

EDUCATION AND THE FAMILY

CONTEMPORARY PERSPECTIVES IN FAMILY RESEARCH

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CONTEMPORARY PERSPECTIVES IN FAMILY
RESEARCH VOLUME 28

**EDUCATION AND THE
FAMILY: ACHIEVEMENT,
ATTAINMENT, AND
QUALITY SCHOOL
OUTCOMES**

EDITED BY

TIMOTHY J. MADIGAN

Commonwealth University, USA

and

SAMPSON LEE BLAIR

The State University of New York, Buffalo, USA



United Kingdom – North America – Japan
India – Malaysia – China

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INVESTOR IN PEOPLE

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ABOUT THE EDITORS

Timothy J. Madigan is an Associate Professor of Sociology at Commonwealth University–Mansfield of Pennsylvania where he has been teaching a variety of courses for over two decades including his favorite course the sociology of education. He earned his bachelor's degree from Bloomsburg University in a dual social work and sociology program which involved field and teaching experiences at Head Start, Children and Youth Agency, and the Navajo Indian Reservation Boarding School in Chinle, Arizona. Upon graduation, he worked at the Bancroft School and Community. In addition to earning a minor in statistics and completing advanced Mandarin classes at Pennsylvania State University (PSU), his graduate degrees from the Sociology Department at PSU focused on Educational Attainment (MA) and Cultural Capital (PhD). He has published work on both topics as well as the Chinese language. He worked as a demographer within the education branch of the US Census Bureau producing annual reports about the demographics of education in the United States. In addition, he also served as a statistical consultant at the National Center for Education Statistics in the US Department of Education where, in addition to ad hoc policy studies, he reported on the condition of education in the United States, science and mathematics achievement and course taking patterns of American high school students, who goes to America's best universities, parent involvement, sub-BA labor market outcomes, diversity, access, and effective schools. He has managed education data at NCES and directed research on higher education at Shippensburg University. For a decade, he conducted the annual Mansfield University State Survey (formerly The Public Mind) exploring crucial policy issues such as education, the environment, gambling, taxes, voting, going to war, etc. His annual reports received local-, state-, and national-level media attention (e.g., NPR, Reuters, *The Wall Street Journal*, Fox News, etc.). For years, he served as Field Editor for the American Sociological Association's new Teaching Resources and Innovations Library Sociology within which he has published. He is a Ford Foundation Fellowship recipient for teaching social stratification in China. Over the years, he has served as a Visiting Scholar at Central China Normal University, Huazhong Agricultural University, Hubei Vocational College, Hubei University of Economics, National Central South University of Law and Economics in Wuhan, Nanjing Pharmaceutical University in Nanjing, National Taipei University, and The Taiwan Provincial Institute of Family Planning in Taiwan, where he has guest lectured, taught sociology and statistic courses, and conducted wave after wave of survey research on education and family. He has coauthored a book, *Mate Selection in China: Causes and Consequences in Search of a Spouse*, with Sampson Lee Blair and Fang Fang. He has published chapters on family and education in the books *Chinese Families: Tradition, Modernization and*

Change, Education and Society: An Encyclopedia and Introduction to Sociology: A Collaborative Approach. He serves on several editorial boards and has published articles in over a handful of sociology journals. Lately, he is pursuing comparative research on Chinese and American college students and teaching a unique college course called “Irish Culture Through Song.” Finally, he and his colleagues are finishing a first ever textbook titled *The Sociology of China: An Introduction* (ORCID: 0000-0002-6185-534X).

Sampson Lee Blair is a Family Sociologist and Demographer at The State University of New York (Buffalo). He received his BS and MS degrees from Virginia Tech and his PhD from Penn State. Much of his research focuses upon parent–child relationships, with particular emphasis on child and adolescent development. In 2010, he received the Fulbright Scholar Award from the US Department of State, wherein he conducted research on parental involvement and children’s educational attainment in the Philippines. He has examined a wide variety of relationship dynamics within families. He has published 23 books, in addition to numerous journal articles and book chapters, has presented over 150 research papers at conferences in the United States and abroad, and has served as keynote speaker on numerous occasions. His recent research has focused upon marriage and fertility patterns in China. In 2022, he published *Mate Selection in China: Causes and Consequences in the Search for a Spouse* (with Timothy J. Madigan and Fang Fang). He has served as Chair of the Children and Youth research section of the American Sociological Association, as Senior Editor of *Sociological Inquiry*, Guest Editor of *Sociological Studies of Children and Youth*, and on the editorial boards of *Asian Women*, *Journal of Applied Youth Studies*, *Journal of Divorce and Remarriage*, *Journal of Family Issues*, *Marriage and Family Review*, *Social Justice Research*, *Sociological Inquiry*, *International Journal of Criminology and Sociology*, and *Sociological Viewpoints*. He also serves on the International Advisory Board of *Tambara*, at Ateneo de Davao University, in the Philippines. In 2023, he was re-elected as Vice-President (North America) of the Research Committee on Youth (RC34), in the International Sociological Association. Since 2011, he has served as the editor of *Contemporary Perspectives in Family Research*. He is a recipient of the SUNY Chancellor’s Award for Excellence in Teaching. Abroad, he has served as a Visiting Professor at the University of Santo Tomas (Manila) and Xavier University (Ateneo de Cagayan), in the Philippines. In China, he has been a Visiting Professor at East China Normal University (华东师范大学), Qingdao University (青岛大学), Shanghai International Studies University (上海外国语大学), and Shanghai University of Finance and Economics (上海财经大学). In 2020, he was initiated into the NCFR Legacy Circle of the National Council on Family Relations. In 2021, he received the Distinguished Career Service Award from the American Sociological Association’s research section on Children and Youth (ORCID: 0000-0001-5039-7139).

ABOUT THE CONTRIBUTORS

Katerina Bodovski is Professor of Education in the Department of Education Policy Studies at Pennsylvania State University. Her research interests lie in the intersection of sociology of education and childhood and comparative international education. Using the lens of cultural and emotional capital, she's studying how family environment and parental practices shape various children's outcomes, both academic and non-academic. She has published extensively in leading peer-reviewed journals and is a recipient of several prestigious research grants, including funding from the American Education Research Association, Foundation for Child Development, and National Science Foundation. She is the author of two books, *Across Three Continents: Reflections on Immigration, Education, and Personal Survival* (Peter Lang Publishing, 2015) and *Childhood and Education in the United States and Russia: Sociological and Comparative Perspectives* (Emerald Group Publishing, 2019) (ORCID: 0000-0003-1997-5214).

Sriti Ganguly is an Assistant Professor at the School of Liberal Arts and Humanities at O.P. Jindal Global University, India. Her research interests include urban sociology, sociology of education, studies on mothering practices, and youth cultures. She has published in the *British Journal of Sociology of Education*, *Economic and Political Weekly*, and *Contemporary Education Dialogue* and contributed chapters to two edited volumes published by Routledge. She is a co-principal investigator in two collaborative projects on gender, mobility, and urban spaces to map how women navigate and experience public transport and city spaces. She is also co-leading a research constellation on culture, digital spaces, and media studies at the newly formed IDEAS, Office of Interdisciplinary Studies at O.P. Jindal Global University (ORCID: 0000-0001-5233-2953).

Eric Hengyu Hu, PhD, serves as a Postdoctoral Associate at the Institute of Social and Health Equity, University at Albany, SUNY. He earned his doctoral degree from Penn State University in Educational Policy Studies with a minor in demography. His research focuses on sociodemographic disparities in the academic, cognitive, and social-behavioral development of early elementary students, emphasizing English learners and students with disabilities. He is adept in advanced quantitative methods, analyzing extensive secondary datasets including ECLS-K, NAEP, and HSLs:2009, to produce rigorous and insightful research outcomes (ORCID: 0000-0002-2113-3940).

Wolfram Laube is a Senior Researcher at the Center for Development Research of the University of Bonn and is coordinating the West African Center for Sustainable Transformation (WAC-SRT) run with partner universities in

Ghana and West Africa. As social anthropologist with rich experience in qualitative and quantitative interdisciplinary research in Africa, his work covers topics such as resource management, extra-activism, climate change adaptation, rural transformation, as well as youth, education, and (social) mobility. He has ample experience in knowledge exchange and capacity building, communicating research results at the international, national, and local levels. He regularly teaches at universities in Germany, Ghana, Niger, and Colombia (<https://orcid.org/0000-0002-6798-7968>).

Yeonwoo Lee is a PhD candidate in Educational Theory and Policy and Comparative and International Education at Penn State University. She received a bachelor's degree in English Education and a master's degree in Education from Ewha Women's University in Seoul, South Korea. She has worked for UNESCO APCEIU, a UNESCO Category 2 center dedicated to teacher education in Global Citizenship Education and Education for International Understanding, where she developed and organized various capacity-building programs for teachers and teacher educators in the Asia-Pacific and Africa. She is passionate about advancing equity and inclusion in education. Her dissertation research explores the disconnect between women's educational achievements and labor market outcomes by focusing on gender-typed occupational aspirations.

Hlamulo Wiseman Mbhiza is an esteemed academic whose research primarily encompasses rurality, mathematics education, and teaching practice. He earned his Bachelor of Education, Bachelor of Education Honors, Master of Education by Dissertation, and PhD degrees from the University of the Witwatersrand. His academic journey has led him through various roles, including lecturing positions at prestigious institutions such as the University of the Witwatersrand, Independent Institute of Education (Rosebank College), Instill Education, and the University of Limpopo. Presently, he serves as a Senior Lecturer in the Department of Mathematics Education at the University of South Africa. Throughout his evolving research career, he has made significant scholarly contributions, authoring and co-authoring book chapters and journal articles. His academic excellence is further highlighted by his receipt of several distinguished scholarships, including those from the NIHSS-SAHUDA and the National Research Foundation. He is a Y2 NRF-rated researcher of Mathematics Education (2024–2029). Additionally, he plays a vital role in the academic community as a Deputy Editor for the *Africa Education Review* journal, accentuating his commitment to advancing the field of Mathematics Education (ORCID: 0000-0001-9530-4493).

Francis Xavier Naab is a Doctoral Researcher at the Centre for Development Research, at the University of Bonn. He is also in affiliation with the SD-Dombo University of Business and Integrated Development Studies in Ghana. With an academic background in development studies and policy planning, his research explores critical areas, including rural youth aspirations and social mobility, gender dimensions of development and cultural change, climate

change and vulnerability, and sustainable rural transformation. His work is centered on understanding the dynamics of rural communities and contributing to policy strategies that foster sustainable and inclusive development (<https://orcid.0000-0002-2013-4351>).

Ana Filipa Gonçalves Gago Pacheco holds a master's degree in Sociology, Human Resources from the University of Évora, and the subject of her internship report, titled "Social innovation responses to the challenges of employability among young people in Central Alentejo," focused on how social innovation could help young people enter and remain in the job market in the Central Alentejo subregion. She is currently a first-year PhD student in Sociology at the University of Évora (Universidade de Évora/IIFA and CICS.NOVA. UÉvora – The Interdisciplinary Center of Social Sciences. Évora, Portugal), with the thesis topic (*Over)posed Times. Contributions of Sociology to the Study of the Contexts and Impacts of Mental Health in Young Adults in the Digital Society*, which generally addresses how digitalization (technological devices, uses and representations) impacts the socio-temporal organization of young people's daily lives, particularly the day/night cycles and waking/sleeping times, and affects their mental health, with repercussions on their academic, professional, and interpersonal relationships. Thus, the thematic areas with which she is most familiar concern youth, employability, social innovation, digitalization, and mental health. It should also be noted that since September 1, 2023, she has been a research fellow at the Fundação para a Ciência e a Tecnologia I. P. (FCT, MCTES, ESF, EU) under grant reference 2023.04451.BD (<https://orcid.org/0000-0002-2482-8406>).

Tanya Rouleau Whitworth, PhD, is a Research Scientist in the Family Research Lab at the University of New Hampshire. Her research includes the importance of familial and parenting experiences for well-being throughout childhood, adolescence, and young adulthood. She conceives of well-being broadly to include mental health, physical health, social adjustment, and educational outcomes. She is particularly interested in understanding ways that family relationships can negatively impact well-being. She received a PhD in Sociology from the University of Massachusetts Amherst and was a Postdoctoral Fellow in the Center for Innovation in Social Science at Boston University. Her current work at the University of New Hampshire involves conducting research and translational science on the topic of sibling aggression and abuse (ORCID: 0000-0003-0629-1059).

INTRODUCTION

Timothy J. Madigan^a and Sampson Lee Blair^b

^a*Commonwealth University, USA*

^b*The State University of New York, USA*

Studies of unsocialized children reveal that the family is essential for providing social interactions needed for proper psychosocial development which cumulatively socialize children into becoming functioning and effective members of society. By and large, the richer the socialization experience provided by parents, the better the young children's social and cognitive development. The first major social institution that children are forced to engage in on a sustained basis through compulsory schooling is the school. It is within the education institution that children begin transitioning from preferential treatment by their parents and family members to more generalized interactions with other more formal members of society who are playing their proper social roles: teachers, principals, counselors, bus drivers, cafeteria workers, etc. Decades of longitudinal research on cohorts of students finds that long-term success in education, which in turn affects placement in the social stratification system as adults, is connected to a child's experiences in earlier stages of education. Hence, the interactions between these two crucial institutions, the family and education system, have enormous implications for major life outcomes. It is this fundamental linkage that the current book's goal is to continue to illuminate.

Early community research on stratification in the United States noted how family background helped children from advantaged backgrounds to succeed. More sophisticated stratification research in the 1960s using large data sets uncovered information on processes associated with education success. Children from different social classes displayed variation in educational attainment: holding intelligence of students constant, students from higher social class acquired more education. School achievement was found to be related more to a students' family background compared to school resources. Researchers concluded that success for students in school depends on those who are closest to children in terms of their social environment, namely their family members. Family background factors proved to be more potent predictors of school success compared

to many school resources such as teacher experience, degrees, salaries, etc., which challenged the thinking of many education experts who had grown comfortable measuring and comparing school quality largely through the use of school inputs. Other education stratification studies detailed the mechanisms that social classes use to promote the success of their offspring. The role of parental aspirations and types of friendship networks that children participate in were shown to be related to educational and occupational attainment. In addition, research uncovered paths through which students could succeed in school despite being members of poor or working-class family backgrounds. Schools served to reproduce existing social relationships as families located within different social strata appeared to be competing to ensure their offspring's success. Yet, schools also provided another important function: a route for upward mobility for a limited segment of students from disadvantaged family backgrounds.

Along with the social class background of students, their racial and ethnic backgrounds have been found to be related to school outcomes. For many decades, public schooling in the United States was segregated by race. Social institutions actively and directly ensured this outcome through "separate is equal" ideology and operations. Even after segregation was ruled unconstitutional, researchers found evidence of large-scale segregation as well as differential treatment of students based on their race. As research expanded to capture minority groups which were fewer in number, Asian American students were found to display somewhat unique patterns. They often achieved higher average test scores and higher education enrollment and completion rates. Variation exists in the Asian American ethnic groups it should be noted, with several groups performing far below average. Family, cultural and structural factors are commonly employed to explain the Asian American successes in education.

The struggle for equal representation in schools between girls and boys to some extent mirrors advances gained in different spheres of social life as women overall challenged the dominant gender regime over time. For a long time, women were expected to attend to household and children's responsibilities for which not much formal education was required. As free public education expanded, both girls and boys benefited from more education opportunities. However, gender expectations channeled girls into tracks that lined up with their expected place in women-dominated occupations in the workforce. As more women moved out of the house and into the workforce and strived to take on better paid and more powerful occupations held typically by men, their educational attainments continually improved to the point that they were now more likely to graduate from college compared to men. Still, notable differences continue to exist between women and men on many educational indicators and other spheres of life.

Family and education systems change over time. Norms change as history unfolds and so does family life. School leaders and experts are constantly devising new techniques and ways that they hope will improve functioning and effectiveness. As societies modernize, for example, their economic needs and operations expand and transform. This leads to education systems developing and adapting to meet the new needs. As these broad social institutions change, they have impacts on the family system as parents and children adjust expectations and

patterns to flow better with the needs of the newly emerging and transforming institutions and social norms, political rules, social rights, etc. Many of these changes can be seen in the United States. Around the world, families operate in a variety of ways, and education systems are at different levels of modernizing. Yet many stratification processes found operating in core Western countries can be expected to occur in a similar manner regardless of location and level of development. The following chapters contain windows into how families and education systems operate in societies around the world, offering glimpses into the important symbiotic relationship that forms between families and education systems.

Obtaining higher education is important for securing credentials for professional, middle-class occupations. In “Parents as School Supplies: What Types of Parental Support Predict Graduation From Two- and Four-Year Colleges?” Tanya Rouleau Whitworth examines a common educational outcome: graduation from higher education. She utilized data from the Panel Study of Income Dynamics. Respondents were asked about the types of help that they received from their parents as they worked their way through higher education. The results show that parents provided several types of support. They attempted to provide career guidance and wisdom to their offspring while they were enrolled in college. For students from higher social classes, this help, a type of cultural capital, seemed to help. Also, they provided material assistance, specifically financial resources. This provision of money was found to be associated with increased chances of graduation from college. Finally, their event history models also revealed persistent racial disparities: African American and Latino students were less likely to graduate from a four-year college compared to their white counterparts. These results align with both the psychosocial and conflict perspectives on educational stratification. They also show the persistence of patterns of inequality despite higher education programming and student financial aid programs designed to help underprepared and disadvantaged students.

South Africa has undergone significant political changes in modern times. However, not much research is done on how families in rural areas operate to promote educational success of offspring. In “Family and Parental Involvement in Mathematics Learning: Rural South African Learners’ Voices,” Hlamulo Wiseman Mbhiza helps to fill this gap through an ethnographic study of parental involvement in math learning. To many people, math skills are largely taught by trained educators in school since the average person does not possess the knowledge. But in South Africa, school policy mandates that parents be involved in their child’s education. But is this an unrealistic expectation for rural parents who work long hours away harvesting or lack education themselves? One parent involvement framework says no. Parents can provide motivation, allocate resources, monitoring services, counseling services in addition to content help. Family members, including those successful ones who were good at math, helped increase math motivation in several respondents, especially through establishing future career goals considering a competitive environment. In addition, family members took it upon themselves to help with learning math at home. They showed that math can be understood and tackled with the right mindset and direction of soft resources within the extended family.

At the beginning of the formal schooling process in the United States, researchers have found that differences in preparation exist across students depending on the student's family background. Other research finds that how a child does in the early years has a strong connection to performance in late primary and secondary school. In "Students' and Parents' Emotional Capital and Academic Achievement in Elementary School," Katerina Bodovski, Yeonwoo Lee and Eric Hengyu Hu analyze national level data from the Early Childhood Longitudinal Study to examine the importance of relationships between parent and child, specifically regarding emotional and social capital and a student's outlook and achievement from Grades 1 to 5. In general, the more emotionally balanced and socially connected the parent was, the better was the outlook and performance of young children across the early primary school years. Mathematics understanding is considered an essential skill for members of modern society. Countries will strive to provide quality mathematics education for students.

The next chapter focuses on the linkages between a college student's family background including the mental and emotional environment and their well-being and success in college. In "A Factitious Inheritance: The Main Family Factors Influencing Young People's Mental Health and Academic Performance," Ana Filipa Gonçalves Gago Pacheco has assembled a comprehensive review of the literature and several college programs for aiding students. It provides an overview of the issues connected to a college student's well-being and how it can be managed. The literature reveals that many college students suffer from various types of problems, the largest being simply general anxiety. New freshmen are faced with multiple challenges in addition to academic success. Thus, it makes sense that universities be proactive in creating resources to help students navigate their environment rather than having systems that simply respond to putting out fires so to speak.

In "The Influence of Family on Mathematics Achievement in China, Taiwan and the United States," Timothy J. Madigan explores family factors associated with learning math across three education systems. Students from Mainland China and Taiwan scored higher on average than American students. Aspects of the child's social environment, shaped heavily by parents, were found to be correlated with math test scores within each society. Material conditions in terms of educational resources, after school activities, attitudes toward learning and social environment had many significant simple correlations, and they were in the direction one would expect. The most robust predictors of achievement in all groups were attitudinal in nature: expecting to be able to earn good grades. Cultivating this quality is a way for parents from any social class to help their children to succeed in school.

To many people, a quality education is thought of being a product of the school environment. Different types of schools, public or private, religious or secular, innovative or traditional and so on, provide possibilities for parents to guide their children's educational journey. In "In Search of 'Good' Education: Exploring Parental School Choices, Perceptions and Evaluations in a Low-Income Neighborhood of Delhi," Sriti Ganguly investigated school choice decisions by parents living in a poor neighborhood in Delhi. The research found that

schooling is used as markers of social distinction by the different social classes. School choice is not a simple black and white individual decision. In the slum area of the city, the space and consequently the people living within it are contested. They are disadvantaged socially not only by caste but also by economic resources plus religion and minority status. Fathers typically worked blue-collar jobs, while mothers worked as domestic servants and had less education than the men, and some with no education at all. Many sent their children to low-fee private schools or high-fee recognized private schools. Government schools were of varying quality, and a majority of families enrolled their children in them for lack of resources. Even though they were free, small expenses were still difficult to produce. Parents hoped to send their child to better quality private schools, largely for their perceived safe, disciplined environments and use of English. Also, several poor mothers intentionally limited their fertility in order to maybe have a chance of affording private schooling. The better educated parents send their children to the high-fee private schools. Overall, the social identity of families was connected to their perceptions of the hierarchical schooling, both private and public, as they strived to bring the two into alignment. School choices were poised to facilitate social reproduction.

In rural, less developed parts of the world, opportunities to attend school from primary to secondary levels and beyond are not always universal. Although structures may be available for aspiring students to utilize, cultural factors could play a significant role in a child's progress. In their study, "'Beyond Bloodlines': Exploring Changing Patrilineal Family Dynamics, Gender Roles and Gender Disparities in Education in Rural Ghana," Francis Xavier Naab and Wolfram Laube traveled to rural parts of Ghana to conduct ethnographic research on adolescents and their families. The system of patriarchy in operation among rural community members differentially affected girls' pursuit of schooling. In many aspects of social life, girls were being socialized into thinking that they were less worthy of pursuing education and that they were better off taking care of familial tasks in the extended household. Men were expected to make the major life decisions and women to simply comply. Scarce resources are often not expended on women as they would eventually be married away to their husband's family and home. Together, these gendered expectations seemed to cause many young women to become pregnant, pursue marriage and give up on dreams of taking advantage of educational opportunities in more prosperous, urban areas as many of the young men were doing.

As editors of this new volume of research on education and family, we believe that the work contained within contributes substantially and uniquely to the literature in the sociology of education and family. A variety of societies around the world have been included including those from North and Central America, Europe, Asia and Africa. Different types of research methodologies were used from quantitative studies using nationally representative survey data to qualitative studies of students, parents and educators to documents and media analyses and comparative analyses. We hope that our readers will find the work useful for their intellectual pursuits in this field. Finally, we would like to recognize and thank all the anonymous reviewers and the publisher's staff for the hard work

they contributed. We would like to thank our spouses for their support, as we pursued this project while maintaining full-time jobs and traveling around the world. In closing, we would like to remind people of the saying: the smallest school is the family, and, as such, numerous crucial life outcomes flow out of this intersection between families and schools.

CHAPTER 1

PARENTS AS SCHOOL SUPPLIES: WHAT TYPES OF PARENTAL SUPPORT PREDICT GRADUATION FROM TWO- AND FOUR-YEAR COLLEGES?

Tanya Rouleau Whitworth

Family Research Lab, University of New Hampshire, USA

ABSTRACT

Access to higher education has expanded in the United States, yet graduation rates from two-year and four-year colleges are low, especially for economically disadvantaged students. At the same time, colleges and universities rely on parents to provide financial support and non-tangible support like advising, to facilitate timely graduation. This chapter asked whether and how different types of parental support – financial assistance, co-residence, emotional support, and college-relevant advice – contribute to associate and bachelor's degree completion, using discrete-time competing risks event history models and a sample of college students ($n = 973$) from the Transition into Adulthood Supplement (TAS) to the Panel Study of Income Dynamics (PSID). The results show that family social class shapes the likelihood of bachelor's degree, but not associate degree, completion through both the type and quality of support provided. These results reveal the distinctive obstacles to bachelor's degree completion among students from less advantaged backgrounds.

Keywords: College degree; parental support; financial costs; economically disadvantaged; emotional support

Researchers and policymakers debate the extent to which, and for whom, higher education serves to promote social mobility or instead perpetuate inequality in the United States. On the one hand, access to college has never been greater, including for low-income, working-class, and first-generation¹ students, and college remains a key pathway to higher-status occupations and incomes (Hout, 2012). On the other hand, social class disparities exist in college completion (Adelman, 2006; Holzer & Baum, 2017; Wilbur & Roscigno, 2016; Zarifa et al., 2018). At the same time, government funding for higher education has shifted over the past 50 years from direct investment in public institutions to a student-as-consumer model, with aid, mostly in the form of loans, allocated to students to use at the institutions of their choice (Goldrick-Rab, 2016). This has left many students burdened by debt – a problem compounded for students who do not complete a degree – and many institutions with depleted resources. Importantly, the resulting financial crunch – perceived or actual – has caused many colleges to “outsource” functions to parents, including not only financial support of students but also academic advising and career preparation (Hamilton, 2016).

Yet, we know little about whether and how different types of parental support impact students’ chances of college graduation. Scholars have recently begun to study the impact of parental relationships and support on college outcomes, including grades, mental health, and degree completion (e.g., Hamilton, 2013; LeMoyné & Buchanan, 2011; Roksa & Kinsley, 2019), but studies rarely consider more than one or two types of support. Further, many of these studies are based on samples of students at residential four-year institutions, which limits the generalizability of their findings to other types of students, such as those who live with parents, community college students, and students who transfer between two-year and four-year institutions. This study uses a subsample of college-enrolled students from a nationally representative study of young adults to investigate the relationship between four types of parental support – financial assistance, co-residence, emotional support, and college-relevant advice – and degree completion, which is arguably the most consequential of college outcomes. Importantly, of the types of support considered here, co-residence and emotional support are generally accessible across the social class spectrum, financial assistance is easier for more advantaged families to provide, and college-relevant advice can be offered by parents regardless of class, but its impacts may depend on parental education levels. The results of this study show that the quantity, quality, and type of parental support students receive contribute to social reproduction of inequality.

BACKGROUND

A large body of literature on intergenerational support, although less often applied to college students, focuses on a range of types of care (Fingerman et al., 2020; Perry-Jenkins & Gerstel, 2020; Seltzer & Bianchi, 2013). The distinction between tangible and non-tangible support, made by Kim et al. (2016), is helpful in framing the following literature review. The authors include financial and