is less than two years. This translates to 77.9% of earnest achievers being enrolled in post-high school education while only 23.9% (the lowest rate among the early graduate groups) have not. The full time variable row in Table 7.2 shows that 77.7% of those earnest achievers who enrolled in some form of college have enrolled as full time students. This is directionally the highest full time student rate among any of the early graduates and trails only the 80.5% rate of the on timers overall. It makes sense that earnest achievers would be the leading full time student early graduate group since they are expected to be more grades conscientious and to also be more likely to come from two parent, higher income households with more means to economically support these students while they are in college. These findings offer directional support for hypothesis 2.

Hypothesis 3

The third hypothesis is that earnest achievers are the least likely early graduate group to currently be working for pay. We can address this third hypothesis by looking at the measure

rows *workpay* (the percentage of respondents currently working for pay) and *workcatjob* (among those respondents currently working for pay, how many hours a week on average are they working for pay) in Table 7.4. We see that four out of five (80%) earnest achievers are currently working for pay, which is directionally the highest currently working for pay level for any of the exiter groups. The absolute and relative high currently working for pay levels for earnest achievers were not anticipated since I expected earnest achievers to be more focused on full time studies as well as being less in need of having to work for pay since there are theory based expectations that these particular early graduates come from higher income households. When we look at the number of weekly paid working hours (*workcatjob*), we see that earnest achievers cluster in two ranges with 38% of them working between 21-30 hours and 50% working 31-40 hours.

We can also see that earnest achievers are staying under the threshold of 41+ hours of paid work per week. These findings suggest that earnest achievers are not ‘silver spoon’ students but rather are similar to the other groups in terms of working for pay, however, these earnest achiever students are different from their peers in their heavy concentration between 21-40 hours of paid work each week. Just as I am surprised by the paid work findings for earnest achievers, I am equally surprised by the finding that early escapees actually have the lowest directional portion (57%) of any group that is currently working for pay. It may be that early escapees are spending their time on family care or other unpaid work rather than (as prior theory suggests) needing or electing to focus on paid work to support themselves or others. These directional results (e.g., that 80% of earnest achievers are currently working for pay and are very likely working 21-40 hours per week) do not support this third hypothesis that earnest achievers are the least likely group to currently be working for pay.

Table 7.3 Determining if the Exiter Type Coefficients Remains Significant With Respect to Four Year College Attendance as Dependent Variable After Including Control Variables (Note: On Timers Omitted).

<i>Variable</i>	<i>Model 1</i>	<i>Model 2</i>
Easy Way Outs	-.29*** (.02)	-.20*** (.02)
Early Escapees	-.13*** (.02)	-.07*** (.02)
Earnest Achievers	.10 (.02)	.01 (.02)
Underachieving Passives	-.27*** (.02)	-.20*** (.02)
Mediocre Passives	-.14*** (.02)	-.08*** (.02)
Dropouts	-.18*** (.02)	-.10*** (.01)
Female		.01*** (.01)
Race (white omitted)		-.01*** (.01)
Two Parents		.02*** (.01)
Siblings		-.01*** (.01)
Income		.09*** (.01)
Computer		.02*** (.01)
Books		.04*** (.01)
PTA		.01 (.01)
Private		.08*** (.01)
Urban		.04*** (.01)
Suburban		.01 (.01)
Peers		.04*** (.01)
Intercept	.75*** (.01)	.70*** (.01)
Pseudo R ²	.01	.09
*denotes 95% significance, ** 99.0% significance, ***99.9% significance		

Table 7.4 Assessing Differences in Post-High School Work Trajectories across Student Segments

		High School Exiter Type								
			A	B	C	D	E	F	G	
	Variable	Values	Easy Way Out	Early Escap-ee	Earnest Achiev-er	Under achiever Passive	Mediocre Passive	On Time	Dropout	
		n =	44	30	10	38	29	2,501	52	
Post High School Paid Work	WorkSince High (Have Ever Worked Since High School)	% Yes	94.7 ^b	88.9	94.1	96.8	95.0	91.9	83.3	
		% No	5.3	11.1	5.9	3.2	5.0	8.1	16.7	
		Total	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	
	WorkPay Currently Working for Pay	% Yes	77.3	56.7	80.0	78.9	75.9	74.8	63.5	
		% No	22.7	43.3	20.0	21.1	24.1	25.2	36.5	
		Total	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	
		% 1-10 hrs	0.0	0.0	0.0	3.3	0.0	2.5	0.0	
	WorkCat- Job Average Hours of Paid Work per Week	11-20 hrs	5.9	5.9	12.5	6.7	4.5	7.1	3.0	
		21-30 hrs	14.7	23.5	37.5	3.3	9.1	16.2	12.1	
		31-40 hrs	67.6	29.4	50.0	56.7	54.5	54.3	60.6	
		41-50 hrs	8.8	29.4	0.0	13.3	23.6	12.9	18.2	
		51+ hrs	2.9	11.8	0.0	6.7	18.2	7.0	6.1	
		Total	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	
	Note: Potentially low sample sizes for some cells.									
	^a Source: National Center for Education Statistics Education Longitudinal Survey 2002/04 Data Files and Electronic Codebook System, First Follow-Up.									
^b Sample interpretation: 94.7% of easy way outs have worked for pay since leaving high school.										

Hypothesis 4

The fourth hypothesis is that early escapees are the most likely early graduate group to have ever been married and, separately, to be a biological parent. Table 7.5 shows that four years after the initial 10th grade survey was fielded, 9.8% of early escapees are married. The ear-

ly escapees' marriage rate is similar to that for earnest achievers and only trails the 10.5% rate among easy way outs. The mediocre and underachieving passives both have a 4.9% marriage rate, which while being the lowest rate among the early graduates, is almost twice as high as the rate for on timers (2.6%) and almost five times higher than the rate for dropouts (1.1%).

Table 7.5 Assessing Differences in Post-High School Family Trajectories across Student Segments

	Variable	Value	High School Exiter Type							
			A	B	C	D	E	F	G	
			Easy Way Out	Early Escapee	Earnest Achiever	Under achiever Passive	Mediocre Passive	On Time	Dropout	
Post High School Family Trajectories	Marital Status	% Single/ Never Married ^b	88.2	90.2	88.2	95.1	95.1	97.2 _{ABC}	98.9	
		% Married	10.5	9.8	9.8	4.9	4.9	2.6	1.1	
		% Divorced/ Widowed/ Separated	1.3	0.0	2.0	0.0	0.0	.2	0.0	
		Total	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	
	BioKids Have Had Biological Children	% Yes	25.0 ^{CF}	8.1	2.0	16.4 ^F	18.0 ^F	4.7	15.6 ^F	
		% No	75.0	91.9	98.0 ^A	83.6	82.0	95.3 _{ADEG}	84.4	
		Total	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	
	Number Kids Number of Biological Children	% One	78.9	80.0	100.0	70.0	72.7	86.2	71.4	
		% Two	10.5	20.0	0.0	10.0	27.3	12.1	28.6	
		% Three	10.5 ^F	0.0	0.0	20.0 ^F	0.0	1.6	0.0	
		Total	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	
	^a Source: National Center for Education Statistics Education Longitudinal Survey 2002/04 Data Files and Electronic Codebook System, First Follow-Up.									
	^b Sample interpretation: 88.2% of easy way outs are single/never been married.									

In terms of parenthood, 8% of the early escapees have at least one biological child. This is unexpectedly the second lowest parenthood rate among all exiter groups with only earnest achievers having a lower rate at 2%. Also unexpected is the finding that the two passive groups have rates ranging from 16.4-18.0%. These rates are double that of early escapees while the easy

way out parenthood rate of 25% is triple the early escapee rate. The marriage and parenthood directional findings do not support the fourth hypothesis since easy way outs and earnest achievers are at least as likely as early escapees to be married while easy way outs, underachieving passives and mediocre passives are at least twice as likely as early escapees to be parents. While it may be the case that some early escapees seek an early graduation because of the pursuit or pull of marriage and children, they are not unique in these regards. In hindsight, there is support for a ‘retroactive hypothesis’ that easy way outs are the most likely early graduate group to be married and, separately, to be a biological parent. This suggests that prior theory-based assumptions that equate the GED pathway with easy way outs being less able or willing to adhere to traditional school processes and expectations (including ‘seat time’) need to be expanded to include more outside of school considerations like marriage and parenthood.

7.4 Other Findings of Interest

In addition to the hypotheses oriented findings that were just discussed, there are a few other results in Tables 7.1, 7.4 and 7.5 that are worth noting. With regard to post-high school education enrollment, Table 7.1 shows that underachieving passives are unexpectedly much more like the easy way outs than the mediocre passives. Almost half (46.9%) of mediocre passives have enrolled in a four year college, while only one in four underachieving passives have done so. The low underachieving passive high school GPA (1.85 with a standard deviation of .611) provides a likely reason for their low four year college enrollment, however, the twice as high mediocre passive enrollment level is unexpected in light of their very average high school GPA of 2.21 (with a standard deviation of 1.01). A possible explanation for the seemingly high mediocre passive enrollment level is that while about half mediocre passives have enrolled in a

four year college, they might be attending colleges that are not as selective in their admissions process or as highly ranked as the colleges the earnest achievers and on timers attend.

The paid work findings offer the surprise outcome that dropouts have the highest level of never having worked for pay since high school at 16.7% (see Table 7.3). I would have expected this rate to be lower since I would not expect dropouts to be as likely to invest their time in post-high school education, therefore they would have more time to pursue paid work. There is no apparent reason for this finding, however, it may be the case that many of these dropouts did not eventually go on to earn a GED credential, which may make it harder for them to find paid work. Another possibility is dropouts may be more likely to be engaged in unpaid work (e.g., helping out at home) or illegitimate work . It could also be that dropouts are more likely than the other exiter groups to essentially sit on the couch on watch television all day.

There is also an interesting directional contrast between the two early graduate passive groups in terms of paid work intensity. Mediocre passives and underachieving passives are quite similar in terms of having worked since high school and currently working for pay. A difference emerges between them when we look at the time they invested in paid work. Over 40% of mediocre passive are working at least 41 hours per week while only 20% of underachieving passives do so. The gap is even wider if we look at the 51+ category of work time. While keeping in mind that we are dealing with limited sample sizes, we can see that directionally about three times as many mediocre passives (18.2%) are clocking such a heavy work load relative to underachieving passives (6.7%). There is no clear reason why this big of a directional (but not statistically significant) difference would exist between the two passive groups. Perhaps mediocre passives are relatively more ambitious or aggressive in their paid work pursuits.

The family-oriented findings are interesting since across all of the different exiter groups, only early escapees and earnest achievers have a higher rate of marriage than of parenthood. The 9.8% marriage rate for early escapees is somewhat higher than their 8.1% rate for parenthood. On the other hand, the earnest achiever marriage rate of 9.8% is almost five times higher than the earnest achiever parenthood rate of 2% (see Table 7.4), suggesting that earnest achievers are relatively more likely to delay their transition into parenthood. It is also interesting that earnest achievers are about four times more likely than on time graduates (with a marriage rate to 2.6%) to be married at this point in time. On the other hand, on time graduates (with a parenthood rate of 4.7%) are more than twice as likely to be parents compared to earnest achievers. It is also unexpected that a dropout is 15 times more likely to be a parent (15.1% rate) than to be a spouse (1.1% rate). This is by far the largest differential in the marriage/parenthood rates across any exiter group. It is possible that raising or providing for a child may be a primary reason some of the dropouts left high school in the first place. Another possibility is that dropouts may be more prone to engage in unprotected sex than the other groups.

7.5 Connecting the Findings with Life Course Perspective Considerations

The snapshots of early post-high school educational, paid work and family statuses and transitions (shown in Tables 7.1 and 7.4-7.5) can start to inform several life course oriented stories about the early graduates. For example, compared to the normative group of on time graduates, easy way outs and underachieving passives are significantly less likely to attend four year colleges. Let's assume that four year college attendance tends to correlate with improved life chances relative to two or less year colleges or no college at all. In this context, easy way outs

and underachieving passives are, at the young age of 20 years old⁶, currently on a trajectory that may result in relatively fewer life chances compared to on timers and, it turns out, earnest achievers (who are also significantly more likely than easy way outs and underachieving passives to attend four year colleges).

Post-High School Education Considerations

We can start thinking about Table 7.1 through key elements of the life course paradigm developed by Giele and Elder (1998) that was presented as figure 2.3 in Chapter 2. While Table 7.1 shows that there are easy way outs and underachieving passives who attend four year colleges, significantly fewer of these students attend their four year college full time compared to on timers. This suggests that earnest achievers and on timers will finish their four year degree quicker than easy way outs and underachieving passives, which enables an earlier transition into higher paying professional roles that require a four year degree. The earnest achievers and on timers' earlier transition into professional work at a young age to work will likely have compounding effects over the course of their career since they are better positioned to begin paying off debt, invest their earnings, learn important and transferable job skills while also building important forms of social and cultural capital in the workplace. The full time student status rate difference can also result in easy way outs and underachieving passives experiencing further relative life chance disadvantages in other ways since part time students are less likely to build important and supportive networks, friendships and outside of class experiences that can help them later in life (reflecting the 'linked lives' dimension of Giele and Elder's life course framework). To add more potential life chance disparity to the mix, students attending a four year college full

⁶ I base this expectation on the logic that the initial ELS survey was fielded when they were in 10th grade (which likely corresponds to the survey respondents being roughly 16 yrs old) and the first ELS follow-up survey fielded two years later (when these respondents were approximately 18 years old).

time are also more likely to meet other students who attend the same college full time, which can result in a higher likelihood of two such students meeting and marrying (which relates to the ‘time and place’ and the ‘intersection of age, period and cohort timing’ dimensions of the life course). A couple comprised of two graduates from a four year college (that they attended full time) will likely earn more money and experience different forms of on-the-job training and skills development than part time students or students attending two or less year colleges. Additionally, such couples have a ‘head start’ since they will be earning more income and developing supportive networks and connections sooner given their prior full time student status. These couples’ relative wealth and life chance advantages can evolve into even more improved life chances for them and their current or future offspring compared to easy way outs and underachieving passives (another example of the ‘linked lives’ dimension).

Post-High School Paid Work Considerations

We learned from table 7.2 that the vast majority (80+%) of every exiter group has worked for pay since high school. We also saw that, unexpectedly, early escapees are directionally the least likely early graduate group (with a rate of 56%) to currently be working for pay. We do not know from the ELS data why early escapees have such a low ‘work for pay’ rate, however it could be due to their focus on unpaid work such as child care, family support, volunteering or work that is ‘off the books’ in terms of not being formally documented for tax purposes (e.g., running an informal day care from home, painting houses, mowing lawns, supporting a family business, etc.). There are many possible life course implications for the early escapees relating to their lower levels of paid work. If it turns out that those early escapees who are not currently working for pay are using their time to care for a child or family member, there is a good chance that they are learning many important life skills (e.g., sacrifice, prioritization, scheduling, multi-

tasking, responsibility, accountability, resourcefulness, resilience, budgeting, navigating through bureaucratic confusion including hospitals and health insurance, etc.). Their advancement up the learning curves of these important life skills will hopefully result in increased abilities to handle or adapt to future life challenges (e.g., raising another child, dealing with elder care, dealing with other bureaucracies such as school systems). These earnest achievers will likely be experiencing many 'real world' rites of passage such as parenthood or time intensive caregiving for relatives or loved ones much earlier than the other early graduate groups.

So far the early escapee life course implications seem to be positive, however, paid work can help or hurt someone's life chances (Mortimer 2000). For example, while the not currently working for pay early escapees maybe missing out on an opportunity to develop potentially helpful capabilities, skills and exposure that can help them to build more additional supportive forms of economic, human, social and cultural capital. Furthermore, these early escapees are less likely to experience and benefit from useful aspects of paid work such as project management, job supervision, structured discipline, teamwork and collaboration, customer interaction, professional training and development, and access to mentors and sponsors (i.e., mentors who have some power or influence within an organization). These early escapees will also not experience positive forms of professional acknowledgement, respect or promotion.

Economically speaking, such early escapees are likely to experience fewer life chances than the other groups since they will likely be limited in the amount they can earn (assuming that their unpaid work and 'off the books' work pays to begin with). These early escapees are therefore expected to have less means of paying down debt, increasing savings, having an emergency cash fund or growing a nest egg for their later years, which can result in their having more potential triggers of finance-related duress in their lives. Because of their limited 'resume enhancing'

paid work experience, these early escapees are also likely to face greater challenges than the other groups in finding a potential paid work ‘on ramp’ should they seek such opportunities later (which reflects the ‘development of human agency’, ‘age, period and timing’ and ‘location in time and space’ dimensions of Geile and Elder’s framework) These challenges are likely to be particularly harsh in light of the recent economic recession and a continuing shift towards an information-based economy that may have little in common with the early escapee’s prior unpaid work experiences (which relates to the ‘individual agency’ and ‘intersection of age, period and timing’ life course dimensions). These relative economic disadvantages may have lasting effects in terms of capping the earnings of such early escapees as well as limiting their discretionary options in terms of providing for their family and current or future offspring , which may result in a next generation cycle of similar relative economic disadvantage (reflecting ‘linked lives’ dimension of Giele and Elder’s framework).

The forms and magnitude of these early escapees’ social and cultural capital will probably also differ from the other groups since these early escapees will not be developing professional and social networks that they might otherwise be exposed to through paid work experiences. This will impact the quantity and diversity of people these early graduates might otherwise meet. It will also impact different types of tangible and intangible skills, learning curves, awareness of how to ‘get things done’ with or without formal authority and other models of behavior that might be quite useful throughout the lives of these early escapees. Additionally, this can also affect these early escapees’ exposure to new acquaintances, friends and potential life partners (reflecting the ‘location in time and space’ and ‘social relations and linked lives’ life course dimensions). This in turn can also intuitively influence the characteristics of a child they might

eventually have and the circumstances in which they raise that child (another ‘linked lives’ consideration)..

The early escapee life course narrative in this section was based on several assumptions, including the assumption that paid work links to greater levels of economic, human, social and cultural capital and those higher levels of such capital link with greater life chances in terms of earnings, opportunities and options. This early escapee life course scenario is an example of but one possible life course narrative. It is important to recognize that there can be a lot of subjective variance in how different people think about their life chances and desired outcomes. For example, Enid and Kefalas (2005) found that for many teenagers, having a baby out of wedlock was actually seen as a positive and desirable life choice based on the how these people perceived their near term and future life chances or out of their desire to achieve a new positive and reachable status of being a ‘good mother’ (reflecting the ‘individual agency,’ ‘location in time and space’ and ‘linked lives’ dimensions). These teens also perceived that they would be better off raising their child outside of wedlock since they did not equate the biological father with necessarily being a desirable choice for a husband or father figure for the child. Enid and Keflas’ findings are good examples of Holstein’s (2005:5) life course perspective in that these teen moms are “formulating the trajectories of (their) lives, revealing the relatedness of different phases, explaining how (their lives) develop and anticipating (their) futures.” Just as these teens sought out or willingly accepted their transition into motherhood and the desired status of being a ‘good mom,’ it is possible that some of the not currently working for pay early escapees prefer their status as a good parent or as a good son or daughter (assuming they are caring for family members or supporting a family enterprise). It is also possible that their potential ‘off the books’ work could provide them with a sense of status, appreciation, respect and personal fulfillment.

Another consideration is that these early escapees may view their focus on unpaid work as a ‘smart choice’ if they perceive limited alternatives, face difficulty in finding potential paid work opportunities (Anisef, Axelrod and Turittin 2000) or experience social mores within their reference group that would influence their likelihood of undertaking certain forms of unpaid work (which would be an example of the ‘individual agency,’ ‘location in time and space’ and ‘social relations and linked lives’ dimensions). While there is no clear indication at this point about whether or not the choices and circumstances of these early escapees will result in a net positive or net negative in terms of the impact on their future life chances, Settersten (2003:86) suggests that there will likely be negative unintended consequences because “when people deviate from a norm (such as not working for pay after high school), their behavior is not only evaluated negatively by others, but is often undertaken to reflect something problematic about their personalities or abilities (both of which can be seen as ‘individual agency’ life course considerations). In other words, even if some of these early escapees have positive reasons or agency-based desires to focus on unpaid work, they may unfortunately be marginalized by others anyway.

Post-High School Family Considerations

The marriage and parenthood findings in Table 7.4 provide the basis for a potential life course story involving the easy way outs. The initial post-high school family transitions and trajectories of easy way outs directionally differ from the other groups in a few ways. First, we see that while the vast majority of each exiter group are still single around the time of their 20th birthday, easy way outs are the only group with a double digit (10.5%) rate of marriage. The data in this table also indicate easy way outs are about four times as likely as on timers to be married at this point. We can also see that one in four easy way outs is a biological parent at this age and their 25% parenthood rate is significantly higher than the rate for on timers (4.7%). There is

not much difference in terms of the number of biological children across the different groups at this stage, so can keep our focus on the marriage and parenthood statuses of easy way outs.

It is possible that the easy way outs' relatively higher rate of marriage will continue to outpace the on timer marriage rate for at least the next few years. As the marriage rate differential between easy way outs and on timers continues to grow, we can envision several corresponding life course implications. For example, a 20 year old married easy way outer has already committed to a life partner and is therefore expected to invest their time, attention and other resources on that specific partner (which relates to the 'individual agency' and 'social relations and linked lives' dimensions). This will likely influence the number, range and types of people that this easy way outer can choose to meet and interact with (which are examples of the 'location in time and space' and 'social relations and linked lives' life course considerations). It may turn out that this particular easy way outer will have a wonderful, happy and committed lifetime of marriage that starts when they are 20 years old. By being married that young, this easy way outer will bypass the mixed consequences of investing time, money and other resources in various dating relationships that they might otherwise have participating in had they not already been married (which are examples of 'social relations and linked lives' and 'age, period and timing' dimensions). On the other hand, this same easy way outer may experience a decrease in their sense of personal agency since they will now need to consider their partner's points of view, input and preferences (or restrictions) when making important decisions that might relate to timing and location of post-high school education, job search criteria, religious affiliation, neighborhood of their residence, interactions with their family and friends and issues related to finances (which are more examples of the 'individual agency' and 'intersection of age, period and timing' and 'linked lives' dimensions). This same married easy way outer is therefore expected have a dif-

ferent range of experiences, social interactions and networks than they would of had they remained single (further reflecting the ‘social relations and linked lives’ and ‘age, period and timing’ dimensions).

At this point, we do not know whether the life chances of a 20 year old married easy way outer will be better or worse compared to a single 20 year old easy way outer or on timer. We can, however, expect that there might be some important interaction effects related to being young, married and holding a GED certificate rather than a diploma. It could be the case that this young married GED earning easy way outer can find a desirable job, however, there is a foreseeable likelihood that potential employers will have concerns about hiring a 20 year old (who likely has limited applicable work experience) with a GED (which may raise concerns about the easy way outer’s discipline, respect for process, adherence to schedules or ability to stay focused). On the other hand, a potential employer might perceive a married easy way outer in a more positive light if they interpret being married as a reflection of the easy way outer’s maturity, sense of responsibility or the higher likelihood this person is more likely to take the job seriously since it will provide important financial support for the couple. On the flip side, this employer might prefer a single easy way outer for other reasons such as a belief this candidate will be more able to work later hours, do so more often, pick up more ad hoc shifts or even relocate if necessary. If we add a married on timer to the mix, the employer might prefer this candidate for many of the same reasons as the married easy way outer plus the additional consideration that this on timer candidate has a high school diploma (which may lessen concerns about issues of discipline, respect for processes and ability to get along with others). An additional job candidate who happens to be a single on timer might be even more attractive to an

employer since they have a diploma and may be seen as being more flexible in terms of scheduling and working late nights or weekends if necessary.

Now let's think about the potential life course narrative of a 20 year old easy way out single parent. There are several reasons to expect this person's life chances to be different and more constrained than the life chances of an on timer. In terms of economic-oriented life chances, these GED holding easy way outers are already expected to be at a paid work disadvantage relative to diploma holding early graduates and on timers because of potential perceptions of GED holders being less able or willing to adapt to traditional school processes and expectations (reflecting the 'individual agency' life course dimension). While most easy way outers are currently working for pay, they may be in roles that do not pay particularly well or have limited career paths. In addition to the likelihood of not earning as much income as the other exiter groups, a single easy way out parent will also need to focus their time, attention and spending in supporting their child (which relates to the 'linked lives' dimension). While single parent easy way outers may be very happy about their transition into parenthood, this transition will likely entail some potentially life chance inhibiting trajectories. For example, in addition to having a harder time finding desirable paid work, these easy way outers will face additional economic stress because of the costs of raising a child. This raises the likelihood of getting into sizeable debt at a very early age, which in turn will make it harder for them to get their 'head above water' fiscally. This also means they will be more vulnerable to financial stress and have less means to maintain an 'emergency cash fund' or to ever get ahead of the curve by paying off their debt and investing in appreciating investments or other assets. These particular easy way outers could lose much of their sense of personal efficacy and agency with regard to future job considerations or relocations if they continuously have to worry or obsess about maintaining

their near term income stream from whatever paid work they are currently doing. This in turn can have compounding effects in terms of hindering their ability to focus on productive job searches, which hinders them at this stage of their career. This can result in more lifetime repercussions since it can negatively affect future earnings, savings and wealth throughout their lifetime. It is important to keep in mind that such unpleasant outcomes are occurring in the life of a person who is likely already starting out in their early 20's, with a relatively lower paying job to begin with since they have a GED rather than a diploma (Day and Newberger 2002; Pallas 2003) and are less likely to attempt or complete a four year college degree (as shown in Table 7.1) that may be required for better career possibilities in the present and in the future.

These easy way outs will also likely have to rely on other adults to care for their child while they are performing paid work, which can result in more financial stress (if money has to be spent on babysitters or daycare) and more family (or friend) related stress if the single parent needs to rely on and coordinate with their kin or friends to help with childcare. In addition to the stresses related to finances, family and friends, there are also important 'social relations and linked lives' and 'intersection of age, period and timing' life course considerations that we might envision for single parent easy way outs. For example, they may have a harder time meeting new friends or potential dates or possible significant others since they likely have many more time and availability constraints in lieu of their paid work schedules and childcare needs. This can make it harder for these easy way outs to be in potentially positive social settings. To make things even more challenging, these easy way outs may also face stigma or discrimination from potential new friends or possible dating partners since they may be evaluated negatively by others who are used to being around young adults who are not dealing with the challenges, constraints and responsibilities of parenthood (Hutchison 2008). We can expect that single par-

ent easy way outs are less likely than non-parent easy way outs or non-parents in the other early graduates groups to be less available (or invited into) social interactions or unplanned activities with their peers. This could then result in these easy way outs being less likely to meet new people or develop supportive social networks while also having a harder time finding a potential mate. This would result in these easy way outs being more likely to remain rooted in their current circle of friends and acquaintances, thereby limiting their future social connectivity and networks as well as their potential dating pool. As a result, these easy way outs will be less likely to experience new and diverse social and professional interactions that they might otherwise have encountered in their early twenties (which reflect the ‘intersection of age, period and timing’ and ‘social relations’ dimensions). While it is very possible and common for young single parents to have happy and fulfilling lives, we can expect that these young single parent easy way outs will have different types of life course trajectories and transitions than married easy way outs with or without kids, single easy way outs without kids and the different variants of married/unmarried and parent/non-parent early graduates in the other groups.

7.6 Summary of Findings Relating to Post-High School Outcomes of Early Graduate Groups

The findings we just reviewed represent the first known assessments of early graduates’ lives after high school. These findings are based on the second ELS follow-up survey, therefore the findings are reflective of the educational, paid work and family statuses of early graduates when they were about 20 years old. These findings represent an initial baseline foundation that will be built upon with future ELS survey data waves (starting with the third ELS follow-up survey to be released sometime in 2014). These baseline findings also offer us an early means of seeing how the different early graduate groups’ statuses, transitions and trajectories compare or contrast with each other at this young stage of their lives.

Some of these initial post-high school findings were consistent with theory-based expectations. For example, the GED holding easy way outs are the least likely early graduate group to be enrolled in four year colleges as well as the most likely group to be attending two year programs. Another expected finding is that earnest achievers are the most likely early graduate group to be attending a college full time and are the most likely group to be attending a four year program.

Some of the findings, on the other hand, provide us with reasons to question the theory-based expectations. One such unexpected finding is that here is a relatively high rate (of about 50%) of four year college enrollment among the mediocre passives. Another surprise was that earnest achievers are actually no less likely than any of the other early graduate groups to currently be working for pay. Another unexpected finding is that early escapees are not standing out from the other early graduate groups in terms of being more likely to be married or to have a kid at this point in their lives. It turns out that easy way outs are just as likely to be married as the early escapees and are actually getting a jump on parenthood relative to the other early graduate groups.

This chapter also explored several potential life course stories that could be generated from the initial post-high school ELS data. These stories are intended as preliminary conceptualizations and can be revised and enhanced as future waves of ELS survey data help us to better understand different educational, paid work and family statuses, transitions and trajectories. While this is the last analytic chapter of my study, it is not the end of the story. We need to next consider how the findings across the last four chapters merge to inform our understanding of early graduates in U.S. high schools. The next chapter of this dissertation, Chapter 9, provides conclusions based on a mosaic of findings regarding the demographics of the various graduate

groups (from Chapter 5), differences in the levels of academic and social engagement across these groups (Chapter 6), consideration of whether or not these academic and social engagement differences really matter in influencing which particular early graduate group a student will skew towards (Chapter 7) and life course implications for each of the early graduate groups (from this chapter).

8 CONCLUSIONS

8.1 Discussion of Findings

This study has shown that an understanding of early graduates requires an understanding of school engagement processes, effects and influences. A student's choice to seek an early graduation is at least partially and significantly explained by their having lower overall levels of school engagement compared to the normative group of on time graduates. Furthermore, these lower levels of early graduate engagement include noticeably lower levels of both academic and social engagement.

Lower levels of school engagement levels matter in terms of predicting whether or not a student will be an early graduate. This study has shown that the importance of avoiding generalizations about overall school engagement or its general academic and social engagement components. While I saw many significant differences among the various student exiter groups relating to academic and social engagement, there was never a case in which all of the academic or social measures were significantly lower (or higher or the same) for the early graduates relative to on timers. There is not a wholesale or blanket pattern of significant engagement differences. This is the case even after grouping the engagement measures in terms of their being more agency-based and within the student's control (i.e., all of the academic engagement measures as well as the social engagement measures of attendance, being punctual and activity participation) or more structural and outside the student's control (i.e., the social engagement measures relating to school spirit, friendliness and racial harmony). Therefore, differences in the levels of academic or social engagement between on timers and early graduates must be drilled down to more precise measures.

Many of this study's findings are in line with my theory guided expectations. While I knew that early graduates existed based on ELS survey data, I did not know before this study if there were significant school engagement differences between early graduates and the normative group of on time graduates. Such differences were suggested by the literature on dropouts since off time students, unlike on timers, do not have sufficient levels of academic and social engagement with their schools and its processes to remain on the traditional on time matriculation path (Rumberger 1983; 2004; Rumberger and Larson 1998; Heck and Mahoe 2006). The hypothesis (hypothesis 6.1) that on time graduates would have higher levels of academic and social engagement compared to early graduates is strongly supported by my findings since on timers tend to have higher levels of academic engagement and social engagement compared to early graduates.

I also expected that early graduates with a diploma would be similar to dropouts in their levels of social engagement (hypothesis 5.2) since these particular early graduates are earning a traditional diploma (rather than a GED), which indicates that they have the desire and ability to adhere to traditional academic processes; however, they are still seeking to leave high school early. Their motivation to graduate early is therefore likely grounded in non-academic considerations, which indicates that these students may not have sufficient levels of social engagement with their school setting (Collins 1979, Rumberger 1995; Heckman, Hsee and Rubinstein 1999; Bowles and Gintis 2002; Rumberger and Larson 1998). It turns out that early graduates do not have more social engagement than dropouts, and in many cases actually have lower levels. This suggests that both early graduates and dropouts share a common "off time" characteristic in terms of having less social connectivity with their school settings relative to on timers.

This study also found support for several of my hypotheses regarding expected differences between the different types of conceptualized groups. For example, I expected that Asian students would comprise a higher percentage of earnest achievers compared to other minority races (hypothesis 4.2). This expectation, based on prior research that suggests there is a cultural belief among many Asian families that emphasizes the importance of a student's effort and the linkages of education and positive future outcomes (Steinberg, Dombush and Brown 1992; Rumberger 2004), is supported by the findings. I also expected (hypothesis 5.3) that earnest achievers would be the most academically engaged early graduate group since they may be aggressively seeking to transition to post-high school education (e.g., college), which reflects pro-learning attitudes and behaviors (Finn 1989; Newman et al., 1992; Rumberger 1995; Mehan 1997; Berkhold, Gies and Kaufman 1998; Heck and Mahoe 2006). This hypothesis is also supported by the findings.

This study also found that even at an early stage of post-high school life, there is noticeable divergence in the timing and contexts of several important life course transitions and trajectories across the student groups. Even though the second ELS follow-up survey (FU2) was fielded just two years after the Spring of 12th grade, there are significant differences among the early graduate groups as well as between these groups and on timers regarding their levels of college enrollment, whether such enrollment is at a four year or a two year college, levels of paid work, marriage rates and parenthood statuses. Some of these post-high school findings are clearly in line with my expectations. For example, prior literature implies that easy way outs would be the least likely early graduate group to be enrolled in a four year college (hypothesis 7.1). The findings support this prediction, which makes sense since past studies suggests that an easy way out's earning of a GED rather than a diploma may indicate that they lack the ability or the desire

to adhere to traditional school processes, and such a pattern of resistance toward traditional high school matriculation processes may continue after high school as well. Additionally, the literature suggests that if easy way outs are in any type of formal post-high school education, they will likely skew toward programs that are shorter in nature (like two-year colleges) (Collins 1979; Finn 1989; Newman et al., 1992; Cameron and Heckman 1993; Rumberger 1995; Bartley et al., 1997; Mehan 1997; Berkhold, Gies and Kaufman 1998; Giele and Elder 1998; Rumberger and Larson 1998; Heckman, Hsee and Rubinstein 1999; Swanson and Schneider 1999; Day and Newbeger 2002; Pallas 2003; Rumberger 2004; Bowles and Gintis 2002; Civic Enterprise/Gates Foundation Studies 2004; Heck and Mahoe 2006; Settersen 2008). The findings support these predictions since easy way outs have the lowest level of four-year college enrollment and the highest level of two-year college enrollment among any of the student groups. I also found support for my hypothesis (7.2) that earnest achievers would be the most likely early graduate group to attend a post-high school educational institute full time. This is consistent with prior literature that implies that earnest achievers are expected to be no less academically engaged than traditional on time graduates and may be seeking an earlier transition to post-high school full time schooling to get a jump start on their desired career path and future earnings (Finn 1989; Newman et al., 1992; Cameron and Heckman 1993; Rumberger 1995; Bartley et al., 1997; Mehan 1997; Rumberger and Larson 1998; Swanson and Schneider 1999; Berkhold, Gies and Kaufman 1998; Giele and Elder 1998; Day and Newbeger 2002; Pallas 2003; Rumberger 2004; Heck and Mahoe 2006; Settersen 2008).

The findings also support many theory-based expectations that informed my selection of control variables included in this study. For example, the data support an expectation that students from two-parent households would be more likely to remain academically engaged with

school since prior research links two-parent households with a student having greater access to parental support, guidance, monitoring (Downey, Ainsworth-Darnell and Dufur 1998), encouragement, economic resources, access to better schools (Cummins 1986; Haveman and Wolfe 1994; MacLeod 1995; Descenes, Cuban and Tyack 2001; Witherspoon and Schissel 2001; Rothstein 2004; Rumberger 2004; Cassidy and Bates 2005) and more parental involvement with the student's teachers (McNeal 1999).

My expectations for the influence of income (a composite variable reflecting household income, parents' highest level of education completed and their occupational status) on a student's levels of school engagement were similar to the expected influence of a two-parent household status. This is because higher levels of income and valuation of education among parents are expected to lead to greater parental support, guidance, encouragement, economic resources, access to better schools (Cummins 1986; Haveman and Wolfe 1994; MacLeod 1995; Descenes, Cuban and Tyack 2001; Witherspoon and Schissel 2001; Rothstein 2004; Rumberger 2004; Cassidy and Bates 2005) and more parental involvement with the student's teachers (McNeal 1999). As was the case with two-parent household findings, the data support the expectation that higher levels of income correlate with higher academic and social engagement.

The literature also suggests that having high achieving and pro-education friends (peers) tends to increase the likelihood that a student will be more engaged with school (Kasen, Cohen, & Brook 1998, Ellenbogen and Chamberland 1997; Carbonaro 1998; Rumberger & Thomas 2000; Rumberger 2004). The findings strongly support this expectation. All academic engagement measures and all but one social engagement measure (punctual) are significantly higher for students with pro-education friends.

While the data did support many of my hypotheses, there are numerous cases where the findings were not congruent with my hypotheses. For example, there are many theory-based reasons to expect that white students would be underrepresented among easy way outs (hypothesis 4.1) and overrepresented among earnest achievers (hypothesis 4.2). The rationale for these expectations relates to prior research that suggests whites are more likely to have greater access to important forms of capital that will increase their levels of school engagement. These forms of capital include learning resources, encouragement, parental support (Haveman and Wolfe 1994; Downey, Ainsworth-Darnell and Dufur 1998; Rothstein 2004; Rumberger 2004) and attending schools with greater resources (Cummins 1986; MacLeod 1995; Descenes et al., 2001; Witherspoon and Schissel 2001; Cassidy and Bates 2005) while also experiencing lower levels of racial and cultural opposition compared to non-white students (Ogbu 1978, 1991a, 1991b, 1992; Fordham and Ogbu 1986; Lawrence 1997). The finding that whites are actually over-indexing (relative to their overall ELS sample representation) among easy way outs may be because white students might be more likely to attend school settings that entail particular school norms, processes or expectations that lead them to seek a GED instead of a diploma. This finding could also relate to white students possibly being relatively less likely to adhere to 'seat time' expectations (like class attendance) and other school policies. The finding that white students are under-indexing among earnest achievers might be explained by the possibilities that white early graduates may not be eligible to be an earnest achievers because they are seeking a GED instead of a diploma, are reporting higher than normal levels of disruption (which would result in their classification as an early escapee) or simply do not have a GPA of above 3.0 (the threshold GPA for earnest achievers). Another possibility is that the school settings these white early graduates are attending may be better at keeping more of the 'would be' earnest achievers engaged enough that

they do not pursue an early graduation, which would result in those potential earnest achievers remaining in the on time group.

In terms of easy way outs and academic engagement, the literature implies that there are no reasons to expect these GED earners to ever be more academically engaged than other early graduate groups but there are several reasons to expect them to be less academically engaged (hypothesis 5.4). Among these reasons are inferences that GED holders lack the desire, discipline or ability to stay on the traditional academic path that is required to earn a diploma (Finn 1989; Newman et al., 1992; Heckman, Hsee and Rubinstein 1999; Bowles and Gintis 2002). It turns out that easy way outs have the highest standardized test scores among any of the early graduate groups. It might be the case that the standardized tests component of academic engagement may be measuring skills, abilities or effort that are very different than those associated with traditional day-to-day school processes and procedures (as reflected in the *grades* measure). It may also be that easy way out students are, for whatever reasons, good test takers and are therefore more likely to be drawn to the test-centric nature of the GED credentialing process.

The findings from the second ELS follow-up data also contradict several of my “life after high school” hypotheses. For instance, I expected that earnest achievers would be the least likely early graduate group to be currently working for pay two years after high school (i.e., Spring of 12th grade for the on timers). This expectation (hypothesis 7.3) is grounded in prior studies that suggest that earnest achievers would be expected to be (1) more academically engaged with post-high school education full time rather than working for pay, (2) more likely to see the connections between greater levels of near term education and greater eventual economic returns over their lifetime, and (3) less likely to need to work for pay two years after high school since they likely come from families with higher incomes (Finn 1989; Newman et al., 1992; Cameron

and Heckman 1993; Haveman and Wolfe 1994; Rumberger 1995; Bartley et al., 1997; Mehan 1997; Rumberger and Larson 1998; Swanson and Schneider 1999; Berkhold, Gies and Kaufman 1998; Giele and Elder 1998; Day and Newbeger 2002; Pallas 2003; Rumberger 2004; Heck and Mahoe 2006; Settersen 2008). The findings show that the opposite scenario is taking place since earnest achievers are directionally the most likely group (at a rate of 80%) to be working for pay at this stage of their lives. It may be that prior studies underestimated the need or desire of earnest achievers to work for pay while in college. It could also be that the type of work the earnest achievers are engaged in are more likely to be work/study situations. This would be consistent with directional findings that point towards earnest achievers to be the least likely of the early graduate groups to work more than 40 hours a week for pay.

Several of the early escapee findings also run counter to my hypotheses. There are plenty of studies that suggest early escapees could be expected to be more likely than the other early graduate groups or on timers to have lower levels of social engagement (hypothesis 5.3) and higher likelihoods of working for pay (hypothesis 6.3 and 7.1), be married (hypothesis 7.4) or be a biological parent (also hypothesis 7.4) within a couple of years after high school. My early escapee hypotheses were grounded in prior literature that suggests these particular early graduates are more likely to be enduring disruptions and stressors while in high school, may desire or need to work for pay, may already be married or a be a biological parent or soon expect to be (Rumberger 1983; Bickel & Papagiannis 1988; Bickel 1989; Bickel, Weaver, Clark 1992; Berkhold, Gies and Kaufman 1998; Giele and Elder 1998; Anisef, Axelrod, Baichman-Anisef and Turittin 2000; Warren 2000; Mortimer 2004; Rumberger 2004). While any of these reasons could lead them to have less relative social engagement with their high school, it turns out that early escapees tend to have social engagement levels that are on par or actually higher than the

other early graduate groups. It could be that the sheer number of disruptions (which I used to classify students as early escapees) may be less relevant in their social engagement levels than the actual context of specific disruptions. For example, a student may not qualify to be an early escapee because they reported lower or average counts of disruptions, but if one of those disruptions is of an extreme form (e.g., violence against the student), that particular disruption could be expected to have a far greater influence on their social engagement levels compared to a less extreme form of disruption (e.g., having something stolen).

Another finding that is inconsistent with the literature-based expectations is that early escapees actually have the lowest directional portion (57%) of any group that is currently working for pay. It may be that early escapees are relatively more likely than the other early graduate groups to spend their time on family care or other forms of unpaid work rather than (as prior theory suggests) needing or electing to focus on paid work to support themselves or others. Another consideration is that while most early escapees are working for pay, the types of jobs they are working at may be quite different than the jobs other early graduate groups work at (e.g., early escapees may be more likely to be working lower wage types of jobs compared to earnest achievers).

The data also show easy way outs, rather than early escapees, are the most likely early graduate group to be married or to be a biological parent within two years of leaving high school. The bulk of prior literature I reviewed regarding GED seeking graduates focused on potential reasons for school disengagement that revolved around a lack of desire, ability, discipline or adherence to school processes as the reasons for why a student would become disengaged enough to pursue a GED instead of a diploma. My findings suggest that there may be higher than expected rates of “outside of school” factors like marriage or parenthood that are pulling on stu-

dents to disengage from an on time graduation by graduating early with a GED. In other words, the research on “pull out” influences may be just as relevant for easy way outs as for early escapees.

8.2 Implications for Future Research

There are several theoretical and sociological implications stemming from these findings. For instance, a proper understanding of early graduates requires a better understanding of the different levels and influences of academic and social engagement processes. While simple models of engagement (at the school, academic or social engagement levels) focus on a general concept, I found that specific manifestations (i.e., measures) of engagement provide better explanations of early exiting from high school. Different engagement measures vary in levels of prediction power and directional impact for each of the early graduate groups relative to each other as well as relative to on timers. The implication of this is that researchers should be cautious about assuming there is a single overall engagement level threshold that would reflect the reality of a student’s likelihood of remaining on time or becoming off time. Instead, researchers need to focus on the individual measures.

The findings indicate that, in general, increases in the levels of the academic and, separately, social engagement measures will raise the likelihood that a student will remain on the traditional normative on time path. While one could argue there are important agency and structural considerations inherent in each of these measures, each measure can be classified as being more agency-based (and within a student’s direct influence) or more structural (and beyond a student’s control). Each of the four academic engagement measures is more agency-based since a student can exercise a large degree of choice and influence regarding their attitudes toward the importance of education and in their behavior in terms of studying, completing their assignments

and showing up prepared for class. Students who improve their attitudes and pro-learning behaviors are likely also going to see increases in their grades and standardized test scores. While students have a lot of direct influence on these academic measures, it is quite possible for administrators, teachers, parents and friends to also impact (positively or negatively) the student's learning attitudes, behaviors and performance. The same can be said about the student's levels of school attendance, being punctual for class and participation in activities since these are largely in a student's purview of control yet can also be helped or hindered by administrators, teachers, parents and friends. While the social engagement measures of school spirit, friendliness and racial harmony may be largely outside a student's direct control, it is foreseeable that student ratings of these proxies can be influenced positively or negatively by administrators, teachers, parents and friends. While no single measure is a 'magic pill' for influencing a student to remain on time, each has the real potential to influence the odds.

Another research implication of this study is that, at this time, there is currently not a basis for assuming that early graduates will have greater or worst life chances than on timers. For this reason, I would guard against assuming that schools and parents should want their child to remain 'on time' rather than seek an early graduation. In terms of relating the findings back to the conceptualized differences in life chances across the life courses of the different early graduate groups, on timers and dropouts (explained in Chapter 2), it is clear that there are differences in the timing, prevalence and context of post-high school education, paid work and family statuses of the different exiter groups. We do not yet know how these differences will impact their life chances. Future waves of ELS data will enable researchers to track these differences further.

This study of early graduates also leads me to consider implications relating to our understanding of dropouts, the more traditionally studied off time group. The findings strongly suggest that there are good reasons to challenge past research, media reports or general assumptions that dropouts are essentially “flunkouts” or are less capable students compared to on timers. The data show that both early graduates and dropouts (in Chapter 5) tend to have lower levels of school engagement compared to on timers. The data also show that many early graduates perform at a similar level or actually outperform on timers in terms of measured academic performance (i.e., grades and standardized tests), yet they are still seeking to become off time and graduate early. If academically capable students like many early graduates are becoming disengaged enough from school that they seek an off time pathway, there is no reason to expect that dropouts wouldn't also be affected in ways that could lead them to become off time in light of their lower levels of school engagement measures. Put another way, it is time for high school administrators and policy makers to consider moving beyond their traditional focus on grades and standardized test score performance by expanding their focus towards influencers of academic performance (i.e., a student's pro-learning attitudes and behaviors like attendance, punctuality and class preparation) and social engagement “levers” that can generate a more conducive school setting and student experience (i.e., supporting a more friendly environment, a greater sense of racial harmony and student involvement in extra-curricular activities). I would expect that increases in these types of engagement manifestations would result in a greater likelihood of a student remaining on time as well as performing better academically in terms of grades and standardized tests. While I do not know at this time whether or not remaining on time would actually be a net positive or net negative outcome for the early graduates, I would expect that remaining on time would be beneficial for the vast majority of would be dropouts (the “vast major-

ity” caveat is appropriate since I do not currently know of the particular circumstances or opportunity costs relating to these dropouts).

8.3 Limitations

In the absence of any available prior literature on early graduates, this study had to rely heavily on past research relating to dropouts. This was appropriate since dropouts are the normative off time high school exiter group, studies of dropouts are widely available and there is no known better option. Since several of my theory based hypotheses were not supported by the actual data findings, there is reason to exercise caution regarding the degree to which the dropout research can be extrapolated to inform early graduate research.

A second limitation relates to the data used in this study. The ELS survey data are the best (and only) option I am aware of in terms of offering a means to analyze a nationally representative sample of high school students across an essential range of variables as well as over time. That being said, there are several drawbacks inherent in the ELS surveys and data sets that subsequently result in limitations of my study. First, there are sample size realities that need to be considered. As reported in Chapter 3, I was able to identify almost 500 (n=488) early graduates within the ELS student sample. Based on a thorough review of the ELS study documentation, there is no indication that early graduates were a group of interest to the ELS study design team and I do not know the degree to which the ELS sampling and tracking process results in an understatement or overstatement of the degree of overall early graduate prevalence. For example, I relied on the ELS tracking of whether or not a student had completed paperwork for early graduation to find my early graduate sample. It could be that the ELS survey process makes it harder to track and retain survey completion rates for early graduates at the same rate as on tim-

ers. It could also be that some schools may be less inclined or capable of officially or easily remaining in contact with these early graduates.

The n=488 early graduate count needs to be considered as a “best case scenario” since I found missing data or incomplete survey forms for most respondents. Even after utilizing multiple imputation to resurrect missing data, sample size considerations still needed to be considered after I segmented the 488 early graduates into the different mutually exclusive and completely exhaustive groups of easy way outs (n=135), earnest escapees (n=99), earnest achievers (n=108) and the two “all other” groups of underachieving passives (n=108) and mediocre passives (n=79). These sample sizes did enable the generation of statistically significant findings for the majority of my analyses. There were noticeable sample size drop-offs when analyzing the early graduate data from the second ELS follow-up survey (FU2). My belief is that the ELS team had a hard time remaining in contact with and gaining continued survey completion compliance from their original ELS sample, which is not unexpected (for the reasons detailed in Chapter 7).

There is also a potential limitation of this study that relates to Type 1 errors. If all of my statistically significant reported findings were at my minimum acceptable confidence level of 95%, I would expect about 1 in 20 (5%) of those findings to actually be erroneous (i.e., not actually statistically significant) due to issues of chance in the sampling process. Luckily, the vast majority of my statistically significant reported findings were at the 99.9% confidence level. This means that the likelihood of a Type 1 error is closer to 1 in 1,000 rather than 1 in 20.

This study also has a methodology limitation in that it utilized quantitative analysis without the benefit of qualitative methods. A mixed methods approach (i.e., quantitative and qualitative) would likely create a more informed understanding of early graduates. My reliance on only qualitative methods for this study was a function of my having access to the ELS data sets as

well as having a sample of almost 500 identified early graduates within the data set, none of whom I could contact for qualitative inquiry because of ELS privacy policies.

8.4 Directions for Future Research

This study is meant to serve as a starting point in our understanding of early graduates. In many ways, it is an exploratory study, setting the stage for future research in this area. There is an opportunity to revise the conceptualizations of the various early graduate groups. The next phase of research should utilize qualitative methods (including interviews), which would provide a richer and more contextual understanding of the life circumstances of early graduates and the meaning and interpretations of that experience throughout different stages of development. Qualitative approaches would also help researchers to better recognize the actual contexts and subjective variability of the different ELS engagement measures (as well as inform researchers about potential new measures). For example, the ELS data allow us to compare differences in the reported levels of friendliness and racial harmony, but it does not allow for exploring the meaning of these concepts from the perspective of early graduates or how they actually influence an early graduate's high school experience. Additionally, while the ELS data give us insights into the number of hours a week a student participated in school activities, it fails to address the student's decision making processes and reasons behind levels of participation in particular activities. Furthermore, qualitative research could explore differences in such narratives across groups of early graduate, dropouts and on time respondents.

Additionally, future research should address early graduation from the perspectives of the students, their parents, high school counselors, high school administrators and college admission personnel. This would provide important additional context. Different stakeholders' perceptions of early graduation could highlight the benefits, concerns, motivations, barriers and meanings

ascribed to the early graduate pathway. Such research would also shed light on barriers and incentives to early exit. For example, families and school personnel may serve as gatekeepers to early exiting. Also, research on college admissions offices can examine the meaning and consideration for applicants who graduated early from high school (and, additionally, if they even discriminate between different ways of completing high school).

Qualitative research would also be very helpful in answering some of my specific questions and points of interest relating to several specific study findings. For example, it would be great to have a better understanding of the context and back stories associated with the easy way outs' choice (or necessity) to pursue a GED, why this group has the highest standardized test scores and why the South over indexes in its share of easy way outs. There is another important area of exploration relating to the contextual importance of specific disruptions (e.g., violence, pregnancy) that might better explain why early escapees (or other early graduates) become off time. It could very well be that my criteria for early escapees needs to evolve by placing higher weightings on particular identified forms of disruption. I am also very curious about earnest achievers and how their life expectations (e.g., career, family) differ from the other groups. For example, I now know that earnest achievers are the most likely early graduate group to attend four year colleges, however, I do not know at this point if they are attending more selective or competitive colleges than the other groups or, separately, if they are more likely to attend graduate school. I also know that by the age of 20 years old, earnest achievers have similar marriage rates but much lower parenthood rates compared to easy way outs and early escapees. It would be helpful to understand if the lower earnest achiever parenthood levels at this stage of life are part of an intentional life course "script" they have intentionally created and are adhering to, and

if so, what else have they written into their script regarding the timing and types of other transitions and trajectories.

Throughout this dissertation process, I have had many serendipitous opportunities to meet people who indicated they had personally pursued and completed an early graduate pathway from high school or had friends that had done so. Their stories provide me with potential guidance that might help inform future qualitative and quantitative work outside of the ELS survey data. I heard several repeated themes from these people regarding why they or their friends pursued an early graduation pathway. The most common reason I heard relates to the tensions stemming from being or feeling “othered” (e.g., picked on for being seen as non-hetero, unattractive, new to the school). I also heard repeated mentions along the lines that these (former) students cared a lot about learning, but were fed up with having to deal with disruptive and disinterested classmates on a daily basis. There were a few mentions of their wanting to leave their home sooner than later due to unhappiness with a parent or stepparent or their wish to leave their neighborhood or town area in general. I was also surprised that I heard more than one case of pursuing an early graduation so that they could get a head start in college sports (e.g., by participate in Spring practices). These types of “becoming off time” influencers are not directly (or in most cases, even indirectly) assessed in the ELS survey. Systematic qualitative research would greatly help in expanding and enhancing our understanding of such considerations.

The qualitative study suggestions I just discussed could include random early graduate inclusion (rather than screening respondents in terms of their being an easy way out, earnest achiever, etc) to determine (1) what types of potential early graduate conceptual groups freely emerge and (2) how these qualitatively derived groups compare with my conceptualizations of easy way outs, early escapees, earnest achievers and the passive groups. Another option is to

screen early graduate respondents based on the conceptualized group criteria used in my study to ensure sufficient inclusion of easy way outs, early escapees, etc. This would allow for better contextualization and guidance for potentially revising or refining each of my conceptualized early graduate groups.

While I am aware of potential early graduate sample size concerns in future ELS survey updates, there is reason to expect that I would still find important directional and statistically significant patterns emerging from updated analyses of the post-high school life course transitions and trajectories across the early graduates. I would be particularly interested in the stories that develop relating to how transitions, trajectories and the timing of both compare over time between the different early graduate groups and between those groups and on timers.

8.5 Conclusion

I knew at the beginning of this study that early graduates are different than the normative group of on time graduates in terms of their high school exiting timing and credentialing pathway. What I did not know then, however, was what factors might help explain why these students sought an early graduation option or how particular groups of early graduates might distinguish themselves from each other as well as from the normative group of on time graduates. After several waves of ELS survey data analyses, it is clear that early graduates have lower levels of academic and social engagement with their high school settings compared to on time graduates. These differences in academic and social engagement levels are significant predictors of a student's particular high school exiting pathway. This research also indicates that there are important differences among the conceptualized early graduate groups as well as between these groups and on time graduates. Additionally, in a relatively short period of time (two years after 12th grade) there are significant differences among the early graduates and between early gradu-

ates and on time graduates regarding the timing and context of important life course transitions and trajectories relating to post-high school educational pursuits, paid work involvement, marriage and parenthood. The next few years will offer researchers the potential to learn even more about early graduates since this study can serve as a springboard to inform future studies, including qualitative research (that has so far been absent in the literature) as well as further quantitative-based findings from future follow-up waves of the ELS survey and other potential data sources.

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APPENDICES

Appendix A

Reference Tables for Chapter 5

Table A.1 Determining if the Exiter Type Coefficients Remains Significant With Respect to *Importance* as the Dependent Variable After Including Control Variables.

<i>Variable</i>	<i>Model 1</i>	<i>Model 2</i>
Easy Way Outs	-.31*** (.02)	-.22*** (.01)
Early Escapees	-.08*** (.02)	-.02 (.02)
Earnest Achievers	-.01 (.02)	-.04 (.02)
Underachieving Passives	-.08*** (.02)	-.05*** (.01)
Mediocre Passives	-.12*** (.01)	-.08*** (.01)
Dropouts	-.05*** (.01)	-.03*** (.01)
Female		.07*** (.01)
Race (white omitted)		-.01*** (.01)
Two Parents		.01 (.01)
Siblings		.01*** (.01)
Income		-.01** (.01)
Computer		.01* (.01)
Books		.03*** (.01)
PTA		.03*** (.01)
Private		-.01 (.01)
Urban		.02*** (.01)
Suburban		-.01 (.01)
Peers		.13*** (.01)
Intercept	2.83*** (.01)	2.80*** (.01)
R ²	.01	.13
*denotes 95% significance, ** 99.0% significance, ***99.9% significance Note: On timers are omitted.		

Table A.2 Determining if the Exiter Type Coefficients Remains Significant With Respect to *Homework* as the Dependent Variable After Including Control Variables.

<i>Variable</i>	<i>Model 1</i>	<i>Model 2</i>
Easy Way Outs	-.35*** (.03)	-.22*** (.03)
Early Escapees	-.16*** (.04)	-.07 (.04)
Earnest Achievers	.18*** (.05)	.17*** (.05)
Underachieving Passives	-.18*** (.03)	-.08** (.03)
Mediocre Passives	-.22*** (.02)	-.11*** (.02)
Dropouts	-.15*** (.02)	-.07*** (.02)
Female		.50*** (.01)
Race (white omitted)		.01*** (.01)
Two Parents		.04*** (.01)
Siblings		-.02*** (.01)
Income		.05*** (.01)
Computer		.03*** (.01)
Books		.01 (.01)
PTA		.02** (.01)
Private		.10*** (.01)
Urban		-.06*** (.01)
Suburban		-.08*** (.01)
Peers		.11*** (.01)
Intercept	2.91*** (.01)	2.80*** (.02)
R ²	.01	.05
*denotes 95% significance, ** 99.0% significance, ***99.9% significance Note: On timers are omitted.		

Table A.3 Determining if the Exiter Type Coefficients Remains Significant With Respect to *Grades* as the Dependent Variable After Including Control Variables.

<i>Variable</i>	<i>Model 1</i>	<i>Model 2</i>
Easy Way Outs	-.88*** (.03)	-.65*** (.03)
Early Escapees	-.40*** (.03)	-.26*** (.03)
Earnest Achievers	.71*** (.04)	.71*** (.04)
Underachieving Passives	-.76*** (.03)	-.55*** (.02)
Mediocre Passives	-.76*** (.01)	-.54*** (.01)
Dropouts	-.58*** (.02)	-.39*** (.01)
Female		.26*** (.01)
Race (white omitted)		.03*** (.01)
Two Parents		.18*** (.01)
Siblings		-.02*** (.01)
Income		.22*** (.01)
Computer		.07*** (.01)
Books		.07*** (.01)
PTA		-.03*** (.01)
Private		.11*** (.01)
Urban		-.10*** (.01)
Suburban		-.05*** (.01)
Peers		.09*** (.01)
Intercept	2.78*** (.01)	2.41*** (.01)
R ²	.07	.26
*denotes 95% significance, ** 99.0% significance, ***99.9% significance Note: On timers are omitted		

Table A.4 Determining if the Exiter Type Coefficients Remains Significant With Respect to Tests as the Dependent Variable After Including Control Variables.

<i>Variable</i>	<i>Model 1</i>	<i>Model 2</i>
Easy Way Outs	-2.23*** (.36)	.40*** (.31)
Early Escapees	-3.82*** (.42)	-2.13 (.36)
Earnest Achievers	1.79*** (.51)	2.54*** (.43)
Underachieving Passives	-5.95*** (.35)	-2.71*** (.30)
Mediocre Passives	-5.96*** (.17)	-2.84*** (.15)
Dropouts	-5.75*** (.20)	-2.99*** (.17)
Female		.12* (.06)
Race (white omitted)		.57*** (.02)
Two Parents		1.10*** (.06)
Siblings		-.45*** (.02)
Income		3.97*** (.04)
Computer		1.12*** (.03)
Books		2.01*** (.08)
PTA		-1.19*** (.06)
Private		1.89*** (.08)
Urban		-.35*** (.09)
Suburban		-.07 (.08)
Peers		.60*** (.03)
Intercept	51.31*** (.03)	46.81*** (.15)
R ²	.03	.29
*denotes 95% significance, ** 99.0% significance, ***99.9% significance Note: On timers are omitted		

Table A.5 Determining if the Exiter Type Coefficients Remains Significant With Respect to *Importance* as the Dependent Variable After Including Control Variables

<i>Variable</i>	<i>Model 1</i>	<i>Model 2</i>
Easy Way Outs	-.31*** (.02)	-.22*** (.01)
Early Escapees	-.03 (.02)	.01 (.02)
Earnest Achievers	.04 (.02)	-.01 (.02)
Underachieving Passives	-.04* (.02)	-.02 (.02)
Mediocre Passives	-.08*** (.01)	-.05*** (.01)
On Timers	.05*** (.01)	.03*** (.01)
Female		.07*** (.01)
Race (white omitted)		-.01*** (.01)
Two Parents		.01*** (.01)
Siblings		.01*** (.01)
Income		-.01** (.01)
Computer		.04* (.01)
Books		.03*** (.01)
PTA		.03*** (.01)
Private		-.01 (.01)
Urban		.02*** (.01)
Suburban		-.01 (.01)
Peers		.13*** (.01)
Intercept	2.79*** (.01)	2.78*** (.01)
R ²	.01	.13
*denotes 95% significance, ** 99.0% significance, ***99.9% significance Note: Dropouts are omitted.		

Table A.6 Determining if the Exiter Type Coefficients Remains Significant With Respect to *Homework* as the Dependent Variable After Including Control Variables.

<i>Variable</i>	<i>Model 1</i>	<i>Model 2</i>
Easy Way Outs	-.35*** (.03)	-.22*** (.03)
Early Escapees	-.02 (.04)	-.01* (.04)
Earnest Achievers	.33*** (.05)	.23*** (.05)
Underachieving Passives	-.03 (.04)	-.02 (.04)
Mediocre Passives	-.07** (.02)	-.04 (.02)
On Timers	.15*** (.02)	.07*** (.02)
Female		.15*** (.01)
Race (white omitted)		.01*** (.01)
Two Parents		.04*** (.01)
Siblings		-.02*** (.01)
Income		.05*** (.01)
Computer		.03*** (.01)
Books		.01 (.01)
PTA		.02** (.01)
Private		.10*** (.01)
Urban		-.06*** (.01)
Suburban		-.08*** (.01)
Peers		.11*** (.03)
Intercept	2.77*** (.02)	2.73*** (.02)
R ²	.01**	.05*
*denotes 95% significance, ** 99.0% significance, ***99.9% significance Note: Dropouts are omitted.		

TableA.7 Determining if the Exiter Type Coefficients Remains Significant With Respect to Grades as the Dependent Variable After Including Control Variables.

<i>Variable</i>	<i>Model 1</i>	<i>Model 2</i>
Easy Way Outs	-.88*** (.03)	-.65*** (.03)
Early Escapees	.19*** (.04)	.14*** (.03)
Earnest Achievers	1.30*** (.04)	1.10*** (.04)
Underachieving Passives	-.18*** (.03)	-.16*** (.03)
Mediocre Passives	-.17*** (.02)	-.15*** (.02)
On Timers	.58*** (.02)	.39*** (.01)
Female		.26*** (.01)
Race (white omitted)		.03*** (.01)
Two Parents		.18*** (.01)
Siblings		-.02*** (.01)
Income		.22*** (.01)
Computer		.07*** (.01)
Books		.07*** (.01)
PTA		-.03*** (.01)
Private		.11*** (.01)
Urban		-.10*** (.01)
Suburban		-.05*** (.01)
Peers		.09*** (.01)
Intercept	2.19*** (.02)	2.02*** (.02)
R ²	.07	.26
*denotes 95% significance, ** 99.0% significance, ***99.9% significance Note: Dropouts are omitted.		

Table A.8 Determining if the Exiter Type Coefficients Remains Significant With Respect to Tests as the Dependent Variable After Including Control Variables.

<i>Variable</i>	<i>Model 1</i>	<i>Model 2</i>
Easy Way Outs	-2.23*** (.36)	.40 (.31)
Early Escapees	1.93*** (.46)	.87* (.40)
Earnest Achievers	7.54*** (.54)	5.54*** (.46)
Underachieving Passives	-.21 (.40)	.28 (.34)
Mediocre Passives	-.22 (.26)	.15 (.22)
On Timers	5.75*** (.20)	2.99*** (.17)
Female		.12* (.06)
Race (white omitted)		.57*** (.02)
Two Parents		1.10*** (.06)
Siblings		-.45*** (.02)
Income		3.98*** (.04)
Computer		1.12*** (.03)
Books		2.01*** (.08)
PTA		-1.19*** (.06)
Private		1.89*** (.08)
Urban		-.35*** (.09)
Suburban		-.07 (.08)
Peers		.60*** (.03)
Intercept	45.56*** (.20)	43.82*** (.22)
R ²	.03	.29
*denotes 95% significance, ** 99.0% significance, ***99.9% significance Note: Dropouts are omitted.		

Table A.9 Determining if the Exiter Type Coefficients Remains Significant With Respect to *Attendance* as Dependent Variable After Including Control Variables.

<i>Variable</i>	<i>Model 1</i>	<i>Model 2</i>
Early Escapees	-.43*** (.05)	-.29*** (.05)
Earnest Achievers	.04 (.06)	.08 (.05)
Underachieving Passives	-.43*** (.04)	-.34*** (.04)
Mediocre Passives	-.53*** (.02)	-.41*** (.02)
Dropouts	-.32*** (.02)	-.26*** (.02)
Female		-.16*** (.01)
Race (white omitted)		-.05*** (.01)
Two Parents		.11*** (.01)
Siblings		-.02*** (.01)
Income		.08*** (.01)
Computer		.02*** (.01)
Books		.04*** (.01)
PTA		.06*** (.01)
Private		.11*** (.01)
Urban		-.05*** (.01)
Suburban		-.04*** (.01)
Peers		.14*** (.01)
Intercept	3.49*** (.01)	3.79*** (.02)
R ²	.02	.06
<p>*denotes 95% significance, ** 99.0% significance, ***99.9% significance Note: Easy way outs were included in the regression analysis, however, they are omitted from this table because of this section's intentional focus on early graduates with a diploma. Note: On timers are omitted.</p>		

Table A.10 Determining if the Exiter Type Coefficients Remains Significant With Respect to *Punctual* as Dependent Variable After Including Control Variables.

<i>Variable</i>	<i>Model 1</i>	<i>Model 2</i>
Early Escapees	-.43*** (.04)	-.27*** (.04)
Earnest Achievers	.07 (.05)	.14** (.05)
Underachieving Passives	-.62*** (.04)	-.46* (.03)
Mediocre Passives	-.69*** (.02)	-.52*** (.02)
Dropouts	-.47*** (.02)	-.35*** (.02)
Female		-.10*** (.01)
Race (white omitted)		-.01*** (.01)
Two Parents		.13*** (.01)
Siblings		-.02*** (.01)
Income		.03*** (.01)
Computer		.02*** (.01)
Books		.07*** (.01)
PTA		.02** (.01)
Private		.19*** (.01)
Urban		-.28*** (.01)
Suburban		.21*** (.01)
Peers		-.16*** (.01)
Intercept	.05*** (.01)	.09*** (.02)
R ²	.03	.11
<p>*denotes 95% significance, ** 99.0% significance, ***99.9% significance Note: Easy way outs were included in the regression analysis, however, they are omitted from this Table because of this section's intentional focus on early graduates with a diploma. Note: On timers are omitted.</p>		

Table A.11 Determining if the Exiter Type Coefficients Remains Significant With Respect to School Spirit as Dependent Variable After Including Control Variables.

<i>Variable</i>	<i>Model 1</i>	<i>Model 2</i>
Early Escapees	-.26*** (.03)	-.21*** (.03)
Earnest Achievers	-.11** (.04)	-.09* (.04)
Underachieving Passives	-.14*** (.03)	-.08** (.03)
Mediocre Passives	-.18*** (.01)	-.12*** (.01)
Dropouts	-.11*** (.02)	-.06*** (.02)
Female		.01 (.01)
Race (white omitted)		.03*** (.01)
Two Parents		.02*** (.01)
Siblings		.01** (.01)
Income		-.02*** (.01)
Computer		-.01** (.01)
Books		.04*** (.01)
PTA		.03*** (.01)
Private		.12*** (.01)
Urban		-.01 (.01)
Suburban		-.04*** (.01)
Peers		.12*** (.01)
Intercept	2.85*** (.01)	2.61*** (.01)
R ²	.01	.04
<p>*denotes 95% significance, ** 99.0% significance, ***99.9% significance Note: Easy way outs were included in the regression analysis, however, they are omitted from this Table because of this section's intentional focus on early graduates with a diploma. Note: On timers are omitted.</p>		

Table A.12 Determining if the Exiter Type Coefficients Remains Significant With Respect to *Friendly* as Dependent Variable After Including Control Variables.

<i>Variable</i>	<i>Model 1</i>	<i>Model 2</i>
Early Escapees	-.06* (.03)	-.04 (.03)
Earnest Achievers	-.20*** (.04)	-.18*** (.04)
Underachieving Passives	-.14*** (.03)	-.07** (.03)
Mediocre Passives	-.17*** (.01)	-.10*** (.01)
Dropouts	-.10*** (.02)	-.03* (.02)
Female		-.01 (.01)
Race (white omitted)		.03*** (.01)
Two Parents		.05*** (.01)
Siblings		-.01*** (.01)
Income		.05*** (.01)
Computer		.03*** (.01)
Books		.02*** (.01)
PTA		-.01** (.01)
Private		-.01 (.01)
Urban		-.05*** (.01)
Suburban		.01 (.01)
Peers		.02*** (.01)
Intercept	-3.03** (.01)	2.86*** (.01)
R ²	.01	.03
<p>*denotes 95% significance, ** 99.0% significance, ***99.9% significance Note: Easy way outs were included in the regression analysis, however, they are omitted from this Table because of this section's intentional focus on early graduates with a diploma. Note: On timers are omitted.</p>		

Table A.13 Determining if the Exiter Type Coefficients Remains Significant With Respect to *Racial Harmony* as Dependent Variable After Including Control Variables.

<i>Variable</i>	<i>Model 1</i>	<i>Model 2</i>
Early Escapees	-.18*** (.03)	-.14*** (.03)
Earnest Achievers	-.06 (.03)	-.07* (.03)
Underachieving Passives	.04 (.02)	.06** (.02)
Mediocre Passives	-.05*** (.01)	-.02* (.01)
Dropouts	.01 (.01)	.02 (.01)
Female		.04*** (.01)
Race (white omitted)		-.01*** (.01)
Two Parents		-.01 (.01)
Siblings		.01* (.01)
Income		-.02*** (.01)
Computer		-.01** (.01)
Books		.03*** (.01)
PTA		.01 (.01)
Private		.11*** (.01)
Urban		.07*** (.01)
Suburban		.03*** (.01)
Peers		.06*** (.01)
Intercept	3.21*** (.02)	3.14*** (.01)
R ²	.01	.02
<p>*denotes 95% significance, ** 99.0% significance, ***99.9% significance Note: Easy way outs were included in the regression analysis, however, they are omitted from this Table because of this section's intentional focus on early graduates with a diploma. Note: On timers are omitted.</p>		

Table A.14 Determining if the Exiter Type Coefficients Remains Significant With Respect to *Activities* as Dependent Variable After Including Control Variables.

<i>Variable</i>	<i>Model 1</i>	<i>Model 2</i>
Early Escapees	-1.57*** (.25)	-.87*** (.24)
Earnest Achievers	-.133*** (.30)	-.89** (.28)
Underachieving Passives	-2.83*** (.20)	-1.77*** (.20)
Mediocre Passives	-2.31*** (.10)	-1.25*** (.01)
Dropouts	-1.88*** (.12)	-1.02*** (.11)
Female		-.56*** (.04)
Race (white omitted)		.25*** (.01)
Two Parents		.56*** (.04)
Siblings		-.03* (.01)
Income		.92*** (.03)
Computer		.17*** (.02)
Books		.31*** (.05)
PTA		.48*** (.04)
Private		.94*** (.05)
Urban		-.65*** (.06)
Suburban		-.23*** (.05)
Peers		.78*** (.02)
Intercept	4.91*** (.02)	3.16*** (.10)
R ²	.01	.09
<p>*denotes 95% significance, ** 99.0% significance, ***99.9% significance Note: Easy way outs were included in the regression analysis, however, they are omitted from this Table because of this section's intentional focus on early graduates with a diploma. Note: On timers are omitted.</p>		

Table A.15 Determining if the Exiter Type Coefficients Remains Significant With Respect to Attendance as Dependent Variable After Including Control Variables.

<i>Variable</i>	<i>Model 1</i>	<i>Model 2</i>
Early Escapees	-.11* (.05)	-.03 (.05)
Earnest Achievers	.36 (.06)	.34** (.06)
Underachieving Passives	-.11 (.04)	-.08 (.04)
Mediocre Passives	-.21*** (.03)	-.16*** (.03)
On Timers	.32*** (.02)	.26*** (.02)
Female		-.16*** (.01)
Race (white omitted)		-.05*** (.01)
Two Parents		.11*** (.01)
Siblings		-.02*** (.01)
Income		.08*** (.01)
Computer		.02*** (.04)
Books		.04*** (.01)
PTA		.06*** (.01)
Private		.11*** (.01)
Urban		-.05*** (.01)
Suburban		-.04*** (.01)
Peers		.14*** (.01)
Intercept	3.17*** (.03)	3.54*** (.03)
R ²	.02	.06
<p>*denotes 95% significance, ** 99.0% significance, ***99.9% significance Note: Easy way outs were included in the regression analysis, however, they are omitted from this Table because of this section's intentional focus on early graduates with a diploma. Note: Dropouts are omitted.</p>		

Table A.16 Determining if the Exiter Type Coefficients Remains Significant With Respect to *Punctual* as Dependent Variable After Including Control Variables.

<i>Variable</i>	<i>Model 1</i>	<i>Model 2</i>
Early Escapees	.04 (.05)	.07 (.05)
Earnest Achievers	.53*** (.06)	.49*** (.05)
Underachieving Passives	-.15*** (.04)	-.12** (.04)
Mediocre Passives	-.22*** (.03)	-.17*** (.03)
On Timers	.47*** (.02)	.35*** (.02)
Female		-.10*** (.01)
Race (white omitted)		.01*** (.01)
Two Parents		.13*** (.01)
Siblings		-.02*** (.01)
Income		.03*** (.01)
Computer		.02*** (.01)
Books		.07*** (.01)
PTA		.02** (.01)
Private		.19*** (.01)
Urban		-.28*** (.01)
Suburban		-.16*** (.01)
Peers		.21*** (.01)
Intercept	-.42*** (.02)	-.26*** (.03)
R ²	.03	.11
<p>*denotes 95% significance, ** 99.0% significance, ***99.9% significance Note: Easy way outs were included in the regression analysis, however, they are omitted from this Table because of this section's intentional focus on early graduates with a diploma. Note: Dropouts are omitted.</p>		

Table A.17 Determining if the Exiter Type Coefficients Remains Significant With Respect to *School Spirit* as Dependent Variable After Including Control Variables.

<i>Variable</i>	<i>Model 1</i>	<i>Model 2</i>
Early Escapees	-.15*** (.04)	-.15*** (.04)
Earnest Achievers	.01 (.04)	-.03 (.04)
Underachieving Passives	-.03 (.03)	-.02 (.03)
Mediocre Passives	-.07*** (.02)	-.05** (.02)
On Timers	.11*** (.02)	.06*** (.02)
Female		.01 (.01)
Race (white omitted)		.03*** (.01)
Two Parents		.02*** (.01)
Siblings		.01** (.01)
Income		-.02*** (.01)
Computer		-.01** (.01)
Books		.04*** (.01)
PTA		.03*** (.01)
Private		.12*** (.01)
Urban		-.01 (.01)
Suburban		-.04*** (.01)
Peers		.12*** (.01)
Intercept	2.74* (.02)	2.55*** (.02)
R ²	.01	.04
<p>*denotes 95% significance, ** 99.0% significance, ***99.9% significance Note: Easy way outs were included in the regression analysis, however, they are omitted from this Table because of this section's intentional focus on early graduates with a diploma. Note: Dropouts are omitted.</p>		

Table A.18 Determining if the Exiter Type Coefficients Remains Significant With Respect to *Friendly* as Dependent Variable After Including Control Variables.

<i>Variable</i>	<i>Model 1</i>	<i>Model 2</i>
Early Escapees	.03 (.03)	-.01 (.03)
Earnest Achievers	-.10** (.04)	-.15*** (.04)
Underachieving Passives	-.04 (.03)	-.03 (.03)
Mediocre Passives	-.07*** (.02)	-.07*** (.02)
On Timers	.10*** (.02)	.03* (.02)
Female		-.01** (.01)
Race (white omitted)		.03*** (.01)
Two Parents		.05*** (.01)
Siblings		-.01*** (.01)
Income		.05*** (.01)
Computer		.03*** (.01)
Books		.02*** (.01)
PTA		-.01** (.01)
Private		-.01 (.01)
Urban		-.05*** (.01)
Suburban		-.01 (.01)
Peers		.02*** (.01)
Intercept	2.94*** (.02)	2.83*** (.02)
R ²	.01	.03
<p>*denotes 95% significance, ** 99.0% significance, ***99.9% significance Note: Easy way outs were included in the regression analysis, however, they are omitted from this Table because of this section's intentional focus on early graduates with a diploma. Note: Dropouts are omitted.</p>		

Table A.19 Determining if the Exiter Type Coefficients Remains Significant With Respect to *Racial Harmony* as Dependent Variable After Including Control Variables.

<i>Variable</i>	<i>Model 1</i>	<i>Model 2</i>
Early Escapees	-.19*** (.03)	-.16*** (.03)
Earnest Achievers	-.07 (.04)	-.09* (.04)
Underachieving Passives	.04 (.03)	.05 (.03)
Mediocre Passives	-.06** (.02)	-.04* (.02)
On Timers	-.01 (.01)	-.02 (.01)
Female		.04*** (.01)
Race (white omitted)		-.01*** (.01)
Two Parents		-.01 (.01)
Siblings		.01* (.01)
Income		-.02*** (.01)
Computer		-.01** (.01)
Books		.03*** (.01)
PTA		.01 (.01)
Private		.11*** (.01)
Urban		.07*** (.01)
Suburban		.03*** (.01)
Peers		.06*** (.01)
Intercept	3.22*** (.01)	3.16*** (.02)
R ²	.01	.02
<p>*denotes 95% significance, ** 99.0% significance, ***99.9% significance Note: Easy way outs were included in the regression analysis, however, they are omitted from this Table because of this section's intentional focus on early graduates with a diploma. Note: Dropouts are omitted.</p>		

Table A.20 Determining if the Exiter Type Coefficients Remains Significant With Respect to *Activities* as Dependent Variable After Including Control Variables.

<i>Variable</i>	<i>Model 1</i>	<i>Model 2</i>
Early Escapees	.32 (.27)	.15 (.26)
Earnest Achievers	.55 (.32)	.13 (.30)
Underachieving Passives	-.95*** (.23)	-.75** (.22)
Mediocre Passives	-.42** (.15)	-.23 (.15)
On Timers	1.88*** (.12)	1.02*** (.11)
Female		-.56*** (.04)
Race (white omitted)		.25*** (.01)
Two Parents		.56*** (.04)
Siblings		-.03* (.01)
Income		.92*** (.03)
Computer		.17*** (.02)
Books		.31*** (.05)
PTA		.48*** (.04)
Private		.94*** (.05)
Urban		-.65*** (.06)
Suburban		-.23*** (.05)
Peers		.78*** (.02)
Intercept	3.03*** (.12)	2.14*** (.15)
Pseudo R ²	.01	.09
<p>*denotes 95% significance, ** 99.0% significance, ***99.9% significance Note: Easy way outs were included in the regression analysis, however, they are omitted from this Table because of this section's intentional focus on early graduates with a diploma. Note: Dropouts are omitted.</p>		

Appendix B

Reference Tables for Chapter 6

Table B.1 Multinomial Logistical Regression Results (for Chapter 7) Comparing Early Escapees to the Reference Group of Easy Way Outs.

	<i>Model 1</i>	<i>Model 2</i>	<i>Model 3</i>	<i>Model 4</i>	<i>Model 5</i>	<i>Model 6</i>	<i>Model 7</i>
Female	-.30* (.09)	-.24* (.11)	-.24* (.11)	-.13 (.12)	-.21 (.12)	-.21 (.12)	.09 (.12)
Native American	-20.77 (2479.79)	-20.67 (2275.66)	-20.64 (1962.33)	-20.61 (9018.87)	-20.69 (9336.09)	-20.54 (8878.09)	-21.71 (.00)
Asian	-.45 (.26)	-.43 (.28)	-.71* (.28)	-.75** (.28)	-.84** (.29)	-.79** (.29)	-.89** (.29)
Black	-.27 (.17)	-.29 (.19)	-.51** (.19)	-.55** (.20)	-.70** (.20)	-.46* (.20)	-.64** (.21)
Hispanic	-.45** (.16)	-.44* (.17)	-.68*** (.18)	-.71*** (.18)	-.83*** (.18)	-.64*** (.18)	-.83*** (.18)
Multi Race	-.28 (.24)	-.33 (.26)	-.45 (.26)	-.47 (.26)	-.53* (.26)	.39 (.26)	-.47 (.26)
Two Parents		.23 (.12)	.26* (.12)	.22 (.12)	.09 (.12)	.14 (.12)	.07 (.12)
Siblings		.17*** (.04)	.17*** (.04)	.17*** (.04)	.16*** (.04)	.18*** (.04)	.17*** (.04)
Income		.25** (.09)	.26** (.09)	.23* (.09)	.28** (.10)	.18 (.10)	.25* (.10)
Computer		-.14** (.05)	-.14** (.05)	-.14* (.06)	-.13* (.06)	-.15** (.06)	—
Books		-.39** (.15)	-.40** (.15)	-.37* (.15)	-.44** (.15)	-.32* (.15)	-.41** (.15)
PTA		.02 (.12)	-.01 (.12)	.02 (.12)	.10 (.13)	.01 (.13)	.09 (.13)
Private			1.16** (.27)	1.21*** (.28)	1.353*** (.28)	1.32*** (.28)	1.34* (.28)
Urban			-1.10*** (.19)	-1.12*** (.19)	-1.27*** (.19)	-1.35*** (.19)	-1.41** (.19)
Suburban			-1.07*** (.17)	-1.12*** (.17)	-1.18*** (.17)	-1.22*** (.17)	-1.25 (.17)
Peers				.21 (.05)	.03 (.06)	.12* (.06)	.01 (.06)
Importance					.63*** (.12)		.68*** (.13)
Homework					.05 (.07)		.04 (.07)
Grades					1.05*** (.09)		.91** (.10)
Tests					-.07*** (.01)		-.07** (.01)
Attendance						.05** (.07)	.03*** (.07)
Punctual						.34*** (.07)	.19* (.08)
School Spirit						-.15* (.07)	-.21* (.07)
Friendly						.33*** (.07)	.38* (.08)
Racial Harmony						-.44*** (.09)	-.45** (.09)
Activities						.03* (.01)	.01 (.01)
Intercept	.04 (.09)	.48 (.18)	-.21 (.35)	-.17 (.36)	-.84 (.62)	.70 (.55)	.30 (.74)
Pseudo R2	.01	.03	.03	.04	.08	.06	.09

Table B.2 Multinomial Logistical Regression Results (for Chapter 7) Comparing Earnest Achievers to the Reference Group of Easy Way Outs.

	<i>Model 1</i>	<i>Model 2</i>	<i>Model 3</i>	<i>Model 4</i>	<i>Model 5</i>	<i>Model 6</i>	<i>Model 7</i>
	-1.37*** (.14)	-.41*** (.14)	-1.40*** (.14)	-1.18*** (.14)	-.24 (.15)	-1.29*** (.14)	-.33* (.15)
Native American	-20.13 (.00)	-19.76 (.00)	-19.67 (.00)	-19.68 (.00)	-18.47 (7283.45)	-19.07 (.00)	-19.53 (.00)
Asian	1.34*** (.22)	1.45*** (.23)	1.19*** (.24)	1.08*** (.24)	.66** (.25)	1.00*** (.25)	.62* (.25)
Black	-.17 (.23)	.21 (.24)	-.01 (.25)	-.09 (.25)	.63* (.26)	-.11 (.26)	.52* (.26)
Hispanic	.73*** (.16)	1.09*** (.17)	.87*** (.18)	.80*** (.18)	1.08*** (.19)	.91*** (.19)	1.05*** (.19)
Multi Race	1.21*** (.22)	1.30*** (.23)	1.18*** (.23)	1.13*** (.23)	1.32*** (.24)	1.23*** (.24)	1.31*** (.24)
Two Parents		.37** (.14)	.36** (.14)	.29* (.14)	-.16 (.14)	.18 (.14)	-.14 (.14)
Siblings		.05 (.04)	.05 (.04)	.05 (.05)	.09 (.05)	.06 (.05)	.09 (.05)
Income		.48*** (.09)	.43*** (.09)	.39*** (.10)	.05 (.11)	.35*** (.10)	.02 (.11)
Computer		.13 (.07)	.13 (.07)	.14 (.07)	.03 (.07)	.13 (.07)	.04 (.07)
Books		-.30 (.17)	-.32 (.17)	-.19 (.17)	-.07 (.18)	-.16 (.17)	—
PTA		-.01 (.14)	.03 (.14)	.11 (.14)	.17 (.14)	.15 (.14)	—
Private			-.11 (.22)	-.07 (.23)	.30 (.23)	.14 (.23)	.31 (.23)
Urban			-1.40 (.25)	-1.33*** (.25)	.30 (.23)	.14 (.23)	.31 (.23)
Suburban			1.24 (.24)	-1.22*** (.24)	-1.38*** (.25)	-1.35*** (.24)	-1.42*** (.07)
Peers				.54*** (.07)	.26*** (.07)	.32*** (.07)	.24*** (.07)
Importance					-.19 (.16)		-.13 (.16)
Homework					.01 (.07)		-.01 (.08)
Grades					4.08*** (.14)		4.07*** (.14)
Tests					-.09*** (.01)		-.09*** (.01)
Attendance						.14 (.08)	.07 (.09)
Punctual						.70*** (.09)	.01 (.10)
School Spirit						.01 (.09)	-.03 (.09)
Friendly						.05 (.09)	-.04 (.09)
Racial Harmony						-.29** (.10)	-.31** (.10)
Activities						.02 (.01)	-.03 (.01)
Intercept	-.48*** (.11)	-.74*** (.21)	.94 (.37)	.87* (.38)	-5.90*** (.76)	1.39* (.62)	-4.95*** (.91)
Pseudo R2	.01	.03	.03	.04	.08	.06	.09

Table B3 Multinomial Logistical Regression Results (for Chapter 7) Comparing Underachieving Passives to the Reference Group of Easy Way Outs.

	<i>Model 1</i>	<i>Model 2</i>	<i>Model 3</i>	<i>Model 4</i>	<i>Model 5</i>	<i>Model 6</i>	<i>Model 7</i>
Female	-.28** (.10)	-.25* (.10)	-.25* (.10)	-.12 (.11)	.05 (.11)	-.16 (.11)	-.03 (.11)
Native American	.31 (.39)	.24 (.41)	.21 (.41)	.23 (.42)	.06 (.42)	.23 (.42)	.01 (.42)
Asian	.67*** (.21)	.68** (.22)	.64** (.22)	.52* (.23)	.51* (.23)	.47* (.23)	.44 (.23)
Black	.78*** (.15)	.76*** (.16)	.72*** (.16)	.63*** (.17)	.38* (.17)	.64*** (.17)	.40* (.18)
Hispanic	.71*** (.13)	.73*** (.14)	.69*** (.15)	.63*** (.15)	.44** (.15)	.64*** (.15)	.43** (.15)
Multi Race	.43* (.21)	.45* (.22)	.44* (.22)	.43 (.22)	.32 (.22)	.42 (.22)	.33 (.22)
Two Parents		.29** (.11)	.29** (.11)	.26* (.11)	.19 (.11)	.20 (.11)	.17 (.11)
Siblings		.14*** (.04)	.14*** (.04)	.14*** (.04)	.12*** (.04)	.15*** (.04)	-.13*** (.04)
Income		.15 (.08)	.15 (.08)	.08 (.09)	.18* (.09)	.07 (.09)	.18* (.09)
Computer		-.07 (.05)	-.07 (.05)	-.07 (.05)	-.05 (.05)	-.06 (.05)	-.03 (.05)
Books		-.11 (.12)	-.12 (.12)	-.07 (.13)	-.12 (.13)	-.03 (.13)	-.09 (.13)
PTA		.09 (.11)	.10 (.11)	.11 (.11)	.20 (.11)	.11 (.11)	.20 (.12)
Private			.09 (.21)	.10 (.21)	.13 (.22)	(.16) (.21)	.12 (.22)
Urban			-.08 (.15)	-.07 (.15)	-.13 (.15)	(-.14) (.15)	-.18 (.16)
Suburban			.10 (.14)	.07 (.14)	.03 (.14)	.03 (.14)	.01 (.14)
Peers				.31*** (.05)	.18*** (.11)	.22*** (.05)	.14* (.06)
Importance					.52*** .11		.50*** (.11)
Homework					.12* (.06)		.10 (.06)
Grades					.41*** (.08)		.31*** (.09)
Tests					-.6*** (.01)		-.06*** (.01)
Attendance						.18** (.06)	.17** (.06)
Punctual						.12 (.06)	.08 (.07)
School Spirit						(.06) (.07)	.01 (.07)
Friendly						(.21)*** (.07)	.27*** (.07)
Racial Harmony						-.03 (.08)	-.02 (.08)
Activities						-.02 (.08)	-.02 (.01)
Intercept	-.13 (.09)	-.70 (.17)	-.77** (.29)	-.71 (.29)	-.31 (.54)	-.1.76 (.48)	-1.03 (.66)
Pseudo R2	.01	.03	.03	.04	.08	.06	.09

Table B.4 Multinomial Logistical Regression Results (for Chapter 7) Comparing Mediocre Passives to the Reference Group of Easy Way Outs.

	<i>Model 1</i>	<i>Model 2</i>	<i>Model 3</i>	<i>Model 4</i>	<i>Model 5</i>	<i>Model 6</i>	<i>Model 7</i>
Female	-.28*** (.08)	-.26** (.08)	-.25** (.08)	-.16 (.08)	.01 (.09)	-.21* (.09)	-.08 (.09)
Native American	-.09 (.31)	-.13 (.33)	-.11 (.33)	-.11 (.34)	-.24 (.34)	-.11 (.34)	-.30 (.34)
Asian	.53** (.17)	.46** (.18)	.40* (.18)	.35 (.19)	.34 (.19)	.32 (.19)	.31 (.19)
Black	.65*** (.12)	.59*** (.13)	.54*** (.13)	.49*** (.14)	.25 (.14)	.51*** (.14)	.28 (.15)
Hispanic	.41*** (.11)	.34** (.12)	.27* (.12)	.22 (.12)	.05 (.12)	.25* (.12)	.05 (.12)
Multi Race	.52** (.17)	.49** (.17)	.46** (.17)	.43* (.17)	.34 (.18)	.46** (.18)	.37* (.18)
Two Parents		.25** (.09)	.24** (.09)	.20* (.09)	.13 (.09)	.15 (.09)	.11 (.09)
Siblings		.12*** (.03)	.12*** (.03)	.13*** (.03)	.11** (.03)	.13*** (.03)	.11*** (.03)
Income		.07 (.07)	.03 (.07)	-.01 (.07)	.09 (.07)	.13*** (.030)	.11*** (.03)
Computer		-.05 (.10)	-.05 (.10)	-.05 (.10)	-.02 (.04)	-.05 (.04)	-.01 (.04)
Books		-.13 (.09)	-.05 (.10)	-.01 (.10)	-.07 (.10)	.01 (.10)	-.06 (.10)
PTA		—	-.10 (.09)	-.08 (.09)	.01 (.09)	-.07 (.09)	0.2 (.09)
Private			-.27 (.16)	-.26 (.16)	-.24 (.16)	-.20 (.16)	-.25 (.17)
Urban			-.30* (.12)	-.29* (.12)	-.36** (.12)	-.37** (.12)	-.40*** (.13)
Suburban			-.33** (.11)	-.34*** (.11)	-.38*** (.11)	-.38*** (.11)	-.40*** (.11)
Peers				.20*** (.04)	.09*** (.04)	.14*** (.04)	.07 (.04)
Importance					.43 (.08)		.42*** (.08)
Homework					.08 (.05)		.07 (.05)
Grades					.45*** (.07)		.36*** (.07)
Tests					-.06*** (.01)		-.06*** (.01)
Attendance						.14** (.05)	.14** (.05)
Punctual						.08 (.05)	.04 (.05)
School Spirit						.02 (.05)	-.02 (.05)
Friendly						.16** (.05)	.23*** (.06)
Racial Harmony						-.22*** (.06)	-.21*** (.07)
Activities						.01 (.01)	.01 (.01)
Intercept	1.38*** (.07)	1.05*** (.13)	1.68*** (.22)	1.74*** (.22)	2.59 (.42)	1.54*** (.37)	2.63** (.51)
Pseudo R2	.01	.03	.03	.04	.08	.06	.09

Table B.5 Multinomial Logistical Regression Results (for Chapter 7) Comparing On Timers to the Reference Group of Easy Way Outs.

	<i>Model 1</i>	<i>Model 2</i>	<i>Model 3</i>	<i>Model 4</i>	<i>Model 5</i>	<i>Model 6</i>	<i>Model 7</i>
Female	-.39 (.07)	-.41*** (.08)	-.41*** (.08)	-.22** (.08)	.24** (.08)	-.34*** (.08)	.07 (.08)
Native American	-.63* (.27)	-.19 (.29)	-.10 (.29)	-.13 (.30)	-.01 (.31)	-.04 (.30)	-.05 (.31)
Asian	.59*** (.16)	.70*** (.17)	.82*** (.17)	.70*** (.17)	.55** (.18)	.71*** (.18)	.56** (.18)
Black	.04 (.11)	.46*** (.12)	.55*** (.12)	.42*** (.13)	.49*** (.13)	.56*** (.13)	.56*** (.14)
Hispanic	-.15 (.09)	.25* (.11)	.31** (.11)	.23* (.11)	.27* (.11)	.38*** (.11)	.31** (.11)
Multi Race	-.07 (.15)	.13 (.16)	.16 (.16)	.12 (.16)	.13 (.16)	.23 (.16)	.19 (.16)
Two Parents		.58*** (.08)	.54*** (.08)	.47*** (.08)	.25** (.08)	.35*** (.08)	.22** (.08)
Siblings		.02 (.03)	.02 (.03)	.03 (.03)	.03 (.03)	.04 (.03)	.03 (.03)
Income		.52*** (.06)	.41*** (.06)	.34*** (.06)	.22*** (.07)	.26*** (.06)	.19** (.07)
Computer		.07* (.04)	.07 (.04)	.06 (.04)	.04 (.04)	.05 (.04)	.05 (.04)
Books		-.29*** (.09)	-.26** (.09)	-.17 (.09)	-.16 (.09)	-.10 (.09)	-.13 (.09)
PTA		-.14 (.08)	-.08 (.08)	-.04 (.08)	.02 (.08)	-.01 (.08)	.05 (.08)
Private			-1.05*** (.15)	-1.01*** (.15)	-.76*** (.15)	-.77*** (.15)	-.69*** (.15)
Urban			.15 (.11)	.17 (.11)	-.04 (.11)	-.08 (.11)	-.16 (.11)
Suburban			-.14 (.09)	-.15 (.10)	-.25* (.09)	-.27** (.09)	-.31** (.10)
Peers				.49*** (.03)	.26*** (.04)	.28*** (.04)	.17*** (.04)
Importance					.58*** (.07)		.54*** (.08)
Homework					.06 (.04)		.02 (.05)
Grades					1.52*** (.06)		1.28*** (.06)
Tests					-.06*** (.01)		-.06*** (.01)
Attendance						.17*** (.05)	.16*** (.05)
Punctual						.49*** (.04)	.25*** (.05)
School Spirit						.12* (.05)	.06 (.05)
Friendly						.37*** (.05)	.39*** (.05)
Racial Harmony						-.19*** (.06)	-.20*** (.06)
Activities						.05*** (.01)	.03*** (.01)
Intercept	---	4.64 (.12)	5.44*** (2.00)	5.44*** (.20)	2.81*** (.39)	4.08*** (.34)	2.52*** (.47)
Pseudo R2	.01	.03	.03	.04	.08	.06	.09

Table B.6 Multinomial Logistical Regression Results (for Chapter 7) Comparing Earnest Achievers to the Reference Group of Early Escapees.

	<i>Model 1</i>	<i>Model 2</i>	<i>Model 3</i>	<i>Model 4</i>	<i>Model 5</i>	<i>Model 6</i>	<i>Model 7</i>
Female	-1.07*** (.14)	-.18*** (.15)	-1.16*** (.15)	-1.05*** (.15)	-.45** (.15)	-1.09 (.15)	-.42** (.16)
Native American	.63 (1499.14)	.91 (2507.76)	.97 (2362.04)	.93 (2418.53)	2.22 (1628.10)	.96 (2352.85)	2.18 (1534.59)
Asian	1.79*** (.26)	1.88*** (.27)	1.90*** (.28)	1.83*** (.28)	1.50*** (.28)	1.80*** (.29)	1.51*** (.29)
Black	.10 (.24)	.50 (.26)	.50 (.26)	.47 (.26)	1.33*** (.27)	.35 (.27)	1.16*** (.28)
Hispanic	1.18*** (.18)	1.52*** (.19)	1.55*** (.20)	1.51*** (.20)	1.90*** (.21)	1.56*** (.21)	1.87*** (.21)
Multi Race	1.49*** (.25)	1.62*** (.26)	1.63*** (.26)	1.60*** (.26)	1.84*** (.27)	1.62*** (.27)	1.77*** (.27)
Two Parents		.14 (.14)	.10 (.14)	.07 (.14)	-.26 (.15)	.04 (.15)	-.21 (.15)
Siblings		-.11* (.05)	-.12* (.05)	-.12** (.05)	-.08 (.05)	-.12* (.05)	-.08 (.05)
Income		.23* (.10)	.17 (.10)	.16 (.11)	-.23* (.11)	.16 (.11)	-.23* (.11)
Computer		.27*** (.07)	.27*** (.07)	.28*** (.07)	.16* (.07)	.28*** (.07)	.17* (.07)
Books		.09 (.18)	.08 (.18)	.18 (.19)	.37* (.19)	.16 (.19)	.32 (.19)
PTA		-.03 (.14)	.04 (.14)	.10 (.15)	.06 (.15)	.13 (.15)	.06 (.15)
Private			1.27*** (.28)	-1.28*** (.29)	-1.06*** (.29)	-1.18*** (.29)	-1.03*** (.29)
Urban			-.30 (.28)	-.21 (.28)	-.43 (.28)	-.25 (.28)	-.32 (.28)
Suburban			-.17 (.26)	-.10 (.27)	-.20 (.27)	-.13 (.27)	-.17 (.27)
Peers				.33*** (.07)	.23** (.07)	.20** (.07)	.24*** (.08)
Importance					-.82*** (.17)		-.82*** (.18)
Homework					-.05 (.08)		-.05 (.08)
Grades					3.03*** (.15)		3.16*** (.15)
Tests					-.02* (.01)		-.02* (.01)
Attendance						.09 (.09)	.03 (.09)
Punctual						.36*** (.10)	-.18 (.10)
School Spirit						.16 (.09)	.18* (.09)
Friendly						-.28** (.10)	.18*** (.09)
Racial Harmony						.15 (.10)	.13 (.10)
Activities						-.01 (.01)	-.04** (.01)
Intercept	-.52 (.11)	-.26 (.22)	1.15** (.43)	1.03 (.44)	-5.06 (.82)	.69 (.67)	-5.25** (.97)
Pseudo R2	.01	.03	.03	.04	.08	.06	.09

Table B.10 Multinomial Logistical Regression Results (for Chapter 7) Comparing Underachieving Passives to the Reference Group of Earnest Achievers.

	<i>Model 1</i>	<i>Model 2</i>	<i>Model 3</i>	<i>Model 4</i>	<i>Model 5</i>	<i>Model 6</i>	<i>Model 7</i>
Female	1.09*** (.13)	1.16*** (.14)	1.15*** (.14)	1.05*** (.14)	.30* (.14)	1.13*** (.14)	.30* (.15)
Native American	16.44*** (.28)	15.99*** (.30)	15.89*** (.30)	15.92*** (.30)	15.54*** (.30)	15.81*** (.30)	15.55*** (.30)
Asian	-.67*** (.21)	-.77*** (.22)	-.55* (.22)	-.55* (.23)	-.16 (.230)	-.54* (.23)	-.17 (.23)
Black	.95*** (.22)	-.36* (.17)	-.18 (.17)	-.17 (.18)	-.63*** (.18)	-.28 (.18)	-.61*** (.18)
Hispanic	-.02 (.15)	-.36* (.17)	-.18 (.17)	-.17 (.18)	-.63*** (.18)	-.28 (.18)	-.61*** (.18)
Multi Race	.78*** (.22)	-.85*** (.22)	-.73*** (.26)	-.71** (.23)	-.10*** (.23)	-.81*** (.23)	-.97*** (.23)
Two Parents		-.07 .13	-.07 (.13)	-.03 (.14)	.35** (.14)	.02 (.14)	.31* (.14)
Siblings		.09 (.04)*	-.09* (.04)	.09* (.04)	.04 (.04)	.08 (.04)	.04 (.04)
Income		-.29** (.10)	-.29** (.10)	-.31** (.10)	.13 (.10)	-.27** (.10)	.16 (.10)
Computer		-.20** (.07)	-.20** (.07)	-.21** (.07)	-.08 (.07)	-.19** (.07)	-.07 (.07)
Books		.20 (.17)	.20 (.17)	.13 (.17)	-.05 (.17)	.13 (.17)	.00 (.17)
PTA		.07 (.14)	.07 (.14)	-.01 (.14)	.03 (.14)	-.03 (.14)	.04 (.14)
Private		.20 (.23)	.20 (.23)	.17 (.23)	-.17 (.23)	.03 (.23)	-.19 (.23)
Urban		1.32*** (.250)	1.32*** (.25)	1.27*** (.25)	1.56*** (.26)	1.46*** (.26)	1.55*** (.26)
Suburban		1.34*** (.24)	1.34*** (.24)	1.29*** (.25)	1.42*** (.25)	1.39*** (.25)	1.42** (.25)
Peers				-.23*** (.07)	-.08 (.07)	-.10 (.07)	-.11 (.07)
Importance					.71*** (.160)		.63*** (.17)
Homework					.11 (.07)		.11 (.07)
Grades					-3.67*** (.14)		-3.75*** (.15)
Tests					.03*** (.01)		.03*** (.01)
Attendance						.04 (.08)	.10 (.09)
Punctual						-.58*** (.09)	.07 (.10)
School Spirit						.05 (.08)	.03 (.09)
Friendly						.16 (.09)	.31*** (.09)
Racial Harmony						.26** (.10)	.30** (.10)
Activities						-.04* (.01)	.01 (.01)
Intercept	.36*** (.11)	.04 (.21)	-1.71*** (.38)	-1.58*** (.38)	5.60*** (.76)	-3.15*** (.62)	3.19*** (.91)
Pseudo R2	.01	.03	.03	.04	.08	.06	.09

Table B.13 Multinomial Logistical Regression Results (for Chapter 7) Comparing Mediocre Passives to the Reference Group of Underachieving Passives.

	<i>Model 1</i>	<i>Model 2</i>	<i>Model 3</i>	<i>Model 4</i>	<i>Model 5</i>	<i>Model 6</i>	<i>Model 7</i>
Female	.01 (.08)	-.01 (.08)	-.01 (.08)	-.04 (.08)	-.04 (.08)	-.04 (.08)	-.04 (.08)
Native American	-.40 (.32)	-.37 (.34)	-.33 (.34)	-.34 (.34)	-.30 (.34)	-.34 (.34)	-.31 (.34)
Asian	-.14 (.15)	-.22 (.16)	-.24 (.16)	-.18 (.17)	-.17 (.17)	-.14 (.17)	-.13 (.17)
Black	-.13 (.11)	-.18 (.12)	-.19 (.12)	-.14 (.12)	-.12 (.13)	-.13 (.13)	-.12 (.13)
Hispanic	-.30** (.10)	-.39*** (.11)	-.42*** (.11)	-.41*** (.11)	-.39*** (.11)	-.39*** (.11)	-.38*** (.11)
Multi Race	.09 (.16)	.05 (.17)	.02 (.17)	.01 (.17)	.02 (.17)	.03 (.17)	.04 (.17)
Two Parents		-.04 (.09)	-.05 (.08)	-.06 (.09)	-.06 (.09)	-.06 (.09)	-.06 (.09)
Siblings		-.02 (.03)	-.01 (.03)	-.01 (.03)	-.01 (.03)	-.01 (.03)	-.02 (.03)
Income		-.08 (.06)	-.12 (.06)	-.09 (.07)	-.08 (.07)	-.11 (.07)	-.10 (.07)
Computer		.02 (.10)	.07 (.10)	.06 (.10)	.05 (.10)	.05 (.10)	.04 (.10)
Books		.06 (.10)	.07 (.10)	.06 (.10)	.05 (.10)	.05 (.10)	.04 (.10)
PTA		-.22* (.09)	-.20* (.09)	-.19* (.09)	-.19* (.09)	-.18* (.09)	-.18* (.09)
Private			-.36* (.16)	-.36* (.16)	-.37* (.17)	-.37* (.16)	-.37* (.17)
Urban			-.22 (.12)	-.23 (.12)	-.23 (.12)	-.23 (.12)	-.23 (.12)
Suburban			-.42*** (.11)	-.42*** (.11)	-.41*** (.11)	-.42*** (.11)	-.40*** (.11)
Peers				-.10** (.04)	-.08* (.04)	-.08* (.04)	-.07 (.04)
Importance					-.09 (.09)		-.07 (.09)
Homework					-.04 (.09)		-.03 (.05)
Grades					.03 (.06)		.04 (.07)
Tests					-.01 (.01)		-.01 (.01)
Attendance						-.04 (.05)	-.04 (.05)
Punctual						-.04 (.05)	-.04 (.05)
School Spirit						-.03 (.05)	-.03 (.05)
Friendly						-.05 (.05)	-.05 (.05)
Racial Harmony						-.19** (.06)	-.19** (.06)
Activities						.03*** (.01)	.03** (.01)
Intercept	1.51*** (.07)	1.75*** (.13)	2.45*** (.23)	2.45*** (.23)	2.90*** (.43)	3.30*** (.38)	3.66*** (.52)
Pseudo R2	.01	.03	.03	.04	.08	.06	.09

Table B.14 Multinomial Logistical Regression Results (for Chapter 7) Comparing Timers to the Reference Group of Underachieving Passives.

	<i>Model 1</i>	<i>Model 2</i>	<i>Model 3</i>	<i>Model 4</i>	<i>Model 5</i>	<i>Model 6</i>	<i>Model 7</i>
Female	-.11 (.07)	-.16* (.07)	-.17* (.07)	-.10 (.07)	.19* (.08)	-.17* (.07)	.10 (.08)
Native American	-.93*** (.28)	-.43 (.30)	-.32 (.30)	-.36 (.30)	-.06 (.30)	-.27 (.30)	-.06 (.30)
Asian	-.08 (.14)	.02 (.14)	.18 (.15)	.18 (.15)	.04 (.15)	.24 (.15)	.12 (.15)
Black	-.74*** (.10)	-.31** (.11)	-.18 (.11)	-.21 (.11)	.11 (.12)	-.09 (.12)	.16 (.12)
Hispanic	-.85*** (.09)	-.48*** (.10)	-.38*** (.10)	-.40*** (.10)	-.17 (.10)	-.26* (.10)	-.12 (.10)
Multi Race	-.50*** (.15)	-.32* (.15)	-.29 (.15)	-.30* (.15)	-.19 (.15)	-.19 (.16)	-.14 (.16)
Two Parents		.29*** (.08)	.25*** (.08)	.22** (.08)	.07 (.08)	.15 (.08)	.05 (.08)
Siblings		-.12*** (.02)	-.12*** (.02)	-.12*** (.02)	-.10*** (.03)	-.11*** (.02)	-.10*** (.03)
Income		.37*** (.06)	.26*** (.06)	.25*** (.06)	.04 (.06)	.18** (.06)	.01 (.06)
Computer		.14*** (.03)	.13*** (.03)	.14*** (.03)	.08* (.03)	-.07 (.09)	-.03 (.09)
Books		-.18* (.09)	-.14 (.09)	-.10 (.09)	-.14 (.09)	-.07 (.09)	-.03 (.09)
PTA		-.22* (.08)	-.18* (.08)	-.15 (.08)	-.18* (.08)	-.12 (.08)	-.15 (.08)
Private			-1.13*** (.15)	-1.11*** (.15)	-.89*** (.15)	-.94*** (.15)	-.82*** (.15)
Urban			.22* (.10)	.24* (.110)	.10 (.10)	.06 (.11)	.02 (.11)
Suburban			-.23* (.10)	-.22* (.10)	-.29** (.10)	-.30** (.10)	-.32** (.10)
Peers				.19*** (.04)	.08* (.04)	.06 (.04)	.03 (.04)
Importance					.06 (.08)		.04 (.09)
Homework					-.06 (.04)		-.08 (.04)
Grades					1.10*** (.06)		.96*** (.06)
Tests					.01 (.01)		.01 (.01)
Attendance						-.01 (.04)	-.01 (.04)
Punctual						.37*** (.05)	.17*** (.05)
School Spirit						.06 (.05)	.06 (.05)
Friendly						.16*** (.05)	.12* (.05)
Racial Harmony						-.16** (.06)	-.19*** (.06)
Activities						.07*** (.01)	.05*** (.01)
Intercept	5.01*** (.07)	5.34*** (.12)	6.21*** (.21)	6.15*** ---	3.12*** (.39)	5.84*** (.35)	3.55*** (.48)
Pseudo R2	.01	.03	.03	.04	.08	.06	.09

Table B.15 Multinomial Logistical Regression Results (for Chapter 7) Comparing On Timers to the Reference Group of Mediocre Passives.

	<i>Model 1</i>	<i>Model 2</i>	<i>Model 3</i>	<i>Model 4</i>	<i>Model 5</i>	<i>Model 6</i>	<i>Model 7</i>
Female	-.11*** (.04)	-.15*** (.04)	-.16*** (.04)	-.06 (.04)	.23*** (.04)	-.13*** (.04)	.14*** (.03)
Native American	-.54*** (.16)	-.06 (.17)	.01 (.17)	-.02 (.17)	.23 (.17)	.07 (.17)	.25 (.17)
Asian	.06 (.07)	.24*** (.07)	.42*** (.07)	.35*** (.07)	.21** (.08)	.39*** (.08)	.25*** (.08)
Black	-.61*** (.05)	-.13** (.05)	.01 (.05)	-.07 (.05)	.24*** (.06)	.05 (.06)	.28*** (.06)
Hispanic	-.56*** (.05)	-.09 (.05)	.05 (.05)	.01 (.05)	.22*** (.05)	.13* (.05)	.26*** (.05)
Multi Race	-.59*** (.07)	-.37*** (.07)	-.30*** (.07)	-.31 (.07)	-.21* (.07)	-.23** (.07)	-.18* (.07)
Two Parents		.33*** (.04)	.30*** (.04)	.27*** (.04)	.12** (.04)	.20*** (.04)	.11*** (.04)
Siblings		-.11*** (.01)	-.11*** (.01)	-.10*** (.01)	-.08*** (.01)	-.09*** (.01)	-.08*** (.01)
Income		.44*** (.03)	.38*** (.03)	.34*** (.03)	.12*** (.03)	.29*** (.03)	.12*** (.03)
Computer		.12*** (.02)	.12*** (.02)	.12*** (.02)	.06*** (.02)	.10*** (.02)	.06*** (.02)
Books		-.23*** (.04)	-.21*** (.04)	-.16*** (.04)	-.08 (.04)	-.12** (.04)	-.07 (.04)
PTA		-.01 (.04)	.02 (.04)	.04 (.04)	.01 (.04)	.06 (.04)	.03 (.04)
Private			-.78*** (.06)	.75*** (.06)	-.52*** (.070)	-.57*** (.07)	-.45*** (.07)
Urban			.45*** (.06)	.47*** (.06)	.33*** (.06)	.29*** (.06)	.25*** (.06)
Suburban			.19*** (.05)	.20*** (.05)	.12* (.05)	.11* (.05)	.09 (.05)
Peers				.29*** (.02)	.17*** (.02)	.14*** (.02)	.10*** (.02)
Importance					.15*** (.04)		.12** (.04)
Homework					-.02 (.02)		-.05* (.02)
Grades					1.07*** (.03)		.92*** (.03)
Tests					.01 (.01)		.01* (.01)
Attendance						.03 (.02)	.02 (.02)
Punctual						.40*** (.02)	.21*** (.02)
School Spirit						.09*** (.02)	.09*** (.02)
Friendly						.21*** (.02)	.16*** (.03)
Racial Harmony						.03 (.03)	.01 (.03)
Activities						.04*** (.01)	.02*** (.01)
Intercept	3.50*** (.03)	3.59*** (.06)	3.76*** (.10)	3.70*** (.10)	.22 (.19)	2.55*** (.17)	-.11 (.23)
Pseudo R2	.01	.03	.03	.04	.08	.06	.09