

3<sup>RD</sup> CONFERENCE ON EMERGING ADULTHOOD  
Paper Symposium Abstracts

Tandon, Darius & Templeman, A.

**Friday, 8:00-9:30 (Canyon A)**

*Disconnected Adolescents' (16-24) Access to Health Care*

Adolescents and young adults disconnected from school and the workforce face significant challenges to leading healthy and productive lifestyles due to their limited schooling. Programs working with this population typically focus on school completion, job training, and reentry from foster care or the juvenile justice system, rather than provision of health services. Moreover, individuals disconnected from school and the workplace are not represented in the peer-reviewed literature. Accordingly, this study seeks to answer the following research question: What is the health access and status of adolescents and young adults participating in youth employment and training programs in an urban setting?

Tanner, Jennifer

**Friday, 8:00-9:30 (Canyon A)**

*Mental health needs and health care vulnerability of emerging adults: A developmental perspective*

Recent advances in theory and research (Arnett 2000; Arnett & Tanner, 2006; Settersten et al., 2005; Osgood et al., 2005) have characterized the age period spanning the years 18 to 30 as a developmental stage different from adolescence and young and later adulthood. Progress in understanding the demographic and psychological features of this group has resulted in identification of unique and unmet needs of emerging adults. One issue, in particular, that has gained recent attention is the aging out of pediatric care that occurs at the end of adolescence resulting in a gap in connection with primary care for emerging adults. Moreover, emerging adults are the most likely to be unemployed and underemployed, resulting in a lack of health insurance higher in this age group compared to all others. Despite low rates of disease in this age group, prevalence of mental illness is high. This paper offers a critical discussion from a developmental perspective of the health and mental health needs of emerging adults and new legislation to provide emerging adults with health care insurance.

Taylor, Sarah

**Friday, 3:40-5:10 (Canyon A)**

*Transitions to school and work for vulnerable emerging adults*

What supports, opportunities, and limitations exist for vulnerable low-income emerging adults as they make transitions to work and school? In this qualitative study, multiple interviews were conducted with 11 emerging adults ages 19-23 as they navigated a work or school transition. Findings include: 1) the ways in which family, social, and institutional involvement can further or hinder achievement; 2) the transition process; and 3) the negative impact of discrimination (due to age, gender, race, mental health status, and sexual orientation) on these work and school transitions. Implications for research, practice, and policy are explored in each of these areas.

Thomas, Khia

**Thursday, 3:25-4:55 (Madera)**

*Being Strong, Feminine, and Definitely Not a Ho: Examining the Contexts in Which African American Women Experience Romantic and Sexual Relationships*

Young adults gain practical experience in how to define and navigate their roles in heterosexual during emergent adulthood. Prominent discourses outlining gender and sexual role expectations

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have been implicated in shaping romantic and sexual behavior. How do African American women translate culturally-specific gender ideals into romantic and sexual behavior? Thirteen African American women participated in in-depth semi-structured interviews. Results indicate that many women connect with culturally-specific gender ideals and experience conflicts in enacting these roles in heterosexual relationships. Furthermore, the context of heterosexual relationships is also affected by women's awareness of sexual stereotypes of African American women.

Tilleczek, Kate, Ferguson, B., Boydell, K., & Rummens, A.

**Friday, 1:50-3:20 (Canyon C)**

*Fractures roads to adulthood: The lived reality of disengagement from school*

This paper provides the findings from a study designed to understand the processes of disengagement from school from the point of view of young people who have left school. It focuses on the voices of 193 young early leavers and 15 focus groups with parents and educators. Early school leaving was found to be the result of a long process of disengagement that was preceded by less severe types of school withdrawal such as truancy and course failures. The findings suggest multiple pathways to disengagement and a host of risk and protective factors. The findings were contextualized within an international review of literature on early leaving and "drop-out." They are discussed in relation to direct implications for current policy and practice in secondary schools.

Trinidad, Alma

**Friday, 1:50-3:20 (Canyon C)**

*Towards a Value-Based Social Justice Framework for Programs Focusing on Young Adults: Sustaining the Native Hawaiian Culture through Intergenerational Work*

Underprivileged young adults, such as Native Hawaiians, deal with an array of issues such as discrimination and limited exposures to opportunities in their communities. Place-based disparities such as lack of high quality youth programs, education, and job opportunities are immense, yet cultural and community factors (e.g. social and cultural capital, sense of cultural community, and community attachment) may not only promote positive youth development but also serve as venues of empowerment and transformation. Utilizing a case study approach, this study attempts to establish a theoretical framework that consists of three dimensions (values, process, and products) for youth programs.

Trujillo, Celina

**Thursday, 9:50-11:20 (Canyon B)**

*Selective Optimization with Compensation in Emerging Adulthood*

The objective of this paper is to critically examine the concept of "emerging adulthood" (EA) as a developmental period of the life span. After an introduction to a metatheory of lifespan development: Selective Optimization with Compensation (SOC) and a brief overview of EA and its distinguishing characteristics, SOC will be used as a model which to examine current research and theory on EA in order to evaluate its congruency with life-span development theory. The presentation will investigate the question: "Is emerging adulthood successful development between adolescence and young adulthood?"

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Tyson, Sheryl

**Thursday, 9:50-11:20 (Canyon C)**

*African American Emerging Adult Women: Challenges in the Development of Identity, Intimacy, and Romantic Relationship Maturity*

In this qualitative study, the theory of relationship maturity (Paul & White, 1990) is combined with Black womanist/feminist thought (Collins, 2000; Walker, 1983) to understand African American emerging adult women's perspectives about developing mature romantic relationships. Five two-hour focused group interviews with 31 socially diverse 18–25 year old women were conducted. Findings suggest that culture and gender are integral to identity development. Intimacy maturity is a core value. Early assumption of adult responsibilities impact relationship goals. Lastly, negative stereotypic images of African American women and interracial dating by African American men pose obstacles to developing mature romantic relationships.

Van Arsdale, Amy & Rice, K.

**Thursday, 9:50-11:20 (Canyon B)**

*The Continued Relevance of Kohut's Self Psychology for Young Adult Development*

This paper will examine the self-psychology theory of Heinz Kohut (1971; 1977; 1984) and how it continues to remain relevant to a developmental understanding of late adolescents and young adults, particularly those transitioning into and through college. Patton and Robbins (1982) earlier argued that Kohut's model is particularly relevant for counseling with college students. This paper re-affirms this belief and considers the model in the context of the presenting concerns of present-day students. In particular, this paper will examine how Kohut's theory can be helpful in understanding students' adjustment transition to the college experience and formation of their adult identity.

Wallace, Scyatta, Harris, M., Townsend, T., & Miller, K.

**Thursday, 9:50-11:20 (Ventana)**

*Identifying factors which may influence HIV testing among young adult African Americans*

Despite increasing HIV prevalence rates among African American heterosexual young adults, there are few studies focused on HIV testing in this population. The objective of this qualitative study was to examine factors influencing HIV testing among African American heterosexual young adults (ages 18-25 years). The study was conducted at one urban and one rural site, each on the eastern US coast. A total of 26 focus groups were completed (13 male, 13 female). Several themes were identified that may influence HIV testing among this population. Unique gender and geographic issues emerged. This information will be used to discuss implications for HIV testing among this population.

Walsh, Jennifer L. & Ward, L.M.

**Thursday, 3:25-4:55 (Madera)**

*First Intercourse: Age- and Gender-Related Trends and Connections to Sexuality in Emerging Adulthood*

We examine developmental and gender-related trends in reasons for and descriptions of first-time intercourse experiences and connections between first-time experiences and other sexual variables in 334 emerging adults. Women and men's first-time experiences differ, with women describing their experiences as more emotionally positive, painful, and/or negative than men and citing emotional connections and feeling they were "ready" as reasons more frequently than men,

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but some differences noted in adolescence disappeared for those losing their virginity as emerging adults. Elements of first-time experiences are related to sexual assertiveness, safe-sex knowledge and efficacy, and use of protection in emerging adulthood.

Webber, Diane

**Thursday, 9:50-11:20 (Canyon A)**

*Stopping-out of college: The students' voices*

This study focused on emerging adults under the age of 27 who stopped-out of college by enrolling, leaving, then later re-enrolling in either the same or a different college. Qualitative data was gathered through interviewing nine participants using purposeful sampling to co-construct stories from the students' words and interviewer observation. The participants addressed explorations of identity, choices, pressures, and responsibilities as well as need for care, acceptance, and community. Many spoke about stopping-out as a positive experience while parents and professionals often view stopping-out negatively. This research brings another perspective to the understanding of students' meaning-making while stopping-out of college.

Weissman, Julie

**Friday, 8:00-9:30 (Canyon B)**

*Identifying and Responding to the Developmental Needs of the Middle Years Students at a Research University*

The experiences of college students in the sophomore and junior years have not been extensively documented nor are the specific needs of these students well-defined. Without such knowledge, designing effective programs to facilitate development of the "middle years" students can be challenging. To learn about students' needs and experiences during the middle years, Saint Louis University invited students to participate in focus groups. This presentation shares the results of the focus groups, relates the framework and findings of the study to the literature, and presents student recommendations for enhancing development during the middle years.

Wickrama, K.A.S.

**Thursday, 1:35-3:05 (Canyon C)**

*Poverty-Patterned Depression Trajectories from Early Adolescence into Emerging Adulthood: Inequality, Narrowing Down, and Reemergence*

This study examines whether the poverty patterning of mental health trajectories persists throughout adolescence and narrows down as youth emerge into adulthood. Second, this study investigates whether poverty patterning of mental health trajectories begins to reemerge as youth pass through emerging adulthood. Study data consist of three assessments of a nationally representative sample ( $N = 13,900$ ) (Adhealth). Participants ranged in age from 13 to 23 years. The study uses a cohort sequential study design. Growth curve modeling of depressive symptoms revealed a positive slope during early adolescence and a negative slope during late adolescence/young adulthood. Family poverty significantly influenced trajectory levels. Preliminary findings provide evidence for a narrowing of trajectory inequality during the emergence into adulthood.

Wiersma, Jacquelyn, Fischer, J., Cleveland, H., & Fitzpatrick, J.

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*Discrepant and Congruent Drinking Partnerships in Dating, Engaged, and Married Emerging Adult Couples*

Based on Roberts and Leonard's (1998) work on drinking partnerships, cluster analyses identified drinking partnerships among emerging adults in three relationship types: dating (n=416), engaged (n=109), and married (n=221). Paired romantic partners, between the ages of 18-29, from the third wave of the National Longitudinal Study of Adolescent Health were analyzed. Four clusters were found for each group, including a low consumption/frequency cluster, two individual/partner discrepant clusters, and a fourth moderate drinking cluster. Relationship quality, alcohol-related problems, and alcohol misuse varied by drinking partnership clusters and by relationship type.

Willoughby, Brian & Carroll, Jason

**Friday, 8:00-9:30 (Madera)**

*Sexual Activity's Link to Marital Horizons and the Acceptance of Cohabitation*

Attitudes towards union formation are likely linked to behavior during emerging adulthood. Using data from several universities nation-wide, we investigate if sexual behavior is related to attitudes towards both marriage and cohabitation. Results indicate that sexual behavior is only slightly related to marital attitudes but consistently related to attitudes towards cohabitation. The data also suggest that religiosity, a common predictor of both sexual behavior and union formation attitudes, moderates the relationship between sexual behavior and attitudes towards cohabitation. Emerging adults who are highly religious are more likely to have their union formation attitudes differ based on their sexual behavior.

Wray, Laura & Syvertsen, A.

**Friday, 3:40-5:10 (Canyon C)**

*Are Youth Worried About Work? Exploring Trends in Work Values*

Trends in high school seniors' work values from Monitoring the Future (1976 to 2004) suggest that youth are positively adapting in some ways yet are unrealistic in others. Though they do not expect job stability, young people desire a high status/high-earning job, yet are less apt to want jobs with overtime, decision-making or new skill acquisition. Also, we find that concerns about career are – in general – a low priority for youth. To reconcile these findings, we raise the question of whether these work values are a developmental phenomenon specific to emerging adulthood, or a cause for concern.

Zimmer-Gembeck, Melanie, Van Dulmen, M., & Collins, W.A.

**Friday, 3:40-5:10 (Canyon B)**

*Age-related characteristics of EA relational experiences in terms of substance use and sexuality*

Key findings from five studies of romantic relationships, sexual behavior, and other behaviors will be united. In all studies, we have drawn upon data from the Minnesota longitudinal study of parents and children, in which about 200 participants have been assessed from birth to age 28. In each study, associations among romantic relationship involvement and qualities, sexual behavior, and other behaviors, including alcohol use and externalising behavior, have been investigated. Bringing these studies together will highlight the importance of considering different age periods of middle/late adolescence and emerging adulthood when investigating the interface between romantic relationships, sexual behavior, and other behaviors. By combining key findings from

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these five studies, findings will highlight the importance of considering individual differences at each age, identify associations between variables that differ across developmental time, and illustrate the importance of studying age-related trajectories.