

completely in such things as mode of dress, hairstyle, taste in music, and vocabulary. Peers can also be a positive force in health promotion by encouraging healthy behaviors, serving as role models, and promoting positive health norms.

Schools

In contemporary society, schools play an increasingly important role in preparing young people for adulthood. Schooling is essential for a successful future. Failure to complete high school reduces employment opportunities and the probability of earning an adequate income. The dropout rate among minority students is higher than nonminority students; however, 95% of Caucasian adults and 89% of African-American adults 25 to 29 years old graduated from high school in 2012 ([Child Trends Data Bank, 2014](#)).

The school is psychologically important to adolescents as a focus of social life. Teenagers usually distribute themselves into a relatively predictable social hierarchy. They know to which groups they and others belong. A sense of school connectedness and optimal social connectedness is associated with positive outcomes for school completion, positive mood, and decreased high-risk behavior in adolescents ([Chapman, Buckley, Reveruzzi, et al, 2014](#)). School connectedness is correlated with caring teachers and the absence of prejudice or discrimination from peers.

Within the larger groups are smaller, distinct, and exclusive crowds or cliques of selected close friends who are emotionally attached to one another. The selection is based on common tastes, interests, and background. Although cliques may become formalized, most remain informal and small. However, each has an identifying feature that proclaims its difference from others and its solidarity within itself in much the same manner as the adolescent generation as a whole sets itself apart from the adult generation. Cliques are usually made up of one sex, and girls tend to be more cliquish than boys and to have a greater need for close friendships ([Fig. 15-5](#)). Within the intimacy of the group, adolescents gain support in learning about themselves, consideration for the feelings of others, and increased ego development and self-reliance. To belong is of utmost importance; thus, adolescents behave in a way that will ensure their establishment in a group. Adolescents are highly susceptible to social approval, acceptance, and demands. To