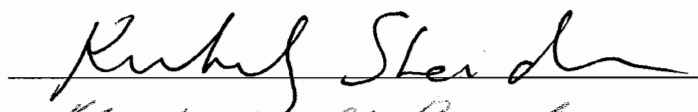THE ROLE OF SCHOOL SUPPORT IN EMERGING ADULTHOOD:
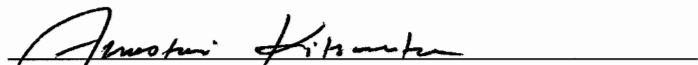FACILITATING A HEALTHY TRANSITION IN IDENTITY

by

Blake Johnson
A Thesis
Submitted to the
Graduate Faculty
of
George Mason University
in Partial Fulfillment of
The Requirements for the Degree
of
Master of Science
Educational Psychology

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THE ROLE OF SCHOOL SUPPORT IN EMERGING ADULTHOOD:
FACILITATING A HEALTHY TRANSITION IN IDENTITY

A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of
Science at George Mason University

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

LIST OF TABLES

LIST OF FIGURES

ABSTRACT

THE ROLE OF SCHOOL SUPPORT IN EMERGING ADULTHOOD:
FACILITATING A HEALTHY TRANSITION IN IDENTITY

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George Mason University, 2010

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This study seeks to clarify the transition to adulthood and the relevance of school support on that transition. Young, emerging adults (n = 41) between the ages of 23-29 were questioned about their transition to adulthood and the prior helpfulness of their high school experience. Demographic information was collected, in addition to qualitative and quantitative ratings of school support. Participant definitions of adulthood were characterized in six trait categories: productivity, independence, communication, relational abilities, financial abilities, and being "adult-like." Participants rated the level of school support for productivity at the highest levels, while trait areas of relational and financial abilities were rated lowest. Participants in a follow up survey said their school could have done more to emphasize relevant adult traits. Implications of these responses are discussed, along with related research inquiries.

Keywords: emerging adulthood, adult roles, school support, qualitative research

Introduction

The transition to adulthood is one of the key components in a comprehensive theory of human development. Building upon Erikson's characterization of psychosocial maturity, a recent interest has grown in the study of emerging adulthood (Barry, Padilla-Walker, Madsen, & Nelson, 2008; Cote & Bynner, 2008). Emerging adulthood can be defined as the transitional period of psychosocial development between adolescence and adulthood. Recent inquiries have sought to understand the components of a successful transition (Galambos, Magill-Evans, & Darrah, 2008; Padilla-Walker, Barry, Carroll, Madsen, & Nelson, 2008). These inquiries have yielded several dimensions of defining at what point a late adolescent or young adult becomes an adult. Sassler, Ciambrone, and Benway (2008) described adulthood as, "a psychological state, attained through a process of assuming responsibility for one's actions and learning how to interact with other adults (particularly parents) from a position of equality" (p. 670). They also looked the importance of financial sustainability. Young et al. (2008) referred to the development of an adult identity, feelings of inclusion with the adult world, the promotion of career as a functional step, and the extent to which youth can assume an adult responsibility. Key components within these inquiries were family dynamics, close relationships, and youth experiencing adult realities (such as parenting, unemployment, and balancing goal-

1

directedness with financial practicalities). The transitional process revealed is dynamic, complex, and uniquely individual, though it is normative for nearly every youth.

Research in the transition to adulthood is not new. Erik Erikson looked at the ways youth respond to challenges or "crises" in adolescence, a stage which focused on a youth's "identity" (Erikson, 1963; Capps, 2008; Woolfolk, 2010). A central aspect of Eriksonian Lifespan Theory is that crises at single stages must be resolved for the individual to develop, and well within the lifespan developmental theory is the extent to which development at early stages is tied to future development and overall esteem (Dunkel & Sefcek, 2009). Robert Havighurst (1948) previously described a series of age-specific developmental tasks (relative to stages), and contended that completing these tasks enabled future satisfaction. As Havighurst writes, a developmental task is one "which arises at or about a certain period in the life of an individual, successful achievement of which leads to happiness and to success with later tasks, while failure leads to unhappiness in the individual…and difficulty with later tasks" (p. 2).

Related to adolescence (ages 12-18), Havighurst established eight normative developmental tasks: accept one's body, adopt a masculine or feminine social role, achieve emotional independence from parents, develop close relationships with peers, prepare for an occupation, prepare for marriage and family life, establish a personal value or ethical system, and achieve socially responsible behavior (Seiffe-Krenke & Gelhaar, 2008). Moving to young adulthood (ages 19-30), Havighurst established these tasks: develop a stable partnership, learn to live with the partner, establish an independent household, establish a family, care for a family, start an occupation or career, become

2

integrated in a social group, assume civic and social responsibility. Havighurst argued that individuals who found success at achieving the earlier set of tasks would both have more success at achieving the later tasks and report higher levels of satisfaction and happiness (Seiffe-Krenke, 2008).

Current research has shown that while many of the tasks outlined above are still normative to adulthood, the time frame for completing such tasks has changed (Galambos, Barker, & Tilton-Weaver, 2003; Galambos, Turner, & Tilton-Weaver, 2005). As Seiffe-Krenke (2008) writes, "Sociocultural factors in modern industrialized societies have changed considerably over the past 40 years, such that most individuals are increasingly postponing many of the young adults' developmental tasks outlined by Havighurst, for example, marriage and parenthood, leaving home, and having a steady full-time job" (p. 34). The authors also consider the influence of societal expectations, the importance of "timing" in developmental tasks, and whether youth feel the current tasks are presently attainable. Though the importance of youth transitioning to adulthood is still considered high, the urgency and efficacy among youth to assume a traditional set of normative adult developmental tasks is not.

This dynamic finds its way into all corners of young adult life. When researching whether or not the developmental tasks outlined by Havighurst were still normative (and similarly urgent) for modern youth, Seiffge-Krenke et al. found unique differences. When looking at younger populations (starting at age 14), they found that all of the youth in their study had already assumed Havighurst's adolescent stage tasks as important goals. Yet when later researching the same youth at ages 21 and 23, virtually none of the youth

had adopted the young adult stage tasks as goals, which the authors state "may illustrate the young adult's feelings of not being mature enough to tackle these developmental tasks"(p. 47). As Arnett (2000) argues, the time frame for what has traditionally been thought of as emerging adulthood has changed, and the pressure or urgency to fulfill certain tasks has also changed. The research shows a difference in normalcy for tasks such as establishing residential independence, beginning a career, and getting married or beginning a family. Our culture still considers these tasks mostly normative in defining the transition to adulthood, yet youth are not assuming these behaviors until later in life.

Some of the challenges associated with emerging adulthood concern the emergence of risk behaviors. Research has shown that low parental involvement with emerging adults can be associated with increased sexual behavior, alcohol use, and drug use (Padilla-Walker, Nelson, Madsen & Barry, 2008; White, Fleming, Kim, Catalano, McMorris, 2008), increased depression and anger (Galambos & Krahn, 2008), and eating disorders (Barker & Galambos, 2007). Furthermore, research has looked at emerging adults' lack of confidence (Barry & Nelson, 2008), increased identity exploration (Padilla-Walker et al., 2008), ongoing search for new activities (Busseri & Rose-Krasnor, 2008), and persistent upward/downward comparisons (Pohlmann, Moeller, & Streblow, 2006). This change in identity is a complex and difficult time, and appropriate supports are necessary to help facilitate a healthy transition to stability.

A related concern with these changes in emerging adulthood is the extent to which they occur simultaneously with formalized education. Typically, American youth spend the entirety of their identity stage in structured classrooms, yet the relationship

between the two still needs further study. In the adulthood chapter of the *Educational Psychology Handbook*, Smith and Reio (2006) describe the difficulties students face when transitioning from a classroom to a workplace, stating that the "task requirements of academic work differ markedly from the skills required in most jobs" (p. 116). Their own list of adult development tasks includes emotional satisfaction, healthy relationships, productive work, a sense of ego integrity, and personal fulfillment (2006). Yet to what extent does formal education serve to assist youth in these ends?

In discussing the changes in youth adopting normative adult tasks, one also needs to consider that education has undergone significant changes in recent decades. With the increase in standardized and high-stakes testing (Jennings & Beveridge, 2009; Usiskin, 2007; Jacob, 2005), and the growing demand for internationally-competitive gains in math and science (Mac Iver & Mac Iver, 2009; Steen, 2007; Teitelbaum, 2003), American education has increased its commitment to normalizing test-specific skill sets. Reports such as the National Governor's Association's Report on Benchmarking (Jerald, 2008) are emblematic. Students in all grades can expect that a significant portion of their development will be spent preparing for and completing these domain-specific tasks.

Some research has shown potentially negative consequences from this new and overarching focus, citing everything from teachers staying away from low-stakes subjects (Jacob, 2005), a lack of understanding of the social-cognitive dimensions in mathematics (Hyde, 2007), an increasingly competitive landscape (Clark, 2009), the potential for increased anxiety/pressure (Hopko, Crittendon, Grant, & Wilson, 2005; Kellogg, Hopko, & Ashcraft, 1999), and the potential for increased stereotypes (Kessells, Rau, &

Hannover, 2006; Walton & Spencer, 2009; Usiskin, 2007). Additionally, some research has shown that an increased emphasis in standards-driven education has not resulted in automatic improvements (Jennings et al., 2009; Jacob, 2005; Teitelbaum, 2003).

As it relates to supports for emerging adults, a body of research exists which has looked at parental influence. Parents have been identified as key facilitators for an emerging adult's academic motivation (Gottfried, Marcoulides, Gottfried, & Oliver, 2009), prosocial tendencies (Barry, Padilla-Walker, Madsen, & Nelson, 2008), lowered risk behaviors (Padilla-Walker et al., 2008), and progression toward meaningful goals (Ford & Smith, 2007). Parents share a significant role in helping young adults move toward independence, even as young adults maintain attachments (Sassler, Ciambrone, & Benway, 2008; Young et al., 2008). Parent-youth relationships are important for addressing many of the challenges emerging adults face. In our current school dynamic, is it possible that schools can have a similar level of influence?

In the current educational and cultural landscape, the questions need to be asked: What relationship do schools have to emerging adults' transition to adulthood? What supports for adulthood are offered in the context of education which supplement or correspond to supports offered at home? An opening in the research exists for future inquiry. At some point in their progress, adolescents are asked to assume adult behaviors and roles, and these compulsions are accompanied by greater autonomy, increased expectations of productivity, a growing self-concept, and increasingly complex relationships. With young adults spending the breadth of their developmental years in education settings, what role does education have in supporting the transition to

6

adulthood? Are current supports sufficient to match the changes youth feel in

developmental urgency when looking at normative adult tasks?

Research

In this study, I sought to clarify the relationship between school and student as the student transitions to adulthood. I asked newly minted adults (according to the legal definition) who have graduated from college and are in an age span typically associated with young adulthood to consider their emerging adult experience, particularly in the context of their high school education, and highlight both the challenges and supports that were available. All participants in the study were between the ages of 23-29, had completed a college degree, and were old enough to have moved ahead in at least some aspects of adulthood, particularly those summarized by Galambos et al. (2008) as autonomy, industry, identity, intimacy. The overarching goal was to understand individual experiences (Charmaz, 2005; Nelson, Padilla-Walker, Carroll, Madsen, Barry, & Badger, 2007) of emerging adults, and try to place them in the broader context of current lifespan research (e.g. Capps, 2008; Kegan, 1982).

Research question categories. The line of inquiry in this study was generally broken down into two principle research categories:

1. How do newly minted adults define adulthood, and how prepared were they for the challenges they faced in late adolescence and young adulthood? As a mode of context, how was it similar or different to what their parents faced?

2. What role do schools play in facilitating a healthy transition to adulthood? What supports for adulthood did youth feel when in high school? According to their perceptions, what additional supports would have been helpful?

Methods

Background

Two important elements in building validity with qualitative research are to address the perspectives of the researchers and to establish a peer review process (Wolcott, 1994). These allow the researcher to show credibility in interpretation and to deal with complexities that are not easily explained (Maxwell, 1992). A researcher must be aware of his or her own assumptions, and be explicit about them, so that the reader can view the findings in light of the researcher's potential biases. The researcher also can explicitly examine their interpretations to see how these biases are influencing them. My own interest in this topic started with a background in higher education and college student personnel. Following my undergraduate degree (which focused on meaning in higher education) I worked with student organizations through University Life at two mid-Atlantic universities. I was a first point of contact for many students transitioning out of what was typically a stable, predictable high school environment and onto a college campus. Many students were living away from home for the first time, and I saw many who noticeably felt the change in parental oversight. We connected students seeking assistance to academic, residential, and counseling services offices on a regular basis. We also monitored the success of leadership development programs in student organizations, noting the range of differences in those who were ready and motivated (or not) to take on what were considered "adult" levels of responsibility. Some were quick to assimilate, but

in line with Arnett's (2000) research, many were not. For some, the traditional conception of adulthood didn't become personal until much later into their 20s.

I did not have a standard, set list of characteristics that I associated with adulthood, but over time, relevant traits stood out. The ability to be independent and self-produce was paramount. Cooperation was encouraged at times, but the top-down structure was entirely different. Self-reliance was increasingly necessary. Productivity was expected at higher levels, not just in academic work but in off-campus jobs, relationships, and in expectations. Relationships as a whole seemed significant, both in peer-to-peer, student-to-parent, and romantic contexts. It became clear that adults relate to people differently than non-adults. Communication was associated with this. Adults have more experience representing themselves, and they present information in different ways than they did previously. They choose to characterize thoughts in a more unique and often mature manner. Financial responsibilities were most noticeable, as this was the first time many students had managed their own accounts. Some had significant oversight from their parents; others had none. There were some things that were harder to categorize, such as the need to be on time, civility, and a motivation to take responsibility for others. These things could simply be considered "adult-like," or the generic obligations that adults are expected to meet.

These six trait categories (independence, productivity, relationships, communication, finances, being adult-like) are drawn from my experience and give me the ability to communicate adult transitional behaviors within different domains. I use them in this study as a descriptive medium for myself and the participants to

communicate adult transitions. Participants coming to this topic will come with different experiences or cultural expectations, yet these categories give a coherent framework for dialoging how they have changed or developed over a given period of time. My definitions of adulthood and categories for which the transitions take place likely shape participants' view of the aspects that are relevant to a discussion of adulthood in this study. However, I have made this decision since I want my research to align both with the definitions of adulthood in the literature and to gain insight into the dimensions I saw as important during my work in college student personnel.

To be sure, researchers could use different semantic categorizations. If these differences relate only to the categorical descriptors and not the definitions themselves (for example, labeling the independence category "self-provision" instead of independence), then the expected change in outcome is not great. If the semantic categorizations are based on significantly different definitions or expectations, then the interpretations likely also will be different. My framework for these variables comes from my experience and current reading of the literature.

The variety I saw in students could have related to demographic variables. In terms of what we generally agreed upon in discussing adult characteristics, international students seemed to be "more adult" at an earlier age. Students who had come from difficult living situations or who were previously expected to carry greater responsibility were also regarded as more assimilated. The same could be said for those who were married, had children, or had served in the military before enrolling in school. These interactions were some of the initial catalysts that led me into graduate school. I wanted

to better understand the connections between development in late adolescence and formal education. This seemed particularly relevant in light of the significant changes taking place with modern education (Rachal, 2002; Usiskin, 2007).

Experiences as high school students were also important. College students used high school experiences as reference points when encountering new dimensions of development. Parental or family involvement was often mentioned (as expected), but high school was also instrumental in building an individual's framework for problem solving, dealing with complex situations, and expressing appropriate situational behaviors. When transitioning through young adulthood, the most relevant reference for dealing with complexity was the framework that had been developed and honed in high school, though certainly other contextual variables were present.

From these experiences, I brought to this study a few assumptions: 1) In general, there are differences between the maturity and responsibility students feel in high school and the maturity/responsibility they are expected to carry as adults; 2) I believe that Arnett's research on the delays in emerging adulthood is a good charactereization; and 3) There are differences from one adult to the next in terms of how the transition unfolds, differences in part which are seen to relate to developmental experiences.

Design

This study was primarily qualitative. The basis of the design was to use structured interviews that would ask several direct, short-answer questions, several demographic questions, a numerical rating question, and a few open-ended questions, some of which could be shaped by prior responses. The need in this study is to both use comparable,

ratable components that give consistency and frame grounded responses, and to have more open-ended narrative components that allow for different types of responses. No specific outcome is sought through any one question, yet the types of questions chosen and the way they are presented influence which elements the respondent is more likely to notice (see Miller, 2007).

But this study will seek to look individual responses on their own and view them in relation to the broader patterns identified in the literature. As Daly (2007) writes:

> *"Stories are implicitly collaborative endeavors that involve the storyteller's drawing from those who are familiar with the way things work in the culture. Since stories help us to understand both cultural conventions and deviations from these conventions, they can be seen as having both moral and epistemic status. In other words, stories help us to comprehend our individual and cultural values, and they are a means by which we come to know our cultural practices. In this regard, narrative analysis goes beyond the lessons of the individual story: It is also a means to generate knowledge that disrupts traditional explanations and allows us to see the complexities of human lives as they are shaped by changing cultural practices"* (p. 113).

As Miller (2007) describes it, the purpose of qualitative research is to study "people's experiences of the world," noting that: "such experiences are variable and personal and self-constructed. It is the meanings with which people invest their experiences that should be our concern … and these meanings may vary from person to person" (p. 124). My goal in this study was to understand personal conceptions of school support as they relate

to individual definitions of adulthood, and qualitative research has the best potential to capture those conceptions. As Miller notes, the starting point for qualitative research is not an "objective reality that is the same for everyone" (p. 124). The meanings associated with experience in this study are considered valid, in as much as they provide accurate portrayals of participant insights into their own personal realities.

Because this was a relatively small-scale study and I wanted data on key categories, I did not engage in a thorough elicitation of individual's personal narratives about becoming an adult. However, I tried to allow enough space through open-ended questions for them to express their personal experience.

Robert Kegan (1982) in his book, *The Evolving Self*, looks at how individuals consider themselves in context, most notably how a person becomes aware of their own capabilities in relation to external experiences. To look at this, he conducted structured interviews, asking individuals to recount their experiences and their awareness of personal developments or crises. That the interviews were structured allowed for a measure of control, compatibility, and replicability. Because they were interviews though, they were allowed to be altered depending on a given context. In his research, he was able to characterize a mind-in-context view of the self that was both unique to the individual and transferrable, not in the experiences themselves but in the ways those experiences could be communicated. The grounded components allowed for individual responses, but the similitude of the questions asked allowed him to see similar, comparable outcomes across a range of people.

A number of current researchers have used grounded or narrative components of qualitative research to understand identity development, particularly with emerging adults. In the book *Capturing Identity* by Watzlawik and Born (2007), the authors include thirteen separate methodologies (each a chapter) for investigating identity, several of which relate to Erikson's identity stage and what we think of as emerging adulthood. At least five of the chapters include some form of structured narrative inquiry. McLean and Pratt (2006) used a narrative life story model (which consisted of multiple structured questionnaires) to understand how emerging adults made meaning of their situations as they went through life turning points. Donoghue and Stein (2007) used structured narratives to understand the criteria emerging adults use when determining standards for adulthood. Dumas, Lawford, Tieu, and Pratt (2009) also used a structured narrative life story model to understand emerging adults' personal life stories and the way they make sense of negative experiences. Kins, Beyers, Soenens, and Vansteenkiste (2009) used self-report surveys to understand how emerging adults make decisions, engage in relationships, and rate their level of happiness. The form of using a structured or semi-structured interview/questionnaire to glean qualitative or quantitative responses when researching emerging adult identity development is well founded.

In this study, I gave each participant a structured electronic survey with numerous questions related to their current life situation, their transition to adulthood (here I'm using adulthood in the legal sense, seeing as some participants didn't fully consider themselves adults), and their high school experience [refer to Appendix C]. I asked participants to define their current life in terms of their age (23-24, 25-27, 28-29),

relationship status (married, single, in a committed relationship, it's complicated), children (yes, no), education level, and occupation. Then I asked more directly, *"How do you define adulthood? What are the key characteristics?"* and *"Do you feel like an adult? How have you changed developmentally in the past 8-10 years?"* These followed with questions about their high school experience, their transition to college, how they feel now that they are considered adults, and how their transition was similar or different to their parents. Finally, I asked, *"When you consider your high school experience, what supports would have been most helpful in assisting students as they transitioned to adulthood?"*

At the conclusion of the electronic survey, I asked all participants to participate in a brief follow-up interview that could be completed either electronically or over the phone. The inquiries consisted of five questions [see Appendix G for examples]. The first two questions asked where geographically they attended high school and college. The third question was primarily concerned with asking them about the dichotomy of age not being the sole factor of determining adulthood. Since all participants had stated they felt like adults in their surveys, each participant was asked, *"In your opinion, why is there so much variety in how people experience this transition? Some see themselves as an adult at an early age, while others don't until much later. In your words, why do some people experience extended adolescence?"* This does assume that: 1) there is a variety in how people transition to adulthood; and 2) some experience extended adolescence, but participants were given the ability to answer questions as openly as they like. They were free to express a different understanding or clarify previous responses. The fourth and

17

fifth questions were positive/negative looks at the ratings they gave their high school. The fourth question asked about the highest marks they had given their school, asking *"What are the principal reasons you think these marks are higher?"* The fifth question looked at the lowest marks, asking if the school had placed a stronger emphasis on the certain trait, would it have improved "a typical student's experience when transitioning to adulthood?" This question calls to mind what they think are "typical" experiences in transitioning to adulthood, and also suggests whether or not they think the experience needs improving. My goal was not to influence their responses in any particular direction, but to look at how they approached the concepts I had identified in their own way.

Participants

The criteria for involvement in this study was individuals who were between the ages of 23-29 and had completed a college degree (Associates or higher). The age was established in order to focus on those who were fully out of a high school experience and likely moving forward in at least some aspects of adulthood, such as autonomy, industry, identity, intimacy (Galambos et al., 2008). In addition, this was old enough to match what is most commonly referred to on a cultural basis when considering adulthood (Arnett & Galambos, 2003). In a traditional lens, a person who is 23 and has graduated from college is generally thought of as an adult. Arnett (2000; 2003) mainly considered the range of 18-25 year olds when looking at extended adolescence, though he did find influences extending through age 29. Galambos et al. (2005) looked at individuals between the ages of 17-29, finding a "crossover" point at approximately 25.5. Other research on emerging adulthood has included similar ages, including 23 (McLean et al., 2006), 26 (Dumas et

18

al., 2009), and Nelson et al. (2007), who considered ages of 25 and 20-29 before settling

on a study range of 18-25. Additionally, Murphy, Blustein, Bohlig, & Platt, (2010)

continued emerging research by looking at post-collegiate adjustments, noting the

differences for those who had specifically completed a college degree. To have a

population with adequate perspective, they chose those who had completed a college

degree three years prior and were now making career transitions.

The criteria in this study of participants age 23-29 who have a college degree

presents an interesting dynamic. On one hand, it presents a traditional demographic

typically associated with adulthood, even if some consider it young adulthood. On the

other hand, it allows us to see differences from individuals included in that demographic

who do not yet want to use the term "adult." Coupled with the other demographic data,

this will allow us to see what differences exist between the types of responses given and

the relevant trajectories that could be expected.

Responses from 41 participants were used in this study. Approximately 110

survey invitations were sent, with about half responding (n = 52, response rate = 47.3%).

Because the initial system gave the option of taking the survey regardless of age or

school status, 8 participants' responses were not included in the findings. These were

either older or younger than the target of 23-29, or they had not completed a college

degree. Three participants piloted the survey and their data was not included. For the

follow up survey, only those who stated they felt like adults and were willing to be

contacted for a follow up survey were included in the second collection. Eight

participants were sent surveys and all completed them (n = 8, response rate = 100%).

Participants were recruited by current and former college student personnel staff from several American universities. I made inquiries to student services personnel who I had worked with previously, asking them to distribute information about the study to alumni who potentially would be interested in participating [see Appendix B for sample recruiting letter]. Participants were able to access the electronic survey anonymously and both the student services personnel and investigators were kept from personally-identifiable information, unless it was freely offered. Participation in the study was voluntary. No incentives or benefits were offered to participants. IRB approval for this model was granted in early 2010, and all participants completed the informed consent form [sample available in Appendix A] and survey. The informed consent form included a summary of the research procedures, risks and benefits to participation, confidentiality statement, and contact information. All participant data were kept secure on a password-protected website, and individual surveys were coded for privacy. The surveys were anonymous, and no personally identifiable information was required. Participants interested in the follow-up survey were asked to provide name and email or phone number.

From the 41 participants (see Table 1), there was a fairly equal spread between males and females, married and unmarried, and between the older two age groups. Less than 30% of the participants had children, and fewer than 10% were unmarried but in a committed relationship, were from a non-white ethnicity, or were in the youngest age group.

Table 1. Participant Demographic Data (by Variable)

Variable	Number (out of 41)	Percentage
Male	16	39.02%
Female	25	60.98%
Age 23-24	4	9.76%
Age 25-27	18	43.90%
Age 28-29	19	46.34%
Asian	3	7.32%
White/Caucasian	36	87.80%
American Indian	1	2.44%
Other	1	2.44%
Married	19	46.34%
Single	18	43.90%
In a Committed Relationship	4	9.76%
It's Complicated	0	0.00%
Has Children	12	29.27%
No Children	29	70.73%

Eight participants who identified themselves as adults completed the follow up survey (see Table 2). Additional demographic information is included in Appendix G, including their complete responses. To provide confidentiality, the participants were given aliases. Six follow up participants were female, and two were male.

A specific element needs to be noted regarding the follow up participants. While no specific type of participant was sought in terms of occupation, the eight participants largely share something in common. Though coming from different states and different majors, all the participants work with either youth or college students. Two appear to

Table 2. Follow-Up Participant Demographic Data (by Variable)

	Participant (Alias)			
	Calla	**Mandy**	**Philip**	**Wesley**
Gender	F	F	M	M
Age	28-29	28-29	25-27	28-29
Race/Ethnicity	White	White	White	White
High school state	Minnesota	Wyoming	Virginia	Michigan
College state	Minnesota	Wyoming	Virginia	Minnesota
College major	Pastoral Studies	Biology/Education	Social Sciences	Pastoral Studies
Current career	Resident Director	Science teacher	Learning Resource Instructor	Youth pastor
Relationship status	Single	Married	In a committed relationship	Married
Parental status	No	Yes	No	Yes
Thoughts on Extended Adolescence	There is a mentality some young adults have that they "deserve" to have … an entitlement attitude that is not reflective of the adult world.	If parents are enablers and pay for everything, in my opinion, they mature much later, because their responsibility comes much later.	One cannot determine his or her adulthood by … mere feelings, without much thought or evidence based on how others perceive this person.	Our culture has made it easier for students to stay home … As rights of passage come later and later, adolescence will get longer and longer.

work in college environments (resident director, learning resource instructor), three work

in youth ministry roles, one is a counselor at a group home, and two work in secondary

education (science teacher, tutor). These participants likely bring similar experiences

and/or expectations to the topic of adult transition. This could be why they each decided

to go into these types of careers. This also could show why they mostly all felt that their

school either didn't do much to address extended adolescence, or that there were specific

things they could have done to make the transition better. The insights likely are not just

coming from personal experience, but from experience within their career roles.

It is possible that there are an unusual number of youth-oriented jobs within

Follow-Up Participant Demographic Data (continued)

	Participant (Alias)			
	Mackenzie	**Erin**	**Evelyn**	**Sarah**
Gender	F	F	F	F
Age	28-29	25-27	25-27	25-27
Race/Ethnicity	Native American	White	White	White
High school state	Minnesota	Ohio	Minnesota	Nevada
College state	Minnesota	Minnesota	Illinois	Minnesota
College major	Youth Ministries	Pastoral Ministries	Political Science and French	Psychology
Current career	Youth pastor and Manager at Caribou Coffee	Youth coordinator	Counselor/Case Manager at group home	Tutor
Relationship status	In a committed relationship	Single	Single	Single
Parental status	No	No	No	No
Thoughts on Extended Adolescence	I think that there is a learning curve every person goes through regarding how to take on responsibility, I just happened to learn it a lot earlier in life.	Placing a stronger emphasis on relationships, communication and finances would improve the student's experience and reduce extended adolescence.	Without the relational room to figure these things out it takes people longer to grow out of adolescence as they try to answer questions about themselves without a sounding board.	If there is no change, no adversity, no challenge, there usually is no growth in a person.

the participants of this dataset. Out of the 41 participants, 32% had careers which involved training, teaching, counseling or coaching with college-age or younger populations. The data they provide likely is influenced by their own efforts to help people transition to adulthood.

Analysis

Qualitative theory from Daly (2007) and Watzlawik et al. (2007) provided a germane reference for analysis. As was mentioned previously, both works contained numerous studies and examples of structured narrative responses being used in identity research. Responses from the electronic surveys were collated according demographic

and theme-based criteria. The data was then reviewed to determine 1) overarching themes, 2) personal examples and 3) specific directives. Also consulted during the review were works by Bogdan and Biklen (2007), Miller (2007), and Thomas (2003).

Data from the surveys were uploaded to an online database. Demographic and quantitative data was exported to SPSS, and qualitative responses were exported to Excel. The study was piloted with three participants whose data were not included, and this was both to test the data loading procedures and rate the efficacy of each question. In addition, a review committee also viewed the questions before launch and gave helpful suggestions. Questions for the follow up surveys were in part developed as responses to answers given in the first survey.

Both surveys served important functions within the study. The first survey gave participants the opportunity to characterize their own transition from different angles and relate it to a number of important concepts: how their transition was similar or different to their parents, the encouragement for adulthood they felt in high school, and the key characteristics of adulthood and education. I used these primarily to do three things: 1) identify key criteria the participant's established for adulthood; 2) determine if these participants considered themselves adults; and 3) gain key information on their school experiences. Coupled with the demographic information, I could make comparisons between those who said they felt like adults, those who didn't or felt they were still in the process, and in how they conceptualized the perception of support. I could pull from these responses what appear to be key themes in any transition (with deference to culture and/or alternative experiences) and make demographic and rating-based observations.

24

With the follow-up survey, I chose only to look at those who considered themselves adults. In developing the surveys, I used material from the participant's previous answers, making each survey unique to the individual. I asked one question specifically about extended adolescence, which allowed the participants to serve as contextual experts and further give support to why or why not these transitions are happening. Then I asked specific questions about their high school experience (as rated in the previous survey). As participants who felt they had made the jump to adulthood, this again allowed them to serve as experts for their domain-specific situation.

Again, this study was able to both look at individual stories and make broader, cross-participant analyses. The goal was not to determine any one singular trajectory but to find (potential) common ground among a multitude of different experiences. As Miller (2007) has written, the important components of any qualitative analysis are to 1) respect individual conceptions, 2) incorporate personal examples (such as "grounded" language), and 3) let the responses serve to show connections between similar themes. Implicit in any qualitative analysis is also the need to show both the benefit and limitations of asking individuals to recollect their experiences. The goal in analysis is to see the relevance of participant responses to the research categories through a variety of similar mechanisms. Though the questions and participants in these surveys were different, they touched at similar constructs, and the questions allowed participants to characterize their transition from multiple angles.

I separated the findings into those responses aimed at adulthood and those aimed at school support. As mentioned previously, I used the six trait categories of

independence, productivity, communication, relationships, finances, and adult-like as a mechanism for relating adult-specific criteria. In analysis, I was able to look at different responses through the lens of those who said they felt like adults, those who were unsure, and those who said they didn't. This is explicated further in the next section.

Additionally, the importance of the demographic information is found in its present context. The participants in this study were real individuals with real stories and who find themselves in a variety of different contexts. Seeing as though the surveys address issues of adulthood, relationships, career choices, and other important happenings, it seems prudent to look at this information and surmise what antecedents may exist from prior experiences. If a noticeable connection can be determined between the responses to adult status and the markers they have highlighted on an evidentiary basis (e.g. marriage, having children), then it further gives credence to the possibility that some of these issues have relevance to a high school environment.

Findings

Questions on the first survey fell into three categories: demographic information, conceptualizing adulthood, and high school experiences. While the participants were anonymous, they did share often personal narrative accounts of their experiences. Participants recalled what made their transition unique (assuming they saw themselves as having transitioned), what did or did not define them as adults, and both the role they felt their school played and the perceptions of secondary school in general. From the two main research categories (considering adulthood and school), this section will look at some key responses and a few general themes that emerge.

Looking at adulthood

The first research category of questions concerned the nature of adulthood: how adults in this study defined adulthood, how prepared they were for the transition, and what in that transition was particular to their life situation. To look at these components, responses were categorized under the banners of four questions: 1) How did the participants in this study define adulthood? 2) Did the participants in this study consider themselves adults? 3) What did/does the transition look like? 4) What, to them, does extended adolescence look like, and why do some people experience it?

Defining adulthood

I wanted to find an answer to the question, "How did the participants in this study define adulthood?" The nature of this analysis concerns both their direct answers to

question 11 *("Briefly, how do you define adulthood? What are the key characteristics?")* and other key elements present in responses. An alternate look at these answers can be found in question 18 *("Now that you are considered an adult, think about the transition you have taken. How has your transition to adulthood been similar or different when compared to your parents, older relatives, or older role models?")*, which asks how their transition to adulthood was similar or different to their parents. I wanted to clarify what aspects of adulthood they considered distinctive.

I saw independence as one of the most common themes in responses, both relating to the physical and emotional separation from parents and from the personal responsibility required. Ability to handle finances and find employment were seen as key elements of independence. In defining adulthood, one participant said, "Making financial, job, social and relationship decisions on my own. Parents are peers, not sole source of guidance. Adulthood includes a personal sense of responsibility for one's actions and decisions." Another said, "Living independently by making your own money and paying your own expenses with the ability to make mature, reasonable decisions." A third said, "Being old enough to be able to support yourself financially and emotionally." Independence encompasses both a physical and emotional separation and an awareness/desire to self-provide.

I saw relationships as another common consideration. Some responses were, "building healthy relationships, healthy communication," "when you have respect for yourself, others and especially older people," "more responsibilities, marriage, having kids," and, "as the time in life when a young person has taken responsibility for

28

themselves and their family (if they have one) and their own affairs. Key characteristics include fiscal responsibility, autonomy from family (childhood family), social responsibility (sense of giving back and caring for others), mature relationships, involvement in the community, etc." With a stronger definition of independence comes a clearer understanding of mature, workable relationships, even if the participants themselves are not experiencing them. Relationships include personal friend/family relationships, relationships with children (if present), relationships with employers/work associates, and with the community at large. To some extent, participants recognize that each of these relationship areas change during and after the transition to adulthood.

Being adult-like is seen as "realizing there are consequences for bad decisions," gaining "autonomy from parents, taking responsibility for his/her own life, and making decisions for his/herself." Many participants listed "selflessness," or "a concern for others," or even, "able to be a fully participating citizen." It is a unique mixture of concern for self and others that rises to previously unseen levels. There is a greater depth of self-sufficiency, and a greater awareness of corporate responsibility.

To facilitate these expanded roles, some participants listed greater dedication, communication skills, and a realization "that life is hard and you have to work hard in order to succeed." Another listed the importance of his "daily routine of working and paying bills," and "doing the best work I can." A new level of productivity in work and family relationships is acknowledged, as is the need to communicate and present oneself in a mature manner. One listed the concerns of the adult world like this: "Adulthood is when you take responsibility for yourself. Pay your own bills, live in your own place, and

have a steady full time job. Characteristics are being financially independent, employed and mature." One could envision a container which held a widely-diverse grouping of tasks that related to adult-type activities, common elements of which could be found in routine activities: bill paying, house cleaning, steady employment, childrearing, relationship management, community obligations, etc.

From these answers, I see connections to at least the six relevant adult transition trait categories: 1) independence, 2) productivity, 3) communication skills, 4) relational abilities, 5) financial abilities, and 6) doing adult-like things. It seems the participants in this study would communicate the transition from adolescence to adulthood along these lines. These categories will be further used in the high school rating section.

Are they adults?

An important follow-up consideration then is to ask if, according to these definitions, the people in this study are adults (see Table 3). I found the most relevance to this in question 12 *("Do you feel like an adult? How have you changed developmentally over the past 8-10 years?")*, though there are some who gave helpful information in other questions. Reviewing these responses led to three main categories of participants: 1) Yes, considers self an adult; 2) Sometimes, yes/no, increasingly, or still in the process; and 3) No, does not consider self an adult.

Table 3. Breakdown of Participants

Level	Number	Percentage
Considers self an adult	27	69.23%
Sometimes, Yes & No, Increasingly	9	23.08%
Does not consider self an adult	3	7.69%

Note: excluding two participants with insufficient data for a determination

30

In this study, of the 41 participants who completed surveys, 39 gave enough information to be categorized. I chose to categorize 27 participants as those who considered themselves adults, 9 who were in the middle column, and 3 who did not consider themselves adults. Below is the justification I give for each category.

Those who considered themselves adults listed the following sample responses:

- *"Yes, I definitely feel like an adult. In the past 10 years, I have grown to be financially independent, emotionally autonomous from my immediate family, and adapted to daily management of complex relationships and important decisions."*

- *"Yes, I feel like an adult now, but it didn't feel that way in college. I'm definitely able to handle more responsibility than I ever had before. My time management skills stink, but I feel they are getting better. I'm practicing to not just complain about something I don't like, but to take action to change something if I am able to, even if it's a small change."*

- *"Yes - having 3 children in 4 years has catapulted me into adulthood :) much less focused on myself than I was even 5 years ago."*

Other things personally associated with adulthood are, "confidence," an "awareness of reality/practicality," the ability to "value others' input," "deeper understanding/wiser," "understanding wants," and being "emotionally autonomous." Some feel confident in their adult status due to attainment of a certain age, such as 18, 24, or 25. Others quantify it by listing specific experiences, such as moving out of their parent's home, getting married, buying a house, and getting a first job after college. Some list more subjective

dimensions such as a feeling or an awareness of greater responsibility, a growth or change in beliefs, and a change in how they view others or the world. Some listed being more interested in politics or community happenings, coupled with an ongoing development of religious, political, and family values.

That they attained this status is central, as it distinguishes them from those at a similar age who do not. Participants in this first category are comfortable using the word adult in reference to themselves. They may have gone through different experiences, and they may have different expectations held to them now, but a change has developed. This is not to suggest that they are somehow fully formed; but it could suggest that they are more willing to accept characteristics/responsibilities associated with adulthood more than others who chide at the characterization.

Those in the middle category often said that they either feel somewhat or mostly like an adult, but that there are still areas unassimilated. Here are some sample responses:

- *"Yes and no. I've come to realize how little I know about the world."*

- *"In some ways I feel like I am an adult and in others I feel I will never be one."*

- *"For the most part but there are days I feel like I need to go hunting and do man things like that. I've developed my skill as a communicator and my ability to work with people that I don't like unlike the past where I would just avoid them if I could. Also my understanding of love was something that I was unable to truly know until I was married."*

- *"I do and don't feel like an adult. I do because I have moved on from college and am pursuing higher studies and feel like I am gaining new knowledge of the world. I don't because I still live with my parents and they provide for me as I am not totally providing for myself financially yet."*

- *"Yes, I feel like an adult. However, not always. There is a sense of not being there yet though I am 27 years old."*

One person in this category wrote that they feel like they "can handle the basics." The present understanding with this category is that the fully-formed opinions and practices of adult behavior are, to them, somewhat in limbo, either waiting to happen down the line or cautiously/reluctantly being embraced. I see that the participants in this category either do not feel confident to fully embrace the image in their mind of an adult status, or they are hesitant to feel that they will ever want to embrace it. The participants do have a formed characterization of adulthood (or behaviors they associate with adulthood), but they are not yet motivated to make all of those characteristics personally formed.

Those in the third category said that they do not feel like adults. There were three participants in this category. Here are their responses:

- *"No, I do not. I feel the same I did throughout high school and college. The only difference is I can now grow a beard."*

- *"Not really. I've grown, though, in having a more realistic view of the world."*

- *"Another day, another dollar. I'm not sure I quite consider myself an adult yet, although I do live on my own and completely independent financially, emotionally, and physically … I'm not ready to call myself a grown up yet!"*

Those in this category either said they are waiting for a significant experience that will move them into adulthood (such as getting a new job), or that they simply do not "feel" like a grown up. One said that she has not felt that "clear break." Another said that when growing up she didn't have the same family support as her peers, and that she was not ready to consider her transition complete. The last respondent above struggled even listening to the semantics of the word adult. Two of these participants were in the 25-27 age group, and one was in the 23-24 age group. There is probably a close relationship between this and the previous, in-between group, though perhaps there is an affective disconnect which distinguishes these individuals. They either do not want to be adults or they do not feel they've done enough to consider themselves there.

The variety of responses from these categories shows the significance given to each element of change in the transition to adulthood. Participants choose to highlight certain aspects of adulthood and characterize their relationship to those things. Some see very little distance between the things that are expected and the reality; with others, the distance is great. This also highlights the subjective nature of each experience. Those who consider themselves adults see a clear transition, whether in the legal/status sense or in the responsibility sense. Those in the process of assimilating to an adult status recognize elements of the future that they associate with adulthood, and they can

articulate reluctance in assuming those roles. Those who state that they do not feel like adults may not have gone far enough to assume a change in identity, but they can at least articulate something outside of themselves that they associate with adulthood. The glamour (whether or not adulthood is seen as appealing), urgency (whether or not they want to assume the status soon) or agency (whether or not they feel they can accomplish adult-like tasks) involved in assuming adult roles plays a central factor in how the transition will unfold.

The variety of responses can further be characterized by demographic information. According to the different categories of adult status, participants can be separated by gender, age, relationship status, and parental status. The following tables (4-7) list these differences.

Table 4. Proportion of those meeting set adulthood criteria (by Gender)

Considers self an adult		
Gender	**Number**	**Percentage**
Male	12	44.44%
Female	15	55.56%
Sometimes, Yes & No, Increasingly		
Gender	**Number**	**Percentage**
Male	3	33.33%
Female	6	66.67%
Does not consider self an adult		
Gender	**Number**	**Percentage**
Male	1	33.33%
Female	2	66.67%

Note: excluding two participants with insufficient data for a determination

Table 5. Proportion of those meeting set adulthood criteria (by Age)

Considers self an adult		
Age	**Number**	**Percentage**
23-24	0	0.00%
25-27	12	44.44%
28-29	15	55.56%
Sometimes, Yes & No, Increasingly		
Age	**Number**	**Percentage**
23-24	3	33.33%
25-27	3	33.33%
28-29	3	33.33%
Does not consider self an adult		
Age	**Number**	**Percentage**
23-24	1	33.33%
25-27	2	66.67%
28-29	0	0.00%

Note: excluding two participants with insufficient data for a determination

Table 6. Proportion of those meeting set adulthood criteria (by Relationship Status)

Considers self an adult		
Status	**Number**	**Percentage**
Married	15	55.56%
Single	9	33.33%
In a committed relationship	3	11.11%
Sometimes, Yes & No, Increasingly		
Status	**Number**	**Percentage**
Married	4	44.44%
Single	5	55.56%
In a committed relationship	0	0.00%
Does not consider self an adult		
Status	**Number**	**Percentage**
Married	0	0.00%
Single	3	100.00%
In a committed relationship	0	0.00%

Note: excluding two participants with insufficient data for a determination

Table 7. Proportion of those meeting set adulthood criteria (by Parent Status)

Considers self an adult		
Status	**Number**	**Percentage**
Yes	12	44.44%
No	15	55.56%
Sometimes, Yes & No, Increasingly		
Status	**Number**	**Percentage**
Yes	0	0.00%
No	0	0.00%
Does not consider self an adult		
Status	**Number**	**Percentage**
Yes	0	0.00%
No	0	0.00%

Note: excluding two participants with insufficient data for a determination

A clear break or a complex process?

From this, I moved to ascertaining whether participants saw the process of transitioning as a shorter, more sudden change or something longer and more complex. This as well can be looked at in terms of three categories: 1) those who felt the transition happened in or as the result of one of several "break" moments; 2) those who felt the transition happened in or was the result of a longer, complex process; and 3) those who either said "both," or were hard to define. Below are examples of each category.

Transition as a clear break

Those who quantified the transition to adulthood as a clear break talk about pivotal moments in time, either where a significant decision was made, or where a significant experience "forced" the transition. Locus of control could be a significant factor in determining these categorizations. Here are some representative statements:

- *"It was a break. The first time a child called me "Mister," my youth was over."*

- *"Transitioning from college to the "working world" was that period for me. I had NEVER had a job until after college. Not McDonalds, not even a babysitting job. My first paycheck came from an Engineering firm. After a few months of learning to get myself out of bed and to work on time, I grew more comfortable with the adult image. The total transformation probably took about 6 months."*

- *"Having children was probably the biggest milestone towards becoming an adult."*

- *"The biggest break was probably graduation from college. While I didn't feel nearly the responsibility I do now, that was the biggest jump."*

Participants in this category saw a moment or brief period of time when a change in identity was warranted. The first example lists a change in status. The second a change in responsibility. The third and fourth examples list significant milestones. Another break point listed was transitioning to a specific age, whether 18, 21, or another age. Voting rights were listed, as was the ability to drink alcohol. The important characteristic of this category is specificity, which distinguishes it from the next category.

Transition as a complex process

Those who characterize the transition to adulthood as a complex process generally have difficulty pinpointing any one thing that moved them closer to assimilation. They may be able to select a period of time or even several events that all served to work as

catalysts, but they will describe the changes as a process. Here are some representative responses:

- *"No. I believe it was a process over many years which started when I graduated high school."*

- *"Definitely a process. I can look back and say "Yes, I am now an adult" but I didn't notice it as I was arriving. After I graduated from college, had a full-time job and lived on my own, I still didn't feel like an adult. I think I was still very dependent on my parents. After time, and several different life experiences, I can now say I feel like an adult. And those experiences were not just marriage and children - I felt like an adult before I was married."*

- *"It was complex beyond simple descriptions. It was a process and I'm not sure where it began or ended."*

- *"The process was very complex. It's difficult - even now - to put it into words. As to what led to the transition... I think it was taking control of my own life. It was getting my first "real" job. Signing the papers to get my own insurance policies (life insurance, health insurance, etc.). Signing my lease for an apartment."*

Some participants, such as the last one listed, consider the process complex, yet list what others would clarify as individual "break" moments: getting a job, signing up for insurance, leasing an apartment. The second example shows a participant who had completed several adult-type roles (full-time job, living on own, etc.), yet was dependent

39

enough to not feel like an adult. Others in the study also said that the process was very complex or "slow", but then listed specific turning points such as moving away from home, getting a job, having children, or signing a mortgage. Some list though that, "I think there are people with children who are not adults," and "I felt another big step had been achieved when I bought my first house, but that is not a requisite for adulthood." So while some would list that their transition to adulthood was one or more clear break moments, those the complex process category might state that simply experiencing those break points is not enough to be an adult.

Transition as both or undefined

The third category was harder to define. Some participants recognized both break points and an overall process, listing both significant experiences and a more complex transition. Other participants either didn't want to be counted as adults, or they felt that their peers/family didn't completely consider them adults because of their decisions. Here are some representative responses:

- *"Like I said, I'm not ready to call myself a grown up yet!! I'm sure the rest of the world does see me in this light though!"*

- *"For whatever reason at age 25 I felt like an adult. I should also say I have three siblings and they are all married and all have at least one child. Compared to them I don't often feel like an adult because my life decisions have been very different. I chose to continue on to extra schooling, travel and pursue completely different life experiences. Because of that, I feel like they don't often treat me like an adult because I don't*

40

have the same responsibilities they do. Not to say mine are less important but they can't easily relate and I often feel like they don't recognize my adulthood. Basically, no it wasn't a clear "break." It was a transition and one that is still happening. I think our society places too much value on marriage, family and children as being the true markers of adulthood and maturity. As a result, it has been hard for me to process my own adulthood because I don't have those experiences. I find myself having to relate with adults who share my experiences as opposed to young families otherwise I often feel like less of an "adult" because I have made different life choices."

- *"My mom still pays my cell phone bill (family plan makes it cheaper and she likes to be able to provide something for me). I don't have a retirement plan. I sleep until at least noon almost every day and rarely go to bed before 4 AM. I eat a lot of cereal. I still like to sit cross-legged on chairs and play on jungle gyms and playgrounds … So it's an ongoing transition. And I don't think it'll ever be completely done. But who says I have to become an adult?"*

- *"I haven't felt that clear break, but if I had to pinpoint a time, it would be getting my first job after college."*

With the first example, look at the difference between what the individual thinks of herself versus what she assumes the world thinks. According to her age or responsibilities, she is confident that the world sees her as an adult, though she is

reluctant to characterize herself as such. The second and third examples list the role of family and perception. The role of family and peers in creating or shaping personal definitions of adulthood is a persistent theme in the data. These participants have all had examples or representative definitions of both what is considered "adult-like" and what the transition should look like. The reactions relating to their move toward independence either confirm or oppose those definitions, which is evident in the variety of responses given. The second example (a female) said she feels like an adult, yet her family doesn't see her as such because she has made different decisions from her siblings. Her characterization of the process as "complex" runs countercultural to her family's expectations, likely causing an assumed extended adolescence in their relationship.

My goal in this line of inquiry was to further define personal expressions of adulthood through looking at participants' conceptions of the transition. Regardless of how the transition unfolded, nearly all would consider the change significant and memorable. We now will turn to their perception of what others go through when the transition takes a different amount of time.

Extended adolescence

Noting differences in experience, it is imperative to understand how participants in this study characterize the idea of "extended adolescence," or a perceived delay in the transition to normative adult behaviors. Responses to this inquiry primarily came from question 16 *("Were there aspects of your high school experience that encouraged students not to want to be adults? In other words, were there elements of your high school experience that encouraged extended adolescence? If yes, what were some?")* and

from question 3 of the follow up survey *("In your opinion, why is there so much variety in how people experience this transition? Some see themselves as an adult at an early age, while others don't until much later. In your words, why do some people experience extended adolescence?")*, in addition to other selected responses. In terms of looking at schools, there was a pretty clear break in terms of those who felt there were aspects of school that encouraged extended adolescence and those who didn't. Those responses will be looked at in the next section.

For this inquiry, I placed the importance on defining extended adolescence, both its characteristics and causes. Even if participants disagree about whether or not there are elements in schools which encourage extended adolescence, most participants in this study do agree that there is such a concept as extended adolescence. Here are some sample responses (with different approaches to the concept):

- *"Teenagers have a hard time thinking about the future consequences of their actions. This was the case for me, at least. And I was a good student, making decent grades, but it was difficult to truly understand the importance of getting into college. I am not sure if my high school experience really taught me what it means to be an adult, but I wonder if it is even possible to be taught how to be an adult. I think that the process toward reaching adulthood differs for each person. Some may grow simply by gleaning lessons from others, but some people have to experience for themselves. I think that it comes down to each person*

individually. For some students, if a teacher tries to impart wisdom into

their students' lives, they listen. For others, they listen with deaf ears."

This idea of being motivated to listen is central to these comments. It presupposes that the

materials available could have been sufficient to support a transition, but that it was hard

to "truly understand the importance" of what lay ahead. Not connecting what was taught

to what was needed made for a lack of motivation. A participant's relationship to their

superiors is also important, as assumed with teachers and with parents.

- *"I think people experience extended adolescence when they are over-*
  sheltered by well-meaning parents, or when they are not taught to take
  personal responsibility for their actions. There is a mentality some young
  adults have that they "deserve" to have fun and have their gratifications
  satisfied, which leads to an entitlement attitude that is not reflective of the
  adult world."

Again is listed the connection between what is seen at a late-adolescent age and what is

"reflective of the adult world." While some participants had parents who expected certain

behaviors for adulthood, this participant saw parents who were actively involved in the

decision-making as catalysts for extended adolescence. Adolescents are not required to

make decisions for themselves, so they do not "take personal responsibility for their

actions." This is coupled with a cultural "mentality" that emphasizes freedom or

entitlement. Some participants felt that older peers also encouraged delayed maturity:

- *"I feel at times I was enabled by those who financially supported me to*
  keep on partying and make bad choices for myself, though they were

44

mostly kept in the dark about how I did this. This is the case with many

people, and why there is extended adolescence. I feel peoples' definition of

adulthood is the biggest reason for a variety of transition. People believe

they have matured when they "feel" responsible, or "feel" independent.

This is too internalized to qualify one as an adult or not. One cannot

determine his or her adulthood by these mere feelings, without much

thought or evidence based on how others perceive this person.   This can

cause a great variety in ages at which people feel mature, because

depending on how the day or month is going, they can give you a different

response."

In relating this to the complex process view, a person's feelings at one point may or may

not facilitate adult behavior. This may not necessarily confirm that some should identify

adulthood with specific adult behaviors, but it could show that the esoteric forms are

harder to quantify and potentially less consistent. Other participants had these responses:

- *"I find myself marking my adulthood in less key moment kinds of ways,*

  though. When I navigate a tricky interpersonal conflict without calling

  and asking advice, or when I go through a difficult time without feeling

  like I need to rely on my parents, I feel more independent. I've found that a

  lot of my peer group and friends are experiencing extended adolescence,

  so much so that the phrase 'quarter life crisis' is common. I think it has to

  do with feeling a societal expectation to quickly leave adolescence and

  have some sort of glamorous roaring experience of being young and in

your twenties. Part of this is the need to face reality that being in your twenties is not necessarily instantly having questions answered, but the pressure to know what you're doing and where you're going remains. Part of the extended adolescence, I think, is rooted in cultural changes away from it being okay to have strong intergenerational relationships with family members/social groups. There is something that is affirmed when an older person encourages or gives feedback to a younger person that helps answer questions that young person might have about themselves that lead to greater self-knowledge. Without the relational room to figure these things out it takes people longer to grow out of adolescence as they try to answer questions about themselves without a sounding board."

- *"In my case, I had to learn how to be responsible for myself at a young age because my family structure was not healthy. I had no choice, if I did not learn how to take care of myself no one else would have been there to pick up the slack. While other people are blessed with a family who takes care of them as they should while they are growing up, so they may not be as used to having to take on a lot of responsibility. By no means do I think that I am better off for having to learn it younger, because I missed out on a lot of great things that most people experience growing up. I think that there is a learning curve every person goes through regarding how to take on responsibility, I just happened to learn it a lot earlier in life."*

A few key considerations arise from these responses. First is the relationship of the individual to current adults, either parents, role models, teachers, or leaders. The understanding of what it is to be an adult is apparent in these examples and will have a significant influence on the nature and urgency of a person's transition. A second related component is the presence of peers and potentially an overriding cultural shift in the way people are "supposed" to transition. Several people mentioned support systems or affinity groups which are distinct from top-down parental motivational chains. Depending on the situation, and as one person writes, potentially a genetic predisposition, one set of relationships/influences could be stronger than the other. Of course, with the last quote listed above, situation variables can be a stronger influence than either role models or peer groups.

But most if not all of the participants in this study do recognize some type of variety in how people transition to adulthood, even if they listed the simplest definitions for themselves (e.g. turned 18, had a child, etc.). The perception of extended adolescence is viable, and it allows us now to turn our attention towards its presence and relationship to organized school.

The role of education

A significant portion of the developmental timeline for adolescents usually coincides with considerable amounts of formal education. Youth grow along the psychosocial pathways characterized by Erikson and others while jointly pursuing academic success either through public/private schools or through homeschooling. Asking participants in this study to recount their development "over the past 8-10 years"

is asking them at least indirectly to recount their high school's influence on them. The amount of time most older adolescents spend in academic training is significant, and it comes in step with other, non-academic developments. Recognizing the potential for cultural or political differences in schooling, this section will focus on standardized, formal education in secondary schools as experienced by the study participants.

All participants in the study recorded that they had attended a formal high school, and I asked them to qualitatively and quantitatively rate their experiences. This section will underscore what role, if any, the participant's high school played in assisting their joint developments in academics and in adult status. I will consider the qualitative components first.

I asked participants to generally list what 3-4 main things their high school teachers or administrators emphasized. I collated the responses into these categories (followed with an example):

- Academics – *"Striving to pass tests for the school's reputation and my college progress. Everything relies on what you are studying and learning now. Try really hard to be the best and better than others because the world is a competitive place"*

- College Preparedness – *"They emphasized college. You need to know these things in order to go to college. Nothing really seemed like it was for the transition to adulthood but rather they were trying to get us ready for the next step which was college."*

- Responsibility – *"Work hard, focus, deciding outcomes before you get there. Education is important- make the most of your opportunity to learn. You are responsible for your own decisions."*

- Respect/Rules – *They always emphasized that we respect fellow students and our teachers/administrators … Rules always seemed to be emphasized a great deal and we were always encouraged to follow them.*

- Social/Community – *"The encouragement to pursue my interests, an emphasis on social problems and situations, encouragement to be actively engaged in and learning about the community and world."*

- Individuality – *"I was taught to: Handle yourself like fine china, not dollar store mugs. Prepare yourself for the world at large. Make the most out of life."*

When asked to rate their high school experience, some participants chose to focus on administrators and teachers, others on peers and the school climate, and others still on personal (sometimes non-school) experiences. These categories though show that when asked directly about school administrators and teachers, participants were more likely to emphasize concepts like academic performance, test scores, college preparedness, and respect for each other and for school policies. Relating to the six traits characterized in the earlier section on adult status definition, these answers relate most closely to Productivity, Independence and being Adult-like, though some students may suggest these relate to the other areas as well.

Some participants listed very positive, favorable perceptions of their high school experience, not engaging in negative aspects of the discussion or simply saying, "I think my high school did a good job." Others were more likely to focus on negative perceptions. Here are a few sample answers:

- *"Most teachers emphasized test scores and grades. I'm not the best tester and my grades weren't amazing so I always liked to say I was "street smart" which made me feel better sometimes. I was truly happy in art classes even though I can barely draw a stick figure. It wasn't about the grade--it was about what I had to give from, well, my soul rather than if I could do algebra. (I still can't, btw.)"*

- *"Teachers and administrators in High School emphasized going to college and getting good grades. I remember nothing about the importance of emotional growth or financial independence coming from teachers in high school. It was college, college, college!"*

- *"Most of us were not expected to complete college, but they wanted as many of us to go as possible. Most of us were expected to live and die in the small town that we grew up in, working minimum wage while trying to raise 5 babies. Good behavior was always expected, and to try your best with your grades, even if you weren't too smart. Creativity was NOT encouraged, even when the teachers said to be so. You still had to 'color within the lines.'"*

Though these are only a few responses, they show the potential limitations of schools choosing to solely emphasize test skills, rule following, and college readiness. Some students may report a disconnect in that type of environment because it's not attached to what they see as a practical need (Teitelbaum, 2003). They also could feel a lack of efficacy in particular areas (Hopko, 2005; Kellogg, 1999). The first respondent said she felt happiest in art classes even though: 1) she was not particularly talented; and 2) it didn't have a connection to a current need, or in other words, it was not an asset. You could argue as well that the algebra skills, though required, were also not a relevant asset, though she likely wouldn't have recognized that until well after high school. But the benefit to her, in that moment, was not evident.

The potential exists for an environment of this type to encourage a delay in moving toward adulthood, because the behaviors are seen as unattractive, impersonal, and work for work's sake. Further research needs to clarify the relationship between school emphases and students' desire to assimilate adult behaviors.

Extended adolescence

I asked the participants if there was anything in their high school experience that encouraged extended adolescence. The construct potentially was new for some participants, and there were two sharply polar responses, either a clear yes or a clear no. Below are a few normative responses for each.

- Yes – *"Yes, the basic public schooling formula feels very adolescent."*
- Yes – *"I feel like all of the rules that were enforced enabled the students to act less mature and did not enable us to mature by giving us*

51

independent responsibility. We always had to be supervised or we could

not do basic things like go to the bathroom without asking. In addition, we

could not walk in the halls without a hall pass."

- Yes – *"Not that it is not a good thing or that it shouldn't be encouraged,*
  but I think the strong push to get kids to go to college overshadows the
  push for independence and adult responsibility."

- Yes – *"They made adults seem boring, tired, angry and irritable without*
  actual care and love for others. "These are the best years of your life..."
  thoughts like that and that adulthood would just not be as fun as
  adolescence."

The "yes" responses focused primarily on two things: 1) that administrators and teachers

(who were adults) assumed that adolescents needed greater oversight and control, leading

to a stronger demand for rule following and less of an emphasis on being your own

person; and 2) that the perception of adulthood among youth was "boring" and

"irritable," that there was not much glamour in becoming an adult. Participants said each

of these things serve to limit a student's motivation for adulthood. Here are some counter

responses from the "no" category:

- No – *"I would not say we were encouraged into extended adolescence as*
  opposed to enjoying the moment. We recognized we aren't young for
  forever and to be where you are at as opposed to always looking ahead or
  behind."

- No – *"I don't believe that there was anything "encouraging" students not to be adults. I believe that maturation as an administrative priority in high school is somewhat passive. There are those who use the opportunity to grow up and those who continue to act with immaturity. If the level of immaturity becomes too extreme then administrative discipline is encountered to let the individual know they have crossed a certain boundary line."*

- No – *"I don't really think so - my high school was focused on preparing us for life, not delaying adulthood. We were not coddled, and rewards were based on merit, not to make people feel good."*

- No – *"Not that I can remember. I spent my entire high school experience wishing I was older and in college."*

This was the most common question people skipped (n = 5), and several simply wrote "No," "Not that I can remember," or "N/A" (n = 14) which could show they lean toward the "No" category." The role of agency seems to be a critical factor in terms of what is "encouraged" or what is passively "permitted." Participants may have been able to recognize extended adolescence in their schools without being able to clarify their school's role. Some participants saw a connection between teachers and/or administrators making decisions for students and students losing or not taking the ability to make decisions for themselves. Others talked about the emphasis placed on following set policies such as when to come to class and how to use the restroom coupled with an overabundance of assistance when it came to schoolwork: letting students turn in

assignments late, giving reviews that were exactly like the test, and not making things challenging enough. What exactly in a school is perceived by a student to be encouraging extended adolescence may vary from student to student, if it's even recognized at all. The variety of perceptions though leads us to ask which traits are or are not being encouraged, and from there be able to make assumptions about the origins of student belief.

Quantitative assessment of school support

In order to better understand what schools could have done to help participants as they transitioned to adulthood, each were asked to rate numerically how well their school encouraged the previously mentioned six traits: 1) independence; 2) productivity; 3) relationship abilities; 4) communication; 5) financial abilities; and a general category 6) being adult-like. The goal was to draw a connection between what participants said they saw as essential to their definition of what it meant to be an adult and the extent to which they felt these things were emphasized. The question was formed: "In high school, think about your relationships with teachers and administrators. This could be either inside or outside of class. On a scale of 1-10 (with 1 being the lowest, and 10 being the highest), how strongly did they encourage you to be …" The categories given were: Independent, Productive, Relationship-savvy, Adult-like, A good communicator, Financially adept. All six traits had 36 of the 41 participants respond, except for Adult-like, which had 35 participants. A complete breakdown of the responses can be found in Appendices E and F. An overview will be listed here.

Analysis of this data is meant to be descriptive rather than inferential, and the findings are not argued to be representative of a larger population. The validity or

generalizability of these numbers is found in the extent to which reviewers find a relationship to their own experiences or current research. However, the numbers presented will simply serve to show the experiences of these respondents in this setting. Any "predictive" measures inferred would simply relate to what they may answer again if resurveyed, though this isn't necessary. These measures are included to show a richer description of these participants' individual perceptions. Inferences can be made as to whether or not these ratings are normative.

Productivity was given the highest mean rating at 8.00, and it had the lowest standard deviation (SD = 1.77). This means participants rated productivity as the most emphasized trait by their high school, and they had the least disagreement about its position. The next highest rated traits were communication (M = 7.14, SD = 1.94), adult-like (M = 6.91, SD = 2.32), and independence (M = 6.75, SD = 2.02). The lowest rated traits were relationship-savvy (M = 5.44, SD = 2.47) and financially adept (M = 4.08, SD = 2.44). This means that, on average, participants in this study rated relationships more than 2.5 points lower than productivity, and finances nearly 4.0 points lower.

Relationships, finances, and adult-like had the largest standard deviations, which means responses to these had the greatest variability. Some participants did show high ratings for each of these categories, but on average, there was less agreement about how much their high school emphasized these particular traits.

Given that some participants may consider different elements when attaching a numerical value to the emphasis of each trait (e.g. a 5 to one person might be a 7 to another), it's important to look at the numbers through a different lens (for a discussion of

the assumptions associated with individual ratings, see Watzlawik et al., 2007). To do this, a rank-order scale was also developed. In this, the numerical value is set aside to look at the actual rank (i.e. first, second, third, etc.) of each trait. If participants gave six different values for the six traits, then the values were placed in order from highest to lowest and the traits assigned a 1-6 number, depending on their order. Average rank-orders were calculated and a new order was established. If the participant used the same numerical value more than once (e.g. two 10s, two 7s, two 3s), then similar values were counted as a tie. The next values after that were assigned the order they would have had had the first values not been a tie. An example is that a participant rated two traits as a 10, and then a third trait as a 7. The first two traits would be assigned a 1, while the third trait would be assigned a 3. This was carried on through all the participant answers and an average rank-order was established.

Out of six possible placement orders, the trait values remained the same. Productivity (M = 1.83) was most likely to be rated first, followed by communication (M = 2.42), adult-like (M = 2.72), independence (2.81), relationships (4.17), and finances (5.14). This shows that when people had a choice, they most often placed productivity at the highest or first placement order, followed by the other traits in the same order. It also shows that relationships and finances were most often placed at the bottom end of the scale, on average 2-3 rank positions behind the higher variables. If given the option of ordering variables in terms of level of emphasis, these were more likely to be listed lower. Relationships averaged lower than fourth place out of six, and finances lower than fifth place.

Another consideration when viewing the quantitative ratings is the demographic

information. Listed in Appendix E is the rating breakdown for each trait by gender,

relationship status, parent status, and age. An overview of the differences will be listed

here.

For gender, males on average gave lower ratings to the emphasis placed on

independence, productivity, and finances (see Figure 1). The independence rating was

1.58 points lower, followed by finances at .825 points and productivity at .45 points. This

shows that males rated a more significant drop in these areas than did females. Females

showed the most variability on relationships (SD = 3.07), and it also had the greatest

range (9) of any area, male or female.
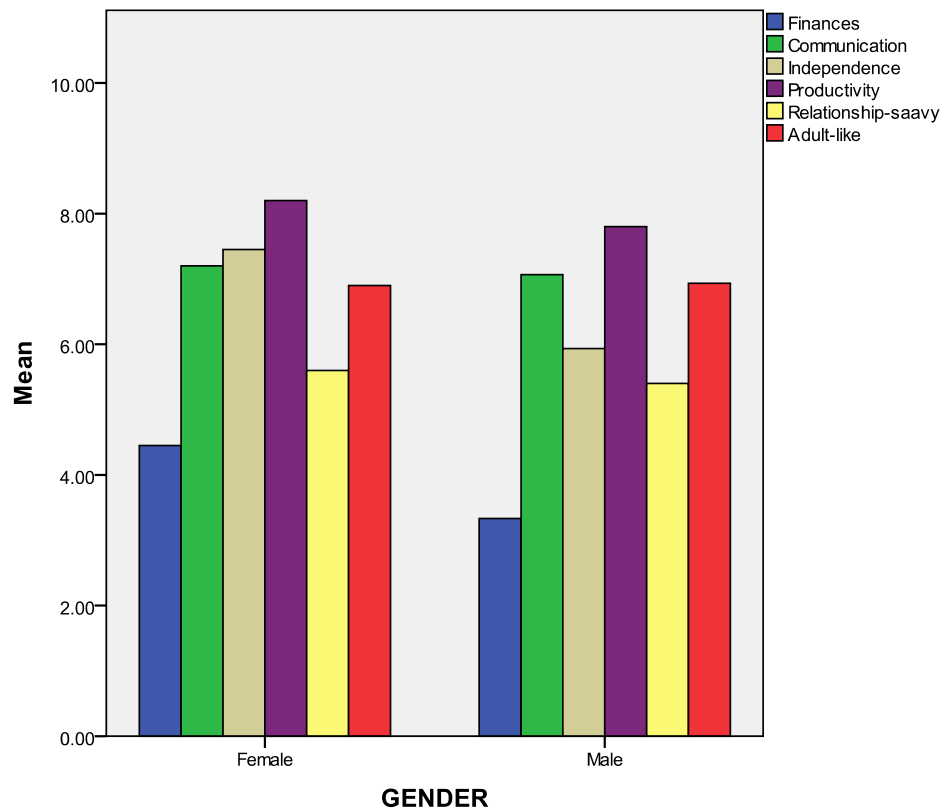
Figure 1. Average Rating of High School Encouragement of Traits by Gender

This shows that there was the least amount of agreement in terms of how females in this sample perceived relationship success was emphasized at their schools. Other areas with high standard deviations were adult-like (SD = 2.49) and finances (SD = 2.42) for females, and finances for males (2.47). In general, males had less variability and smaller range in their ratings than did females, which could show that males were more consistent in their ratings. It also could show a potential difference in how females were encouraged through this transition as opposed to males.

For relationship status, the numbers were separated by married and single/in a committed relationship (see Figure 2).
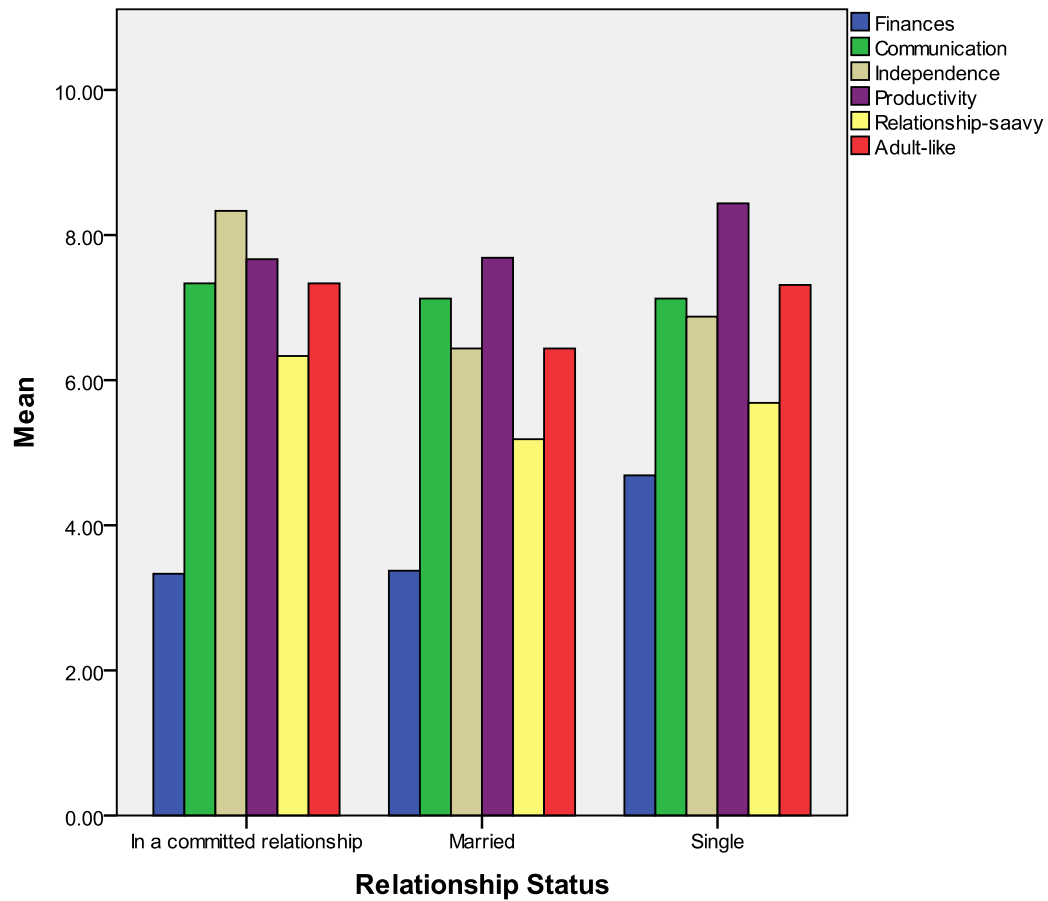
Figure 2. Average Rating of High School Encouragement of Traits by Relationship Status

No participants rated "It's complicated," and the other unmarried participants were combined. On average, those who were single or in a committed relationship gave higher ratings to the six areas than did married participants. The biggest differences in mean were found in adult-like (.878), finances (.827), independence (.753), and relationships (.731). In each of these areas, those who were single or in a committed relationship gave higher average ratings, which could show a difference in perception of adulthood by those who are married, or it could show an actual difference in the way those traits were

emphasized in participant high schools. In terms of variability, the highest ratings were for relationships (SD = 2.56) and adult-like (SD = 2.50) among married participants, and finances (SD = 2.45) and relationships (SD = 2.39) among non-married participants.

For parent status, the numbers were separated by those with children and those without (see Figure 3).
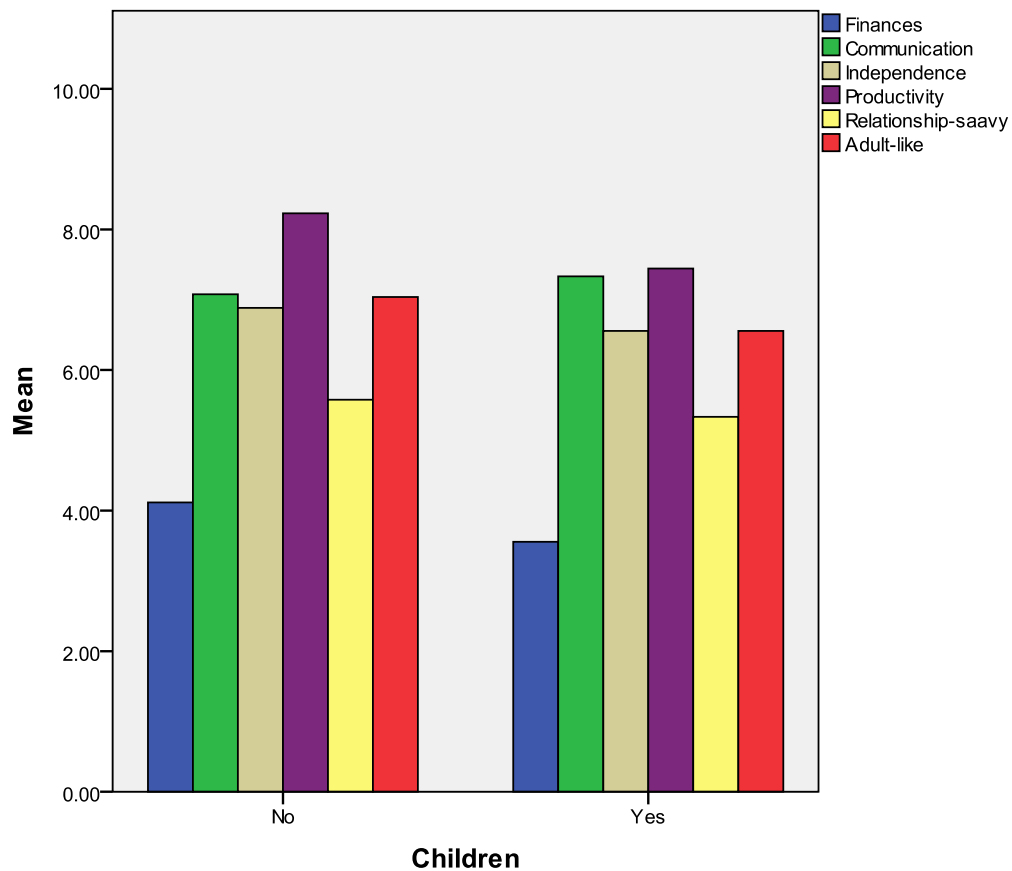
Figure 3. Average Rating of High School Encouragement of Traits by Parental Status

The numbers for this demographic were similar to those under relationship status, with participants who had children giving lower numbers to each area except for

communication. The largest difference was in productivity (.831), which shows that those with children were less likely to give a high rating to a school's emphasis of productivity. The greatest variability was for relationships (SD = 3.07) for those with children, and also had the largest range (8). For those without children, the greatest variability was adult-like (SD = 2.44), while the greatest range was under relationships (9). This could show that those who went on to have children (unless they had children already in high school) felt less confident in the encouragement they had during high school with the different traits. It also could suggest that they are simply more aware of the realities of adult expectations now that they are older and have children.

For age, the numbers were separated by these categories: 23-24, 25-27, and 28-29 (see Figure 4). Those in the 23-24 category on average had the most variability, and had the lowest average marks for productivity, relationships, adult-like and communication. Surprisingly, they had the highest rating for finances. The 25-27 age group had the highest average rating for relationships and adult-like, and showed the lowest average rating for independence. The 28-29 age group had the highest marks for independence, productivity, and communication, and the lowest marks for finances. Variability for relationships, adult-like and finances was high for all age groups.
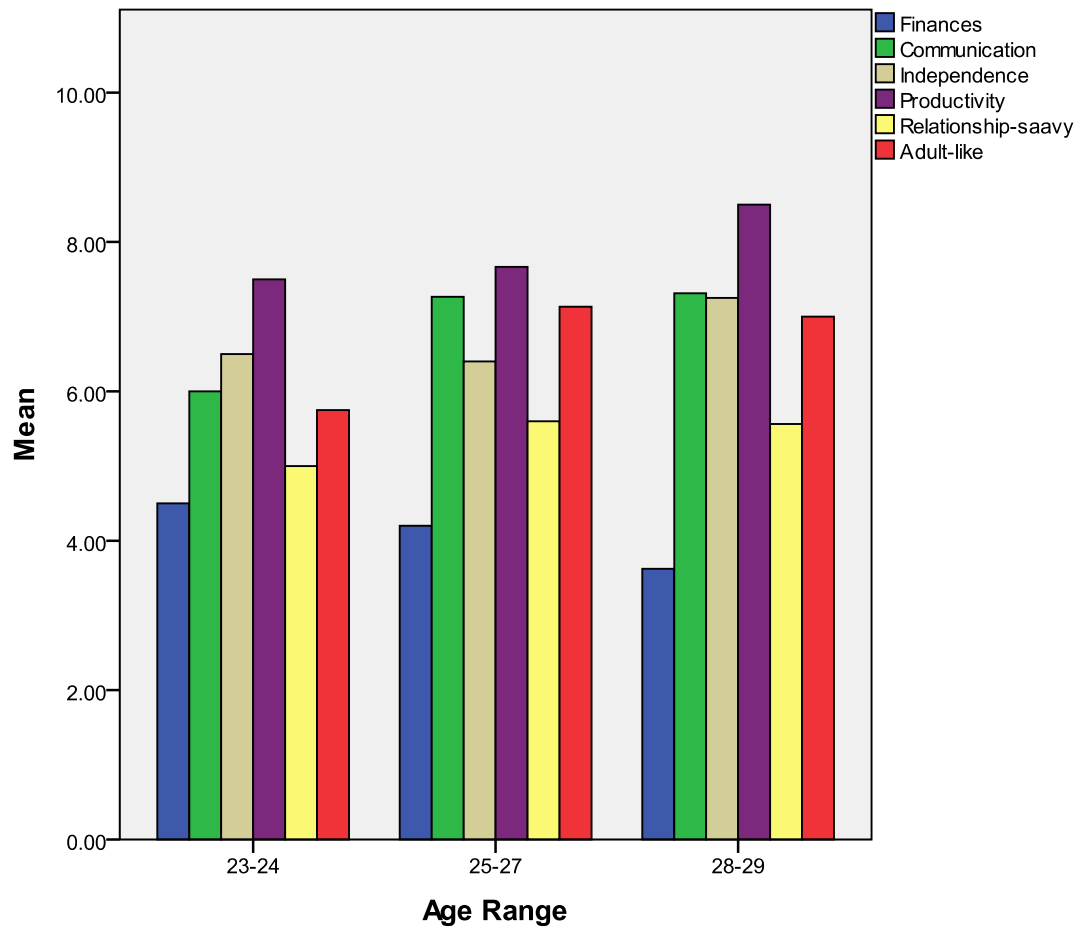
Figure 4. Average Rating of High School Encouragement of Traits by Age Range

These numbers show the younger participants felt less of an emphasis had been placed on four of the six areas than their older counterparts. The average rating for adult-like was 1.38 points below the average rating given by the 25-27 age group for the same trait. Conversely, the older age group gave the lowest rating for finances, while the youngest group gave the highest (an average difference of .618 points). This could speak to different perceptions of older students who potentially have more experience and may have more formed opinions about what would have been helpful in high school. It also

could speak to actual differences in preparation or trait encouragement by their high schools. Whatever the origin, older participants did not feel as strongly that they had been encouraged in finances, and younger participants did not feel as strongly that that had been encouraged in independence.

The last component to look at is the study-determined status listed previously in terms of who considered themselves adults, who was in limbo, and who did not consider themselves adults (see Figure 5).
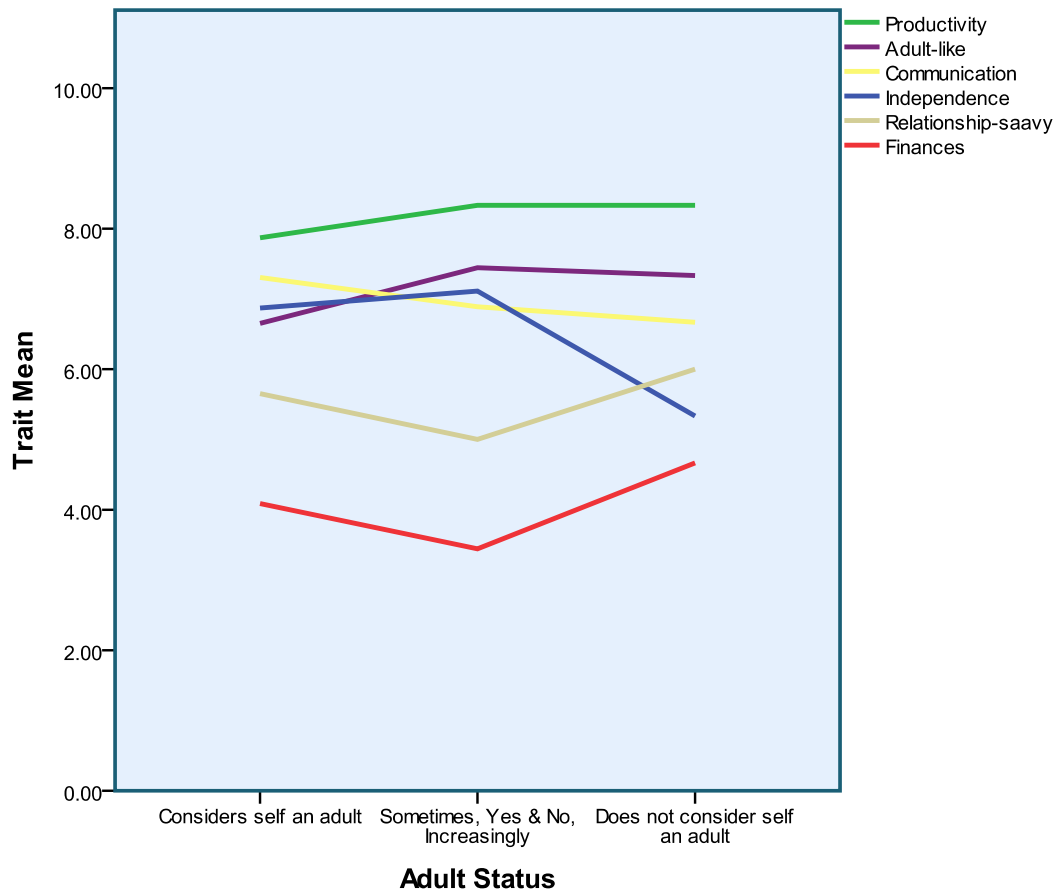
Figure 5. Average Rating of High School Encouragement of Traits by Adult Status

63

These figures show the ratings as they vary across the different domains. Productivity is listed at the top, while relationships and finances are listed at the bottom. Communication gradually declined across the domains. Independence had the sharpest drop in the ratings when moving to those who did not consider themselves adults. Relationships and finances both dipped from the first to second status, and then rose to a higher level for those who didn't consider themselves adults. This could show some of the variability listed among those who are still in the process of assimilating to adulthood, as there are potentially certain traits they resonate with more than others. It also could speak to differences they experienced in their high schools as some traits were emphasized more than others.

The missing elements

The final step in this study was to look at two things: 1) what participants in this study said they were missing when they entered adulthood, and 2) what they felt their school could have done better to help the transition. In essence, this brings a qualitative connection between the earlier adult definitions, the perceptions of their school situation, individual trait ratings, and future recommendations. Beyond the ratings, this gives participants an opportunity to list specific things that could have been changed or enhanced to make their transition healthier. Responses to this inquiry came primarily from questions 17 *("When you made the transition to college, what elements of adulthood proved difficult? What things did you feel you were missing or needed improvement?")* and 19 *("When you consider your high school experience, what*

64

supports would have been most helpful in assisting students as they transitioned to

adulthood?").

Responses can be looked at under the six trait categories listed previously. Here are answers to what participants said they were missing when they transitioned to adulthood:

- Productivity – *"The ability to risk responsibly. I was always put in a bubble and never allowed to really make my own decisions."*

- Productivity – *"Paying bills was not difficult, as my parents taught me to be a tight-wad, unlike my other high school peers. My parents sent me a check, and I paid the bills when due. Cleaning up after myself was the adult part that I worked on the most during this period. I still did not feel like I had that much responsibility. I did not understand what working a full day meant, or how difficult working 8 straight hours would be. I almost wish that high school would have prepared us for that by extending school hours and going year-round. When I started to work, it was difficult to keep going based on how much vacation I was used to. If employers had the 11 or 12 or so weeks of vacation a year that school did, this would have been no problem. :) Also, I had a pretty easy life growing up, so there was no need for time management. I learned a little of this in college, but not to the extent that I needed. I blame this on college being nowhere near a "normal" schedule."*

- Productivity – *"You had to motivate yourself in order to do well in the classroom."*

- Communication – *"Making the transition from a small social life to a larger one. I needed to learn how to communicate better in my environment and feel socially comfortable in large crowds."*

- Communication – *"My communication skills lacked."*

- Communication – *"My basic grammar, writing and rhetorical skills were much worse than I realized. I wish I would have been challenged much more in that department. Dealing with complex cultural issues that don't exist in a small predominately white town."*

- Adult-like – *"It has been difficult to adapt to the responsibilities that come along with adulthood. The finances, taking care of a house, planning ahead, working, etc. Where, in high school, the largest concern is a test in biology, as an adult, there seems to be a never-ending list of concerns."*

- Adult-like – *"Pretty much everything I did in college needed improvement-- grades, attitude, needed to be a more selfless. But it's a part of growing up. Can't regret it."*

- Adult-like – *"I was not prepared for how fully you are responsible for getting things done all by yourself. There were helps made available but it required you to get the help. No one was seeking you out or holding your hand as had been the case in high school."*

- Relationships – *"I had trouble being away from my family and related to that, trouble forming relationships with my fellow students at first. I had not changed schools since elementary school, so I never had to learn how to make new friends in an unfamiliar place."*

- Relationships – *"During my first semester of college, I found myself deeply missing my high school friends and feeling very lonely. I found it hard to meet people at school and make friends. I struggled all through first semester and ultimately transferred to another school. I might have transferred for all the wrong reasons but it ultimately worked out. My second semester of college my freshman year I flourished and met people and made friends with people I am still friends with to this day. Ultimately, the elements that proved difficult were loneliness, making friends, and putting yourself out there to meet people and not be fake in an effort to meet friends."*

- Relationships – *"I think the biggest thing was learning to deal with relationships with friends whom I'd had prior to college that weren't going to college with me. Should I keep in touch or move on?"*

- Finances – *"Budgeting, saving, paying bills, practical living skills would have been nice to have learned."*

- Finances – *"Managing money was difficult because I was not aware of how much money I needed to cultivate my lifestyle."*

67

- Finances – *"For me, finances. I was still supported by my parents for the most part, but I had a small part-time job to have money for recreation. I remember it being a rough transition."*

- Independence – *"Independence was of course hard. I felt I had been living a very sheltered life. (However, even college life was sheltered)."*

- Independence – *"The biggest challenge was dealing with closed minded individuals with newly found freedom and lack of respect for one another's independence."*

- Independence – *"I had to learn how to learn more independently. College syllabi and courses were more challenging, and adjusting to managing my own academic life took time."*

Each trait had participants who said it could have used a stronger emphasis. In addition, they also listed several specific examples of things that could be helpful: financial management classes, better counseling about post-secondary options, role models/high school alumnae who could offer assistance or provide insight. Others listed career counseling (including interviewing and resume writing), values formation and a stronger emphasis on "delayed gratification" or self control.

The most distinctive component of these responses is the role of agency: that they felt their school could have done something to improve a typical student's transition. They recognize deficiencies and the potential of school to meet them. Some participants though, had different perspectives when talking about their high school. Here are a few alternate responses:

- *"Honestly, I'm not sure anything in high school would have helped me become an adult. It's a different time. People become adults much later. I know not everyone attends college, but I think support in college to transition into adulthood is the more accurate focus."*

- *"I feel many students would ignore or accept and quickly forget any advice until they are at 'adult age'"*

- *"I think I needed more assistance once I was away from home. High school is a hopeless bubble of security."*

- *"I don't know that there are any. I think that responsibility is the great teacher of adulthood. The acceptance of that responsibility is an individual choice. When someone other than a parent forces responsibility on another you run into enforcement problems when an individual fails with their responsibilities. Thus strong parenting is really the greatest assistance in the transition to adulthood."*

These participants touch on the different philosophical views of when adulthood begins and what late adolescents are ready to hear or learn at this transitional time. It would be interesting to see why they may feel adulthood starts later, or why they feel their school wouldn't have played a stronger role. Perhaps they feel that the structure or focus of high school doesn't allow for individual psychosocial development similar to what is expected for academics. Or they also could see a need for stronger parental involvement in school practices. In any case, the need for growth is prevalent, whether it is apparent at an early age or older. When offering any remedy or assistance, administrators need to realize the

69

difficulty in trying to communicate a potential reality which some students may not see as imminent. Differences in perception create the range of different understandings and lead to different experiences, some which could reflect directly on the school.

Discussion

This aim of this study was to clarify the relationship between students and high schools as students make the psychosocial transition to adulthood. Are more supports needed in high school settings? The participants in this study were old enough to be considered adults by legal and what some would consider traditional standards, yet their transition to adulthood (and for some, even their willingness to use the word in reference to themselves), was by no means consistent. The findings in this study show a number of interesting characteristics that both define these participants' expressions of adulthood and how they understand its current meaning in the context of their lives. Additionally, it highlights the fact that these psychosocial developments occur in the context of formal education. The range of experiences (or outcomes) in present reality speaks at least in part to differences of experience in late adolescence, of which education is one aspect. This section will highlight both the implications and limitations of these findings.

Validity issues

The conceptual context for this study came from both current examples of emerging adult identity research (Donoghue, 2007; Dumas, 2009; Kins, 2009; McLean, 2006; Syed, 2008;) and from the broader theories of Eriksonian lifespan research (e.g. Kegan, 1982; Capps, 2008), as well as insights from my own work experience in college student personnel.

I saw in this study individuals with different backgrounds and present situations, yet I chose to have them respond to a fairly structured set of pre-determined categories, and I am choosing to look across them to find elements most relevant to my research questions. There are two reasons I have chosen to do this. First, I bring to the study my own experiences as a worker with college student personnel, having interacted with thousands of students who were both fresh out of high school and were assimilating an independent identity. This gives me familiarity with the variables and constructs at hand, and I came into the study with a mechanism of six workable categories to discuss current transitions. The extent to which responses support these categories adds value to the characterization of what is considered normative.

The second reason I have chosen this approach relates to the types of implications I am hoping to draw. My aim is to use participants' experiences in relation to the constructs I have identified to gain a clearer understanding of how people define these constructs in their own experience, gather examples, and begin to see how participants see relationships among the various categories in this study. These things all work to improve construct validity for the particular categories, and make potential suggestions for changes in future research inquiries. Schools can choose to look at these responses and see to what extent they typify a student within their classrooms. Parents can look at this information and see to what extent it explains behaviors of their children. Researchers can look at it and consider what ways they would study similar ideas and reach potentially different conclusions. That this information is useful, even in light of different experiences, builds its validity.

Another key validity issue surrounds selection bias for participants. While the participants of the broader survey represented a diverse range of majors and post-college occupations, the eight who completed follow-up interviews were all involved in youth services or education in some way for their careers. I did not intentionally select them for these roles, but it may be that they were interested in participating in the study further because in their roles they are tasked with supporting youth development. It is likely that the roles influence their responses. For instance, on questions about the role of school in youth's transitions to adulthood or the conceptions of extended adolescence, the participants may be not just thinking of themselves and their peers, but also the youth they are charged with helping. However, because I did not explicitly ask them questions about how their current work with youth influences their conceptions of adulthood, I do not have information about this aspect. Thus, interpretation of the follow-up data should be viewed in the light of the participants' roles, but without specific insight into the how these roles affect their responses. It may be interesting for future research to look explicitly at the transition to adulthood for young adults who have chosen careers supporting youth.

Changing conceptions of adulthood

One of the key questions of this study was to understand how participants understood their own transition to adulthood in relation to the body of research that suggests the transition to adulthood has been undergoing change in recent decades. This study looks at a group that is in some way focused, in other ways broad. I narrowed the

population of adults in this study to those who were between the ages of 23 and 29 and had completed a college degree. Most of the participants were Caucasian (88%).About half the participants were married and about 30% had children. Among survey participants, the list of college majors ran a wide span, including psychology, law, English, architecture, and many others, and current occupations included musicians, counselors, recruiters and actors. While I focus on some consistent themes in these responses, these themes come from many different stories and situations, and it speaks to the rich contextual nature of trying to understand complex, mostly personal phenomena. However, while each situation is unique, these participants do share some common ground, including graduating from high school, changing schools and attending college, graduating college and moving into a more independent, self-directed lifestyle. And they did this in relation to many others who also completed the same set of transitive experiences (e.g. friends, classmates, siblings). Parents and school administrators were involved, as they likely were for others who went through the same transition (Sassler, 2008). So contextual variables allow for variety (e.g. home living situation, college major, current occupation, relationship status), but the fact that such a transition occurs in nearly all adults is common and allows participants and researchers the opportunity to share a mutual understanding.

The age of participants in this study (23-29) extends four years beyond the original population targeted by Arnett (2003) when he coined the term "emerging adulthood." The findings in this study show great fluidity in the definitions for adulthood and in the personal adoption of adult roles, which for some participants come as a result

of additional experiences or time to process those experiences. Even some in this study beyond Arnett's age range struggle to consider themselves adults, and this despite filling several of what others may consider key criteria: having a job, owning a home, paying bills, raising children. Certainly many would align their definition of adulthood with the responsibility, independence and maturity necessary to approach such tasks, but many in this study would not consider those tasks in and of themselves standards for adulthood.

Examples can be seen in how people address these seminal moments. In the question regarding a clear "break" or a complex process, those who were more likely to think of it as a process were less likely to mention seminal moments. One described it as a series of clear breaks, saying *"as more adult responsibilities (parenthood, home ownership, career goals) have presented themselves, I have embraced a more adult mentality."* Another said, *"When I got married and bought my house, I feel like I solidified my adulthood; however, I would still have told you that I was an adult prior to that so the process toward adulthood is more than just this breaking point."*

This aligns with Donoghue's research that says that young adults are less and less likely to use traditional roles or markers to define adulthood (2007). That the age range and completion of a college degree traditionally would mark them for adulthood seems to matter less and less. As Mclean (2006) writes, identity formation for those in their mid-twenties is still a chief developmental concern.

The findings in this study fit with the research suggests that today's young adults are more likely to think of adulthood in terms of indefinite personal developments, a series of cognitive, emotional and individual changes. Some aligned with traditional

markers, but most listed at least some psychological and emotional developments as at the same or more important positions. Marriage, for example, may for some be a cultural expectation, and many listed it as significant to their adult assimilation, but it's not as likely to be as emblematic of adulthood as it was in prior generations. As Murphy et al. (2010) states, the difficulty in determining a singular conception of life in the 20s leads many to disillusionment when it doesn't match their expectations. This comes whether or not they've gone to college or done other traditionally normative adult tasks.

Key themes for adulthood

Adults in this study were asked to consider their emerging adult experience, particularly in the context of their high school education, highlighting the challenges and supports that were available. It sought to understand what in their emerging adult experience was distinctive, whether or not their transition was healthy/successful, and what could be done to assist those who were going through (or would go through) a difficult transition. While in their definitions of adulthood, most of the participants did not rely on clear-cut, traditional markers, a few common themes emerged.

Independence was one of the strongest considerations listed. Independence, for many participants, involved a physical, emotional, and/or financial separation. Adulthood was seen as a time when individuals were now asked to self-produce, to be responsible for generating necessary materials for life, for being mature enough to handle that responsibility. Independence entailed a psychosocial need to separate, to take responsibility for the future, and to be entrusted with a newfound level of freedom.

76

Relationships were another strong component. Beyond simply listing "marriage," which some said went hand-in-hand with adulthood, participants listed attributes that related to good relationships: communication, the ability to write and speak well, respect, social awareness, expanding/changing work and family roles, etc. Adulthood is a time when relationships change, when the way an individual presented him/herself as a teen is no longer adequate (see Roest, Dubas, & Gerris, 2009). Relationships with family involve unique responsibilities; one set often involving parents or extended family, and another set involving intimate relationships and children. Relationships with employers and coworkers also change, as does the level of maturity that's expected. A person who communicates well, treats others with respect, and has an active community/social engagement is seen as adult-like.

A third major consideration listed involved an adult's psychological and cognitive development. Components of this included the concepts of wisdom and judgment, the ability to know which decisions were good and which were bad. It also included self-control and discipline, the ability to activate a response and to keep things in balance. An adult is seen as someone who, to a certain extent, can choose when or when not to move, employing a self-determined set of agency beliefs about how and when they will accomplish a goal. Implicit in this is emotional control, a sense of fairness, and an ability to manage competing objectives.

For the participants in this study, a transition to adulthood seems to incorporate elements of these phenomena: 1) Independence, often characterized as a call to self-produce, 2) an expected change in relationships, and 3) a move toward social cognitive

maturity. Future research could more specifically look at how these elements are reflected in adult transition narratives, and how high schools prepare (or fail to prepare) students to these shifts.

Extended adolescence

As discussed earlier, the construct of "extended adolescence" has been used to describe the pattern of transition to adulthood in recent decades. Many argue that the trend of emerging adolescence has had far-reaching, sometimes negative results (Barker et al., 2007; White, 2008). If this is the case, we need to understand why people go through this experience, and how we might provide applicable supports.

One goal in this study was to determine what the participants felt about emerging adulthood and extended adolescence, or those who take a seemingly longer period of time to assimilate. Though not all in this study considered themselves adults, many did recognize the idea of someone taking longer to assimilate into an adult identity. As one participant described it, *"For some reason some teenagers are doing things later like getting a drivers license, etc ... As these rights of passage come later and later, adolescence will get longer and longer."* The urgency to complete traditional adult-tasks has changed significantly in recent decades (Murphy et al., 2010), and participants in this study were able to recognize elements of the condition, even as some may or may not be able to separate themselves personally.

The significant cultural shift impacts numerous domains. Participants talked about parents and older siblings, close friendships in high school and college, intimate

relationships, academic ambitions, career goals, and societal expectations. To some extent, each of these can be affected by how the participants consider adulthood. One participant in this study said he felt the need at times to leave his regular responsibilities and do "man things." In the past (before he was married and had a job), he said he would have just avoided those responsibilities, but now he was comfortable drawing a type of "necessary" balance. It's distinctive to this culture that times of such "non-adult" behavior or "man things" can be considered necessary.

To better understand the construct of emerging adolescence in relation to my participants, I separated participants into three categories: 1) those who considered themselves adults; 2) those who felt they were in the process, or said Yes and No; and 3) those who said they didn't feel like adults (or didn't want to call themselves adults). There were some demographic differences in the categorization. The women were twice as likely to be listed in the lower two categories. This could be related to a number of things, including differences in the way males and females described their transition to adulthood, differences in family or school situations, or, potentially, actual differences in the way males and females in this study were encouraged during late adolescence. Some research has looked at the way gender differences influence emerging adulthood (Sneed et al., 2006), and these differences could continue to be researched.

Younger participants were less likely to consider themselves adults. None of the participants in the 23-24 age category considered themselves adults, and 30% of those in the 25-27 didn't consider themselves adults. In the 28-29 age category, all considered themselves either in transition (17%), or fully adult. So age, for these participants, could

be a relevant factor. This could speak to additional experiences that the older population had which forced them to more strongly adopt adult responsibilities. It also could speak to differences in their family or school situations which encouraged adult behavior.

For relationships, none in the youngest age group were married or in a relationship. Roughly half of the participants in the middle adult category were married, which is evidence that marriage in and of itself is not considered a standard for adulthood. This breakdown could show differences in the way participants were exposed to relationships and marriage in home or school. It also could show a potential reluctance to step into the responsibility of a committed relationship for those who otherwise are not ready to assume an adult identity.

The parent status categorization appears similarly. None of the participants in the middle (i.e. in transition, not quite yet) or latter (i.e. does not consider self assimilated) adult-status categories had children. Of those who considered themselves adults, 44% had children. Obviously there are a number of factors involved in having children, and it is not an easy variable to assume (if it can be at all), but this distinction supports the conclusion that those in the latter categories were not as willing to assume another traditional adult characteristic.

Participants in this study did recognize extended adolescence, and they listed several causes, included over-protective parents, unrealistic schedules or expectations in high school and college (in terms of what would be expected in adulthood when school was past), cultural shifts (including a lack of intergenerational relationships), and peers who served as "enablers." The relationship of students to family members, role models,

school environments, and peer influences is significant. There are so many places an individual can be moved or held stagnate between an adolescent status and an adult status. It shouldn't be expected that any one influence serve as a mechanism for change in distinguishing these adult transitions. However, a student or young adult may decide to make one influence a chief motivator if alternatives are characterized as impractical or inhibitive. To a certain extent, extended adolescence is determined by what level of responsibility they're willing to assume. This is seen in this study by those who went to college with a host of ideals in mind, but spent too much time "partying" and having a *"glamorous roaring experience of being young and in your twenties."*

Some participants described having had adulthood "forced" on them, by poor family environments, crises, or the sudden emergence of responsibility expectations. What most distinguishes those in the adult-status category from the others is that they, at some point or at several points, encountered an expectation for responsibility and maturity that they were (even through a process) willing to embrace. Those who were not in that status either were not challenged in the same way, or they were but chose not to embrace it. And as one participant writes, as long as adulthood is characterized as uninspiring, rule-driven and work for work's sake, the cultural phenomenon of "living it up in your twenties," or "quarter-life crises," will continue to flourish.

The relationship of high school to emerging adulthood

A key part of this study was devoted to seeing if participants saw a link between what they experienced in secondary school and emerging adulthood. If the students had

81

fully assimilated to an adult-status, then the link can be characterized as "high school to adulthood." If the students did not fully assimilate, then a more appropriate designation could be "high school to extended adolescence." Many participants listed their high school and college experiences in relation to their transition to adulthood. In addition, as has been noted, a significant portion of the identity stage of Erikson's model of psychosocial development occurs during formalized education, if for no other reason than that they occur simultaneously. In this study, I sought to see more than just the simultaneous, coincidental components. What influence did a student's high school experience have on their transition to adulthood? How well did a school encourage behaviors participants listed as aspects of the adult definition? What could schools have done better to promote a healthy transition?

I asked participants to tell me 3-4 things that stood out during their high school experience (presented in the context of a transition to adulthood, though not specifically characterized). These weren't limited to any domains, but most of the answers centered around these areas: academics (grades, tests, graduating), college preparedness (skill sets for high education classrooms, standardized tests), responsibility (taking ownership of educational future, working hard), respect and rules (following policies, respecting teachers, administrators and other students), social and community involvement (social clubs, athletics, nation/world awareness), individuality (personal value, creativity). Some chose to focus more on teachers/administrators, some on peers, and some on non-academic experiences.

As it relates to their definitions of adulthood, these school emphases primarily relate to the categories of: 1) productivity; 2) independence; and potentially 3) being adult-like. They do not relate well to the other categories. Through one lens, this could show a disconnect between what current adults see as relevant to their adult experience and what they actually were trained to do in adolescence. This supports the assertion by Smith (2006) that students sometimes struggle when transitioning from high school to a workplace, finding the "task requirements of academic work differ markedly from the skills required in most jobs" (p. 116). This could seem all the more relevant in schools that have shifted to a test-dominant modality (Jennings, 2009; Usiskin, 2007; Jerald, 2008).

In looking at the numerical ratings, the findings show participants were far more likely to say their school encouraged productivity and communication than they were to encourage relational and financial abilities. And the distance between the top and bottom end of the scales was consistent, meaning participants almost always thought of their school's emphasis of relationships and finances in lower terms than they did their school's emphasis of productivity.

This could show support for what was listed earlier, in that some participants may feel that they had a definition of adulthood that included certain things, but their school was primarily concerned with only emphasizing a few of those. Again, this is not to serve as a representation of any one school, but it does show participants in this study felt some areas were emphasized more than others. This could be why Syed (2008) found that students transitioning from school have more identity exploration than those in school.

It's possible that transition is a catalyst for understanding different aspects of reality and/or self in context (Kegan, 1982).

Demographic differences

Through a different lens, I looked at these numbers by demographics [see Appendix E]. For gender, males in this study gave lower average ratings to their high school's encouragement of independence, productivity, and finances. This could speak to different elements males were looking for in their high school experience, or it could speak to different responsibilities expected of them in adulthood. Females had the most variability on the emphasis of relationships, with a standard deviation of more than 3 points. This could be a balance of having some female participants who had good relationship experiences and some not having good experiences. These experiences also could have been in high school, college, or after college. Its origin could come from different places, but females agreed the least on this rating.

In terms of relationship status, those who were single or in committed relationships tended to give higher ratings than did married participants, with the biggest differences found in adult-like, finances, independence, and relationships. Married participants gave lower ratings in each of these. This could show something similar to the adult-status definitions earlier, where those who consider themselves adults have a more nuanced (and probably realistic) view of adulthood than do non-adults. Since, in this study, there is a relationship between age, being married, and considering oneself an adult, it makes sense that these participants give similar answers. That married

participants gave lower marks of their school's encouragement may mean they are old enough or mature enough to know more about adulthood and what would have been helpful had they been encouraged more in high school.

Since those in this study with children were also married, the numbers are similar. Participants who had children gave lower numbers for every category except communication. The largest mean difference between the two is productivity. Similar to the last variable, this could show that adults with children now realize more of what is expected in adulthood along the lines of productivity than do those without children. The most variability in this demographic was with relationships for those with children, again with a standard deviation of more than 3 points. Since the participants were married, this could show a difference in opinion about how ready they were for what was expected of them in adulthood, or it could show actual differences in the way their school encouraged relational skills.

For age, those in the youngest demographics had the most variability. In fitting with the trend of differences in awareness, the 23-24 population rated the highest level of encouragement for finances. They could actually have been encouraged more in finances, or they could simply not know as much as those in the older age groups. Those in the 28-29 age group had the lowest marks for finances. The likelihood that those in the 28-29 age group had been tested more in their financial abilities could speak to this. Their experiences could show more clearly how lacking their financial skills were, a transition those at younger ages had not made.

The last designation was to look at ratings by adult-status category. The line graph in Figure 5 is helpful. Productivity was listed as the highest across all domains, while relationships and finances were listed as the lowest. Those who didn't consider themselves adults rated independence and communication lower than those who did consider themselves adults. Those in the middle category gave the lowest ratings for communication, relationships, and finances.

Clearly there is a great deal of variability with student experiences as they transition to adulthood. Some who more recently graduated from high school may not feel the same sense of urgency or personalization for adult responsibility as do those who are further out of high school. Some who are older or more mature may recognize certain things from their younger days they wish they would have learned, and potentially, in a matter of time, those who are younger could begin to give ratings similar those who are currently older. Over time, these ratings could continue to merge. Longitudinal studies are necessary to understand how shifting demands alter one's conception of preparedness for adulthood.

The variability also shows that even though a school may feel they have addressed a particular emphasis with aplomb, there could be students who don't share their opinion. Even if students at the time may share it, they also may, in the next 8-10 years, realize how inadequate the things they learned are for what they are expected to know as an adult. Students who wrote that they had to take on more responsibility at a younger age were more likely to think of themselves as having assimilated to adulthood, and they were less likely to think that their high school had adequately encouraged

certain traits. They gained the traits by responding to a challenge or situation, but they separated growth encouraged by the school from that required by a situation.

Though there are a wide variety of experiences, I asked students to list what their high school could have done better to promote a healthy transition to adulthood. Answers supported many of these trait areas: the need for better communication skills, a wish the school would have provided financial management classes, a better understanding of relationships, a clearer understanding of college and career planning (i.e. life after school), and better role models of healthy transitions. Participants in this study do feel that schools can play a role in creating a healthy environment for successful transitions. Nearly all participants in the first survey and all participants in the follow-up survey stated a feeling that their school did or could have played a role in a healthy development.

Participants did express limitations though. Some are not sure whether a public school is the appropriate place for these developments. Some placed the "blame" for extended adolescents on parents or peers, saying that home life or a person's social network was a stronger influence than was school. One participant said:

- *The peer influence was stronger than any other force regarding relationships. Influence is put on groups within the school, with after school programs, but those are merely putting a name to a gathering of students that could naturally happen any ways. I feel if there were a way to emphasize relationships outside of student to student, such as student to parent or student to employer, then students would learn to thrive and reach adulthood earlier, since those are the people from whom they have*

87

the torch passed to. My teachers did little to encourage financial ability. I feel the only way to learn that is to give actual money to a student and through trial and error and time, see if they can save it or spend it on worthwhile investments.

So there could be limits to what schools may actually feel responsible for, or feel they are capable of addressing. One girl said that she didn't know if high schools should spend more time on relationships, even though she had taken a "wonderful" course in college entitled "Love and Relationships," which served to be invaluable. One girl said it was hard to think about learning relationships and finances in a school classroom, though she recognized the great extent to which adolescents needed to learn things based on what would someday be "reality."

The struggle with these concepts appears as twofold: 1) schools may not have the abilities or resources to adequately address things which also could (and some say should) be addressed in home environments, peer groups, churches, or other contexts; and 2) participants in this study said they may or may not have been willing to hear what was promoted in school, even supposing the school had great resources and talked about relevant topics. If they don't currently need those responsibilities (and in this culture, may not for many years), perhaps the projection to what is seen by their peers as dull and monotonous will not be something they are ready to hear. But as it relates to school emphases and extended adolescence, participants in multiple formats said that their school was only emphasizing certain things they felt were necessary components of being an adult. Productivity and certain forms of independence were among these, and they

often came coupled with a list of rules or policies that could undermine the urgency

central to identity definition (Syed, 2008). These findings do reveal that more could be

done to determine what is being emphasized in current schools and what types of

programs could more adequately address central concerns of students as they move into

adult life.

Implications

This study found that participants supported the six main trait categories I

associated with adulthood. Of the six categories, participants had the strongest agreement

that one, productivity, was most emphasized in their school experience. Participants gave

medium to high ratings for three middle categories (independence, adult-like,

communication), with less consensus, and gave the lowest ratings for the same two

categories: relationships and finances.

In terms of the relationship of their high school to extended adolescence, there

was an equal split between those who said they saw it and those who didn't. Those who

agreed generally said that the system encouraged extended adolescence by sheltering

students, concerning their lives with rules and tests, and not connecting academic life to

post-school realities. Those who disagreed generally said they thought their school did

what it could and that these constructs were better addressed by other environments, such

as families or peer groups. They said they wouldn't have necessarily listened had their

school chosen to emphasize other things. Support for the first group can be found in

productivity being the most emphasized trait category; support for the latter group can be

found in those who listed other categories as high, or with those who felt in general like their high school did what it could.

In the follow up interviews, every participant said they thought there was something their school could have done to improve a typical student's transition to high school, whether focusing on specific areas or providing a more realistic environment. These participants considered themselves adults, which potentially means they had a more realistic view of the expectations involved in adulthood. This is not to go against other available supports, or to inflate the importance of a school's influence. Indeed, as noted earlier, all of the follow-up participants have a career role in either education or youth development and thus may be more inclined to view school as important. Nonetheless, this study suggests that school supports should be coupled with additional supports available in family, peer, and community environments, not placed as one or the other. In addition, the age and adult-status differences of participants consistently show that older participants with more responsibilities had a different understanding of adult-level expectations than did younger participants with fewer responsibilities. This could show that younger participants in this study do not have the awareness or personalization of adult responsibilities that older participants do. This could come from the closeness these participants have to "unrealistic" environments in high school and college (considered unrealistic by some because they don't relate to adult life), or the cultural belief that the time of their early twenties should be spent in freedom from obligation. Smith's (2006) statement of work life being markedly different from a classroom environment only strengthens this feeling, as deviations from extended adolescence are

only likely to reveal greater disappointment. As seen with some participants, the compulsion for freedom at this age has consequences (in terms of drinking, risky relationship behaviors, poor financial choices, an inability to make career choices, diminished family relationships, poor body image), and these consequences emerge at points where participants are suddenly separated from parents/role models, separated from high school peers, and expected to self-produce in a world that is largely unfamiliar to them.

So the benefit to improving healthy transitions among late adolescents is evident. The question then is the implication this research has for schools. Obviously, many will continue to recognize the importance of understanding and improving family/peer relationships as adolescents transition out of the home. But since such a significant portion of development is occurring simultaneously with school-based development in organized classrooms, these phenomena will continue to have an impact on schooling, training, and the overall life health of students. That former students who are now expected to live in adult responsibilities can look back on their high school experience and say, "it would have helped me if they had focused on such and such," is telling and should be worthy of attention.

In addition, this study has shown differences in terms of those who felt like they were adults (based on their self-assessment) and the demographic-related information they provided. Participants in this study who considered themselves adults were more likely to be engaged in traditional adult behaviors. Participants who did not or were unsure were less likely. With further research, I could determine whether these

differences were the result of being put in situations in late adolescence that encouraged

adult-level responsibilities or whether their assimilation was more a result of adult-level

experiences. A potential question could be, are participants who feel like adults more

likely to pursue having children? Or the other question could be, do participants with

children feel more like adults? It does show a limitation with just looking at demographic

information and not being able to fully interpret it, but there does seem to be a strong

enough connection between demographic-related variables and current adult process

outcomes to warrant further consideration.

Limitations

As mentioned previously, while this study does address real student situations, it

has some limitations. The participants from this study were recruited through a web-

based delivery system by student services staff from American universities. The

participants were able to take the survey anonymously, and there was no restriction or

control over who could take the survey. Respondents who didn't fit the criteria were not

included in the data, but the information about included participants was limited. In

addition, only about half of those contacted responded—those who respond may be

systematically different from those who choose not to respond in terms of their

conceptions of adulthood. This sort of self-selection bias was even more likely true in the

follow-up participants, where all those who participated were involved with youth

development for their careers. This makes the findings of this study limited to these

descriptions. However, there is enough richness and diversity to their responses that,

reviewers, administrators, teachers, parents, and/or students can find relevance in the responses and implications.

As Daly (2007) notes, analysis in qualitative research is an ongoing process, something which occurs through the research cycle. The project is constantly being analyzed and honed. The researcher becomes more aware of the constructs in question as the research process unfolds, whether through additional research, demographic issues, or specific responses. A researcher is making decisions about which types of respondents to study, which types of questions to ask, and what key variables are to be noted in analysis. What is considered "right" or "key" may relate to the underlying assumptions the researcher has about how the outcome should emerge. This can be done without specifically pursuing a given outcome, but assumptions should be noted. They affect researchers and participants differently. In this study's analysis, my own experience as an emerging adult and associate with college student personnel influence my judgment of these responses. Other researchers may potentially reach different conclusions and establish different levels of significance for key ideas. All the data available (some of which has been edited for privacy) from these surveys is located in the Appendix for further review.

Future research

There are many ways in which this study could be extended. Gender differences were found in this study, but there was no inquiry into the specific qualities or origin of those differences. Work similar to Sneed et al. (2006) could be continued while focusing

on formal education to further understand how the different genders see their schooling in relation to transition to adulthood.

As it fits into a broader theory of lifespan research, a type of this study could be conducted with older populations, potentially those at each decade level (Capps, 2008). This could ask for a broader perspective on this specific transitional component. If, as Robert Kegan (1982) suggests, the self is always developing, then perhaps this singular transition is a component of many other transitions or is similar to other life experiences.

Additionally, this study could focus more on within-person trajectories and decision making. This study is currently broad and limited in its ability to determine what is normative for an individual. More open-ended questions and greater time each participant could capture the complexity of each individual's experience. In terms of school support, further research could be done to see what practices are currently being done along these lines. It also could suggest what potential mechanisms could best serve students ready to assimilate adult responsibilities, and how normative these are considering a diverse cultural makeup.

Schools have a decision to make when considering the responses present in this study. How they choose to interpret them and/or implement a response will affect students in significant ways. Participants suggested that high schools can play a significant role in how students ready themselves for adulthood (in addition to other influences), and they offered a number of alternatives to the current model. Yet schools need to consider the following:

- The diversity of a student body may not present a singular picture of what a "healthy" transition to adulthood looks like. Family living situations, in addition to numerous non-academic social constructs will also have a significant influence on what students in different situations need. To have one singular formal support system likely will not be adequate to address every student or cultural expectation. As Nelson et al. (2007) writes, *"Given that launching children is a major developmental task for this time period, it stands to reason that different approaches on how to accomplish this task may have salient effects on a relationship"* (p. 671).

- Creating more formalized support systems within classrooms could become increasingly difficult with the growing emphasis on standardized testing and competitive academic norms. To highlight an additional element that is relevant for student success may be drowned out by the multitude of other perceived student needs.

- The most difficult thing an administrator might face could be the perception that these non-academic developments should only be handled by non-academic entities. Students though are developing in non-academic ways while still engaging in formal education. The two happen simultaneously. This study suggests that separating responsibilities could actually be encouraging extended adolescence, as schools choose to put off systemic adult-level responsibilities and adopt what participants in this study considered more adolescent levels of expectation.

Schools are making decisions for or against these developments by their decisions to enact policies, even those that don't directly relate to the subject matter. A school cannot remain entirely neutral because the students themselves are not able to remain neutral. They will develop in accordance with the level of expectation held to them, and if that expectation is low or seemingly irrelevant, then they will be less familiar with the constructs they are faced with in post-schooling years. If a school has the foresight to look ahead and see how these individuals will be tested beyond academia (which touches at the fundamental purposes of education), then they will want to consider how they might engage these students while their attention and malleability are available.

Conclusion

The extent to which adolescents change to adults is emblematic of the larger and more complex changes in our world, which have influenced everything from large, interconnected communities to small, seemingly-isolated families. This study has addressed a few of those changes. Some young adults no longer think of adulthood as prior generations did. Some schools have shifted their focus to standardization and internationally-competitive scales. Some students leaving high school and stepping into an adult world are choosing to delay adulthood, to value a type of freedom that is most marked by an unwillingness to embrace adult norms. Former students have said that they wish their high school experience would have emphasized certain adult responsibilities better. Schools and future research should take notice of their ideas. Relevant supports

should be studied and implemented. Cultural differences in adulthood should be embraced. Inaction and deference should be seen as potentially hazardous.

Whatever the impetus for awareness or change, school administrators and teachers can be sure that the concerns of emerging adulthood will continue to influence their students, and that the obligation presents itself to provide students with resources and support systems to ensure a healthy transition. For some, the potential exists that schools could actually be in the best position to promote behaviors that will one day be better understood.

APPENDIX A. INFORMED CONSENT FORM

<The Role of School Support in Emerging Adulthood>
INFORMED CONSENT FORM

RESEARCH PROCEDURES
This research is being conducted to look at how youth transition to adulthood. The goal is to understand the experiences of young adults as they go through high school and into adulthood. If you agree to participate, you will be asked to provide insight on your experiences in high school and early adulthood. Some demographic information will be collected to help us understand the background of people responding to the survey, and the rest of the questions will be aimed at understanding your specific experiences as a high school student and young adult. At the end, you will be asked to participate in a brief (15 minute) follow up interview. The follow up interview will be recorded and transcribed.

This survey will take approximately 30 minutes.

RISKS
There are no foreseeable risks for participating in this research.

BENEFITS
There are no benefits to you as a participant other than to further research in education and human development.

CONFIDENTIALITY
The data in this study will be confidential. All responses will be stored on an encrypted, password-protected website, and only the researcher will have access. While it is understood that no computer transmission can be perfectly secure, reasonable efforts will be made to protect the confidentiality of your transmission. Additionally, 1) your name will not be included on the surveys and other collected data, 2) the data will be coded with a unique identification number, and 3) only the researcher will have access to the number and identifiable data. Themes from all the responses will be used in the study, but every aim will be made to keep personally identifiable information private. Your participation in the study will also not be shared.

PARTICIPATION
Your participation is voluntary, and you may withdraw from the study at any time and for any reason. If you decide not to participate or if you withdraw from the study, there is no penalty or loss of benefits to which you are otherwise entitled. There are no costs to you or any other party.

CONTACT
This research is being conducted by Blake Johnson, College of Education and Human Development at George Mason University. He may be reached at 301-646-2582 or bjohnsoe@gmu.edu for questions or to report a research-related problem. This research is being supervised by Kimberly Sheridan, College of Education and Human Development at George Mason University (ph. 703-993-9181). You may contact the George Mason University Office of Research Subject Protections at 703-993-4121 if you have questions or comments regarding your rights as a participant in the research.

This research has been reviewed according to George Mason University procedures governing your participation in this research.

CONSENT
I have read this form and agree to participate in this study.

_____ Agree

_____ Disagree

[The George Mason University Human Subjects Review Board has waived the requirement for a signature on this consent form. However, if you wish to sign a consent, please contact Blake Johnson at bjohnsoe@gmu.edu. You also may print a copy of this form for your records.]

APPENDIX B. INVITATION SCRIPT

Email Script

Thank you for your interest in this study.

This study is being conducted to help us understand the transitions young adults go through as they transition to adulthood. We are contacting people in their 20s who have graduated college and asking them to recount their experiences as they moved from high school to college and beyond. It is open to anyone between the ages of 23 and 29 who has completed a college degree. In this study, you will be asked about your experiences in high school and early adulthood, and your responses will help clarify what was and wasn't helpful in this time. Our goal is to get a better picture of the transitions students make into adulthood and see what supports could be offered to assist them.

Participation in this study is voluntary and involves an electronic survey through Zoomerang. The survey will take approximately 30 minutes to complete. All your responses will be kept confidential. Upon approval, you will receive an email with a link to the survey and can complete it at your convenience.

Your insights will serve as a tremendous value to the future of research in this field. If you have any questions or would like to know more about the study, please don't hesitate to contact me.

Thank you very much for this opportunity to contact you. We look forward to your participation.

Sincerely,

Blake Johnson
College of Education and Human Development
George Mason University
bjohnsoe@gmu.edu
301-646-2582

Structured Interview Questions

This is a study of adulthood. Specifically, this study is looking at the ways students in high school transition to being adults, and the different supports schools use to help that transition. The following questions will ask about your transition to adulthood, and your experiences both in high school and after college. All responses will be kept confidential, and no personally identifiable information will be collected. The survey will take approximately 30 minutes.

Age:

Gender:

Race/Ethnicity:

Years since leaving high school:

Years of college attended, major:

Current occupation:

Marital status:

Parent status:

How do you define adulthood? What are the key characteristics?

Do you feel like an adult? How have you changed developmentally in the past 8-10 years?

Think of your high school experience. What 3-4 things were most emphasized? Or in other words, if someone were to ask you what your high school experience was like, what 3-4 things would stand out the most?

How encouraged in high school were you to be a) independent; b) productive; c) adult-like; d) relationship-savvy; e) a good communicator; f) financially adept?

Did aspects of your high school experience encourage people not to want to be adults? In other words, did elements of your high school experience encourage extended adolescence?

When you made the transition to college, what elements of adulthood proved difficult? What things did you feel you were missing or needed improvement?

Now that you are considered an adult, think about the transition you have taken. How has your transition to adulthood been similar or different when compared to your parents, older relatives, or older role models?

When you consider your high school experience, what supports would have been most helpful in assisting students as they transitioned to adulthood?

Thank you for your help. We have a few follow up questions that would be very helpful in clarifying the results from this study. Would you be available to be contacted by phone or in person for a brief interview?

APPENDIX D. COMPOSITE SKETCH OF NON-DEMOGRAPHIC SURVEY RESPONSES

(responses shuffled for privacy)

Question 7: What was your college major/focus?

Social Sciences
Architecture & English
Youth Ministries
Visual Art
English - Creative Writing
Music
Systems Engineering
Electrical Engineering
Youth Ministry
Youth Ministry/ Urban Education
IT
International Studies
International Relations/Gender Studies
Public Health
Political Science & French (2 majors)
Psychology
Pastoral Studies
Social Studies Education
Information Technology
Business Management
Accounting
Integrative Studies, Focus in Organizational Administration and Leadership
Political Science
Pastoral Studies
BA Psychology; BS Management with a concentration in Finance
Outreach
Psychology
Liberal Arts
Mass Communications
Communications
Youth Ministry
Business Information Technology
Journalism
Accounting & Management
Law and Justice

Biology/Education
Spanish/Latin American Studies
General Studies
Pastoral Studies
Broadcasting and Electronic Media
Government

Question 8: What is your current occupation?

Learning Resource Instructor at a college
Architect/Engineer
Youth Pastor and ASM Caribou Coffee
Exhibitions Manager at New Museum of Contemporary Art
Reviews Assistant
music pastor and potbelly associate
Systems Engineer/Enterprise Architect
Software Engineer
Anti Money Laundering Investigator
High School English Teacher
Teacher
Human Resources Assistant
Paralegal
Master's Student
counselor/case manager at a group home for women with mental illness
Tutor/ missions director
Youth Coordinator
Teacher
Self-Employed
Recruiting Coordinator
Accountant
Government Program Manager
attorney
Resident Director
Actor, photographer, web designer, editor, writer, etc.; self-employed
Social services
Director of Development for a Non Profit
I'm between jobs
Sports Information Director
Video Producer	Editor
youth pastor
IT Consultant
stay-at-home parent; coach

Accountant
law clerk
Science Teacher
stay-at-home mom/natural childbirth educator
Human Resource Analyst
Youth Pastor
Parking attendant (valet)
stay at home mom
Master's Student
stay at home mom
IT Consultant
Human Resources Assistant
Paralegal
Reviews Assistant
counselor/case manager at a group home for women with mental illness
Architect/Engineer
Tutor/ missions director
Youth Coordinator
stay-at-home parent; coach
Recruiting Coordinator
Software Engineer
Government Program Manager
Resident Director
Social services
Science Teacher
stay-at-home mom/natural childbirth educator
Youth Pastor and ASM Caribou Coffee
Human Resource Analyst
attorney
Accountant
Accountant
Director of Development for a Non Profit
High School English Teacher
I'm between jobs
Self-Employed
Video Producer	Editor
Learning Resource Instructor at a college
music pastor and potbelly associate
youth pastor
Teacher
Systems Engineer/Enterprise Architect
Actor, photographer, web designer, editor, writer, etc.; self-employed
Anti Money Laundering Investigator

Exhibitions Manager at New Museum of Contemporary Art
Youth Pastor
Parking attendant (valet)
Sports Information Director
Teacher
law clerk

Question 11: Briefly, how do you define adulthood? What are the key characteristics?

Adulthood would be entering into a world of independence and making mature decisions on your own. Characteristics would include maturity, stability, success, financially dependent
responsibility, maturity
Making financial, job, social and relationship decisions on my own. Parents are peers, not sole source of guidance. Adulthood includes a personal sense of responsibility for one's actions and decisions.
Financially independent from parents, taking responsibility for yourself and your own needs.
Financial independence, having things figured out, being ok with getting older/becoming wiser, employment, contributions to society via volunteering/charity work/not sitting on your couch wearing sweatpants watching the Hallmark Channel all day
Constantly changing and evolving. A time of growth. Learning to be selfless. It is a time of adaption.
Adulthood, for me, is a continual process of discovering that I am independent of my parents financially, socially, and spiritually. There's no 'aha' adulthood moment--just small ones where you realize you are more confident or you actually know how to handle different situations without asking for help. It's also a movement from hesitation about your self to more of a sure sense of self.
Adulthood is when you take responsibility for yourself. Pay your own bills, live in your own place, and have a steady full time job. Characteristics are being financially independent, employed and mature.
Financially responsible. Working on a career. Balancing work and life obligations. Key characteristics: Balance Responsibility Respect
self sufficiency for self and family; ownership of beliefs, values
career, more responsibilities, marriage, having kids, ability to independently making decisions and supporting myself financially, owning a house and additional assets.
Paying your own bills/rent, doing your own laundry, being able to take care of and clean up after one's self without relying on parents or other adults around you.
Another day, another dollar. I'm not sure I quite consider myself an adult yet, although I do live on my own and completely independent financially, emotionally, and physically.
Adulthood is when a person gains autonomy from parents, takes responsibility for his/her own life, and makes decisions for his/herself.
Hmmm . . .adulthood is when you are fully independent of your parents and are able to be a fully participating citizen.
responsibility, work, maturity
Independence, responsibility financially and career wise, building healthy relationships, healthy communication, dedication to being a healthy contributor to society!
Being old enough to be able to support yourself financially and emotionally (for the most part).

I would define it as taking responsibility for yourself and dealing with the consequences of your actions.
Adulthood is defined as the time in your life when you have to take care of yourself. The ability to pay your bills & care for your family.
Living independently by making your own money and paying your own expenses with the ability to make mature, reasonable decisions.
I would define adulthood as the time in life when a young person has taken responsibility for themselves and their family (if they have one) and their own affairs. Key characteristics include fiscal responsibility, autonomy from family (childhood family), social responsibility (sense of giving back and caring for others), mature relationships, involvement in the community, etc.
Adulthood is when you have respect for yourself, others and especially older people. It's when you are not a teenager anymore and aren't dependent upon your parents.
Anyone 18 years of age or older. In the State of Virginia you are officially an adult once you turn 18. I define adulthood by whatever age the state in which you live says your an adult.
Being independent from your parents.
Responsibility, the means to provide for oneself and family
Independence from parents/ guardians. Able to make good life changing decisions. somewhere between the ages of 16 and 30, depending on the person.
1. Leaving the parents when I married my wife 2. daily routine of working and paying bills 3. creating good relationships 4. doing the best work i can at work. not in any order
you no longer rely on your parents for your basic human needs (housing, food, bills, etc)
Increased responsibility and maturity.
The ability to physically reproduce and be self-sustaining. Adulthood is not necessarily age dependent, however, it is dependent upon one's physical, mental, and social state.
It is a time period of maturation after adolescence and childhood. It's hard to pin down exactly, but there are elements of age, responsibility, independence, world-view, experience, physical maturity, and intelligence, among other things, that are neither universal or requisite in defining that period for a given individual.
I define adulthood as realizing there are consequences for bad decisions. You have to come to the realization that life is hard and you have to work hard in order to succeed.
Independence, responsibility and finding your own path.
Adulthood is a place in your life where you begin to operate apart from the environment you grew up in and begin to to make your own decisions and taking more responsibility for your own actions.
Responsibility for oneself and family. Paying your own bills. Being independent of parental provisions.
Adulthood seems to be related to the period of life when you become completely self-sufficient. It is not completely related to age. Experience, knowledge, established values, personally developed goal or path for life.
Emotional stability, responsibility, understand self
Adulthood is the process of maturation whereby one takes on full responsibility for one's actions. This also includes the ability to take on roles which may not always be in one's self-serving interest.

Question 12: Do you feel like an adult? How have you changed developmentally over the past 8-10 years?

Yes and no. I've come to realize how little I know about the world. As a teenage I felt like I was "lyke, sewww deep you guize" and way more mature than everyone else. I know this is not true in any way shape or form. In the last 8-10 years I've become much better at standing up for myself, being honest with people and figuring out what it is I do and do not want in my life. Sometimes I still feel like I'm 17--like I'm still looking up to the older kids who are way cooler/more mature and worldly than I'll ever be.
Yes I feel like an adult. I realize things are not always easy in life. I know that I have to work hard to make a living in order to support a future family. I also realized that God has me in this place now for a reason and I am comfortable knowing that.
yes.
No, I do not. I feel the same I did throughout high school and college. The only difference is I can now grow a beard
Yes, I feel like an adult. I pay my own bills. I am married (so I can have kids). I make my own decisions. I live in my own home and pay my own bills. I have mentally grown and become more mature and more mentally stable. I have lost lots of hair.
Yes. I am able to fully support myself financially, I can make important decisions for myself with confidence and wisdom, and I have much more self confidence in my abilities and person than when I graduated from High School.
I could go on for hours, but the largest change would be the value I place on relationships (friendships and family) and letting go and not stressing to or put energy in maintaining those that are not give and take.
I finally feel like an adult. Took awhile, and the process was gradual, but now that I own a house to take care of, a 9 to 5 job, a wife with a baby on the way, yes, I feel like an adult!
I do. I have graduated college, highschool. I pay all my own bills, own a home, rent to others, do not rely on my parents but I value their input. I was rebellious and confused and had very little direction 8-10 years ago. I did not value other's input as much as now. I am more foucused career wise and relationship wise.
I do feel like an adult. Over the past 8-10 years I have learned to make decisions for myself and take more responsibility for my actions. I have gotten married and started a family which brings a whole other dimension to my life.
I've become more aware of what's out there. I've learned what it's like to live in the real world. It isn't as hard as I thought it would be. In many ways it's very similar to going to school.
Yes, my responsibility has gone from doing school work to providing not only for myself but for my own family. Running a household, paying bills, making food, cleaning laundry, paying for living expenses, etc...
Yes, I have become much more confident after moving out of my parents' house and taking care of myself.
Yes, I feel like an adult. I transformed from a self-centered egocentric individual to a giving and loving husband and father who puts the needs of those dependent on him before his own.
Yes, I feel like an adult. However, not always. There is a sense of not being there yet though I am 27 years old. I have changed significantly in the past 8-10 years. The key difference is that I am more aware of myself as a person and I respect the differences I have with others. Also, I honor the differences in others.
I do feel like an adult in most ways. There are certainly places that I know I will continue to grow and develop in. I have particularly grown in my self-confidence--not being afraid to be who I truly am. I have become less judgemental, but in some ways, more narrow-minded. I know that nearly sounds like an

oxymoron, but it is true. The things I beleive have solidified over the years, but I have also grown less ciritical of those around me.
Yes. I feel very much like the same person that I was in high school, but more mellowed, more mature, more ready to think things out before reacting.
For the most part but there are days I feel like I need to go hunting and do man things like that. I've developed my skill as a communicator and my ability to work with people that i don't like unlike the past where i would just avoid them if i could. Also my understanding of love some that i was unable to truly know until i was married.
Yes, in the past 8 years, there has been a transition from being dependent on my parents to being completely independent and making decisions that are mine.
Yes. I've learned how to manage my finances better and increasingly make better, more knowledgable decisions with various positive and negative experience.
Yes, I feel like an adult now, but it didn't feel that way in college. I'm definitely able to handle more responsibility than I ever had before. My time management skills stink, but I feel they are getting better. I'm practicing to not just complain about something I don't like, but to take action to change something if I am able to, even if it's a small change.
In some ways I feel like I am an adult and in others I feel I will never be one. Over the past years I have gained a lot of life experience and have learned how to overcome many problems
Not really. I've grown, though, in having a more realistic view of the world.
Sometimes. Exceptionally - I'm aware of more things that happen in the world; my perspective has been built by experience and perception. I'm more independent from my parents and from institutions, such as school and employers. I live on my own and make my own decisions. My lifestyle has undergone several changes - I eat healthier but exercise less. I'm better able to read non-fiction. I'm more interested in politics and the effects of government on my life.
Yes I do feel like an adult but to be honest I didn't feel like I had achieved adult status until I turned 25. I was out of college a few years at that point and 25 officially felt "grown up." According to my own definition of adulthood, I would also say I am an adult. I have changed so much over the past 8-10 years. I have retained much of the same social, religious, political, and family values, but my understanding of each is much deeper. I am also able to much more readily recognize my weaknesses and not let my arrogance get the best of me. I am not even sure I would recognize who I was at 18 but the reality is I am very much the same person but with more experiences and hopefully wiser because of them.
I do and don't feel like an adult. I do because I have moved on from college and am pursuing higher studies and feel like I am gaining new knowledge of the world. I don't because I still live with my parents and they provide for me as I am not totally providing for myself financially yet.
yes - having 3 children in 4 years has catapulted me into adulthood :) much less focused on myself than I was even 5 years ago.
Yes, I have no financial reliance on anyone else and live day to day according to my own decisions. My goals are my own now as opposed to when others would have had more direct control.
Yes, I definitely feel like an adult. In the past 10 years, I have grown to be financially independent, emotionally autonomous from my immediate family, and adapted to daily management of complex relationships and important decisions.
I feel increasingly like an adult. Graduating from college I was not sure I was actually an adult--I wasn't sure how to handle banks, or paying bills, or negotiating leases. Now I feel like I have the basics of adult life down. It took a few years post-college of exploring different ideas to feel like I have a better sense of who I am as an adult and to feel confident and solid in my opinions and ideas about how to do life. This is what makes me feel like an adult. Or, when I can negotiate a situation or relationship based on my own knowledge without relying on my parents or other adults to hold my hand through it.
Yes. I have taken responsibility of myself, am financially independent and I have matured in my Personal

choices and Christian beliefs. I have gained the ability to think for myself and to make decisions based on what is best for me and the people around me.
I definitely don't always feel like an adult. I have become more confident and secure. I feel like life is fast and I see it now looking back not just forward. I see my parents and grandparents as real people not just as my family. I am not as wild and impulsive but now think responsibly and logically about situations.
Yes. I can handle more responsibilities, I am more thoughtful. I work harder than I thought I could.
Yes. I have developed a STRONG desire to responsible in all areas of my life, and helping other do the same!
Absolutely. I've calmed down, experienced important self discovery and I have a good perspective on where I am and where I'm headed.
Yes. I have learned to deal with stress, made important life decisions using the intellectual processes my parents and teachers taught me. I have learned that I can make decisions that my parents wouldnt necessarily agree with.
yes.
Yes. Yes, there are so many ways that I have changed in the past 10 years. Wow it is actually shocking to look back. (gee don't make me!) Ok, one major change is that I look inward on my actions. Also, I care about what others think & how I treat them. Finally I pay my own bills. No more mommy or daddy...bummer
yes. i'm more aware of my surroundings and the needs of others versus myself.

Question 13: Was there a point in time when you saw a clear "break" and you were finally an adult, or was the process more complex? In your own words, what led to that transition?

The day I turned 18 was when I felt like an adult. It didn't feel any different physically. But I knew from that point on I was responsible for myself.
I don't think I have come to that clear "break" yet. I think I will reach that point when I get married, move out on my own, and handle my own finances.
When I graduated from college.
I would say when I got married because then I moved out of my parents home. Also, when I started paying my own bills. The process wasn't too complex because everything changed over at once.
I haven't felt that clear break, but if I had to pinpoint a time, it would be getting my first job after college.
I think it was when I went to college. I went to college in the UK and when my parents left the country, I realized I was on my own and the only person I could depend on was myself. it was complex and a clear break at the same time, if that makes any sense. I thought it initially to be a clear break but I see now that it was a transition. I'm a far different person at 24 than I was at 18.
Definitely complex. My time away from home--at college--was the most beneficial in my transition into adulthood. For the first time, being away from parents, forced me to decide for myself who I truly am. No longer did I have to go to church, study hard to get good grades, etc. I began to make decisions for myself, based on what I wanted or needed. So I was also forced to evaluate myself to learn what it was that I truly wanted for my life.
The process was complex, full of small steps. There are immediate steps like moving away from parents and social groups you've been raised in, learning to cook and wash your laundry. There are also steps where you don't call your parents to get advice for most situations. A big step for me has been to live in a city without any of my family and commit myself to a church and a church community and feel like I'm known as an individual and not as a member of my family.

I think once you move out of your parents house is a "break" but the process of becoming an adult is different for everyone. I believe even a person can become an adult Sooner than moving out, if they are given adult responsibilities.
The process was very complex. It's difficult - even now - to put it into words. As to what led to the transition... I think it was taking control of my own life. It was getting my first "real" job. Signing the papers to get my own insurance policies (life insurance, health insurance, etc.). Signing my lease for an apartment. I think what led to the transition was responsibility - Signing papers and owning things.
home ownership, CHILDREN, financial struggles/victories, major decisions made as a couple (my husband and I)
Transitioning from college to the "working world" was that period for me. I had NEVER had a job until after college. Not McDonalds, not even a babysitting job. My first paycheck came from an Engineering firm. After a few months of learning to get myself out of bed and to work on time, I grew more comfortable with the adult image. The total transformation probably took about 6 months.
Like I said, I'm not ready to call myself a grown up yet!! I'm sure the rest of the world does see me in this light though!
The biggest break was probably graduation from college. While I didn't feel nearly the responsibility I do now, that was the biggest jump.
more complex. I had many incidents with alcohol and many acquaintances that I feel held me back from being independent and an adult. I feel that I reached adulthood at about age 24. What led to the transition was me finally learning how to learn from my mistakes.
I feel like I see that clear break all the time. every time I do something new that I've never done before. e.g. when i rented my first car.
it's much more fluid than a clear "break". as more adult responsibilities (parenthood, home ownership, career goals) have presented themselves, I have embraced a more adult mentality
It was a break. The first time a child called me "Mister," my youth was over.
I believe that the process was complex, yet there were definitive milestones that lead to individual breaking points. For example, when I moved out of my mom's house and got an internship that was a milestone that begain a new step toward adulthood. When I got married and bought my house, I feel like I solidified my adulthood; however, I would still have told you that I was an adult prior to that so the process toward adulthood is more than just this breaking point.
My process of becoming an adult was gradual. Moving out of my parents' home to attend college, taking responsibility for my finances & decisions, graduating from college, working full-time, and creating a supportive system of friends & family were all part of that transistion.
I think it was a slow process that started when I left home for college. I remember bawling my eyes out the day before I left because I realized "this is it". This will never truly be my home again, not in the same way that it had been. I think I felt another big step had been achieved when I bought my first house, but that is not a requisite for adulthood.
Having children was probably the biggest milestone towards becoming an adult. I think there are people with children who are not adults, though.
Due to my childhood, I would say no, I had to grow up pretty young. For me the transition was led by family circumstances.
Definitely a process. I can look back and say "Yes, I am now an adult" but I didn't notice it as I was arriving. After I graduated from college, had a full-time job and lived on my own, I still didn't feel like an adult. I think I was still very dependent on my parents. After time, and several different life experiences, I can now say I feel like an adult. And those experiences were not just marriage and children - I felt like an adult before I was married.
I think turning 18 brought a certain amount of "adultness." As did 21. Voting for the first time had a big impact on me. Graduating from college, buying my first house, having a bed bigger than a twin, getting my first apartment, owning my first car, getting my first "real" job," moving to New York City -- all

these things were milestones that made me feel "more like an adult." But I don't always feel like an adult. My mom still pays my cell phone bill (family plan makes it cheaper and she likes to be able to provide something for me). I don't have a retirement plan. I sleep until at least noon almost every day and rarely go to bed before 4 AM. I eat a lot of cereal. I still like to sit cross-legged on chairs and play on jungle gyms and playgrounds. So it's an ongoing transition. And I don't think it'll ever be completely done. But who says I have to become an adult?
No. I believe it was a process over many years which started when I graduated high school.
A little more complex. I think the biggest difference, post graduation, is experience and mistakes. You learn from all of that and how to calibrate your outlook, responses and responsibilities.
This process for me seemed a little more complex. The transition for me and my parents was pretty difficult and still remains to this day. My people-pleasing personality contributed to this as I wanted to keepy my wife and parents happy. That definitely never works.
Complex it gradually changed while in college and then at the end of that jumped into adult life, payed bills, responsibilty has increased with getting married and having a child.
It was complex beyond simple descriptions. It was a process and I'm not sure where it began or ended.
No, I don't think there is ever a clear break. I know many "adults" who are still really children.
The process was more complex. Going away to college was a way to ease the transition because I left home, but still had the support of the college community. The final break came after graduation when I got a job and moved away.
the process was complex. It was the culmination of several events over the period of approximately 6 or 7 years which led to adulthood. It is my opinion that this process is still not fully complete, but the process has taken on conscious resolve to continue maturing rather than through the school of hard knocks.
Yes, I saw a clear break when I had a career that made enough money where I could financially support myself.
Referring to my past answer, for whatever reason at age 25 I felt like an adult. I should also say I have three siblings and they are all married and all have at least one child. Compared to them I don't often feel like an adult because my life decisions have been very different. I chose to continue on to extra schooling, travel and pursue completely different life experiences. Because of that, I feel like they don't often treat me like an adult because I don't have the same responsibilities they do. Not to say mine are less important but they can't easily relate and I often feel like they don't recognize my adulthood. Basically, no it wasn't a clear "break." It was a transition and one that is still happening. I think our society places too much value on marriage, family and children as being the true markers of adulthood and maturity. As a result, it has been hard for me to process my own adulthood because I don't have those experiences. I find myself having to relate with adults who share my experiences as opposed to young families otherwise I often feel like less of an "adult" because I have made different life choices.
I came home from college and saw my parents had grown older. It scared me. I treated them differently and I started to see myself differently too.

Question 14: Think of your high school experience. What main 3-4 things did your teachers or administrators emphasize? Or in other words, if someone were to ask you what your high school experience was like, what 3-4 things stand out the most?

I was miserable for basically the entire time. I think a lot of this had to do with the tyranical coaches I had for volleyball. My high school was very into sports and I don't think I'm exaggerating when I say my coaches were unfeeling tyrants who got off on making 14/15 year old girls feel like shit on a daily basis. What stands out to me from this experience is that my 24 year old self would have walked out of the gym if someone had spoken to my 14/15 year old self the way my coaches did. You live and you learn that you can't change the past. You can only hope to recognize the signs if it happens again. Most teachers emphasized test scores and grades. I'm not the best tester and my grades weren't amazing so I always liked to say I was "street smart" which made me feel better sometimes. (See my earlier answers for how much more worldly,etc I thought myself to be.) I was truly happy in art classes even though I can barely draw a stick figure. It wasn;t about the grade--it was about what I had to give from well, my soul rather than if I could do algebra. (I still can't, btw.)
They emphasized college. You need to know these things in order to go to college. Nothing really seemed like it was for the transition to adulthood but rather they were trying to get us ready for the next step which was college.
1. do what you love 2. maintain strong relationships 3. never stop dreaming
Importance of academics, athletics, and scholarships
Responsibility - they emphasized that we turn assignments in on time and show up to school and class on time. Respect - they always emphasized that we respect fellow students and our teachers/administrators Rules - rules always seemed to be emphasized a great deal and we were always encouraged to follow them. Extracurricular Involvement and social interaction - we were always encouraged to interact with our peers, have friends and get involved in the things that interest us.
Teachers and administrators in High School emphasized going to college and getting good grades. I remember nothing about the importance of emotional growth or financial independence coming from teachers in high school. It was college, college, college!
I had a rough childhood so my focuses tend to be different than many of my friends. In high school I originally was very focused on straight A's, being a star athelete and musician. Many times I recieved little guidance and students with behavioral issues or that made poor decisions, recieved majority energy and attention, ironically I eventually became one of these students/ teenagers. Although I'm glad I fell apart prior to college, and believe I was able to make a comback and continue my academic career, school systems and parent's should consider and not lose sight of positive reinforcement.
I'd say every teacher was different, and mostly they focused on the day-to-day stuff. But I can remember some teachers talking about how easy we had it in their classes and how college was going to be a lot harder. A motivational technique, I guess.
everything's okay if you don't get caught--which wasn't told by administrators but implied by students and admin. Highschool's something everyone's forced to do, so we might as well make the best of it. Procrastination is bad, but everyone does it and it happens
The 3-4 things that stand out the most were to... 1. Be prepared 2. Pay attention to detail 3. Work Hard 4. Keep good character
High school was a lot harder than I thought it would be. The gap between middle school and high school

is huge. The classes in high school were a lot harder.
Importance of an education, how to prepare for college.
My high school had a portfolio program that was designed to help with college or job applications. AP classes were emphasized, though they also emphasized the state standardized test.
1. It is a time where idealism is at its height because experience is minimal. 2. Rational thought has begun to spread its wings, and those who are able to articulate logically dominate the academic climate. 3. Beauty reigns supreme. Clothes, cars and athletic ability define who is at the top of the social ladder.
My teachers and administrators emphasized 1. going to college, 2. test scores, 3. sex and how to have safe sex. 3-4 things that stand out the most about my high school experience: 1. Moving out of my family's home because there was no food, electricity or phone. 2. Youth group at church and Bible Study at School. 3. Trying really hard to actually fit in. 4. Athletics.
I think they emphasized: Individuality, Honesty, Diligence and Responsibility.
Writing, writing, writing. Brain-based research, having thoughtful discussions and reading some very interesting books.
1. Do good work 2. Be yourself 3. Be open to new things honestly i cant really remember high school was all about friends and i remember my experiences with them but not in school
- being self disciplined - responsibility - ownership over things
3 things emphasized: 1) responsibility, 2) education, 3) obedience. 3 things that stood out the most: 1) friends, 2) sports, 3) music.
Most of us were not expected to complete college, but they wanted as many of us to go as possible. Most of us were expected to live and die in the small town that we grew up in, working minimum wage while trying to raise 5 babies. Good behavior was always expected, and to try your best with your grades, even if you weren't too smart. Creativity was NOT encouraged, even when the teachers said to be so. You still had to "color within the lines".
Work hard, prepare, explain clearly
Succeeding by going to college, following God (it was a Catholic school), figuring out who you are
Responsibility. Politeness. Analysis.
1. Involvement - I felt like were encouraged to get involved in the school and community. I played sports and volunteered. 2. Community - Coming from a small town everyone knew everyone else but it wasn't a small thing. 3. Fun - I loved high school. I had great friends and felt like my teachers really cared. I should let you know I attended a small to mid size school in a rural town. I was also in all honors classes so my experience isn't necessarily the same as others from my high school.
I was taught to: Handle yourself like fine china, not dollar store mugs. Prepare yourself for the world at large. Make the most out of life.
Wide variety of experiences (athletic, academic, fine arts) Social training ground Learning responsibility
Work hard, focus, deciding outcomes before you get there.

Education is important- make the most of your opportunity to learn.
You are responsible for your own decisions.
God has a plan for your life - find out what it is and obey Him.
The encouragement to pursue my interests, an emphasis on social problems and situations, encouragement to be actively engaged in and learning about the community and world.
The four things that stand out to me are: test taking skills, excelling as a leader of others, math skills, and abstract thinking.
1. Social was all I was...homecoming queen and lived for meeting people and knowing everyone. 2. I tried to be unique..making my own clothes etc. 3. I didn't actually read books just talked about them.
Discussion, problem-solving, thinking.
1) Dedication to my passion / dreams / goals 2) Learning to fail and become a better person because of failure 3) The importance of putting time in, to see successful results, in sports, music, studies, with translated into life in general.
Introduction of broad concepts, prodding us to develop opinions on basic issues and philosophical questions, starting a discussion of accountability.
Striving to pass tests for the school's reputation and my college progress Everything relies on what you are studying and learning now Try really hard to be the best and better than others because the world is a competitive place

Question 15: In high school, think about your relationships with teachers and administrators. This could be either inside or outside of class. On a scale of 1-10 (with 1 being the lowest, and 10 being the highest), how strongly did they encourage you to be:

Question 15: Independent	Question 15: Productive	Question 15: Relationship-savvy	Question 15: Adult-like	Question 15: A good communicator	Question 15: Financially adept
8	8	7	9	6	9
4	4	1	2	3	1
8	10	8	9	10	6
6	8	4	3	5	2
5	8	3	6	7	2
5	6	3	5	8	2
9	10	7	8	8	4
7	6	6	8	7	5
4	4	7	6	8	8
9	8	6	7	7	6
6	9	2	9	3	5
4	8	8	8	8	4
4	10	7	9	9	2
10	9	9	8	8	6
7	8	6	9	8	7
8	7	9	8	9	4
7	8	6	7	9	6
7	5	2	4	4	1

Question 15: Independent	Question 15: Productive	Question 15: Relationship-savvy	Question 15: Adult-like	Question 15: A good communicator	Question 15: Financially adept
4	9	3	5	6	1
6	7	4	4	7	4
9	10	9	9	10	7
6	8	5	6	7	1
8	8	6	10	7	2
7	4	1	7	7	1
4	7	5	2	4	6
10	10	8	10	8	5
8	10	8	8	9	7
10	9	10	10	10	7
10	8	6	7	4	1
9	10	7	8	10	5
4	9	1	3	5	2
5	8	5	5	7	3
5	8	5	7	6	4
5	7	3		7	8
8	10	5	6	7	2
7	10	4	10	9	1

Question 16: Were there aspects of your high school experience that encouraged students not to want to be adults? In other words, were there elements of your high school experience that encouraged extended adolescence? If yes, what were some?

I didn't have any experiences like that in high school. When I was in middle school my Civics teacher told our class a story about when he moved into his first apartment. It was a bad experience for him. That same teacher told a story about a time when he and some friends lived in a neighborhood with an abandoned house. The garage door to the house was open so they went inside. The next thing you know a bunch of cop cars show up and they got arrested and sent to jail. He didn't say but I think the charges were later dropped. After he finished telling the story he told us to enjoy being a kid. Because the real world is not easy.
N/A
no
Not that I can remember. I spent my entire high school experience wishing I was older and in college.
Teachers may encourage students to do their homework (which encourages responsibility), but as a whole, teenagers have a hard time thinking about the future consequences of their actions. This was the case for me, at least. And I was a good student, making decent grades, but it was difficult to truly understand the importance of getting into college. I am not sure if my high school experience really taught me what it means to be an adult, but I wonder if it is even possible to be taught how to be an adult. I think that the process toward reaching adulthood differs for each person. Some may grow simply by gleaning lessons from others, but some people have to experience for themselves. I think that it comes down to each person individually. For some students, if a teacher tries to impart wisdom into their students' lives, they listen. For others, they listen with deaf ears.
Yes, letting students had in their homework days late, giving us reviews that were exactly like the test,

and setting up classroom rules for us.
Things that extended adolescence: 1. When the teacher or administrator tried too hard to fit in with the students and dropped their level of professionalism.   2. Prom and other school dances. (We never realized how much these events actually cost - dress, tux, tickets, shoes, etc.)   3. Athletics. (We put so much time into athletics that we forget that we will rarely play a sport in college. And, almost never play that sport after college)
Certain activities offered by school - silly dress up days, dances, etc.
We were treated like children, not like adults. We didn't have any high demands that forced us to "grow up" if we didn't want to. We were viewed as the cute, adorable children that deserve to be handed as much of the world our parents and teachers could afford without having to work for it.
Hmmm no I wouldn't students were encouraged to remain adolescence but I also say student's were encouraged to be indepedent either. Few students had part time jobs, and work life and life balance was not ever emphasized or taught.
Gym class.
punishment of in school detention or out of school detention were considered a slight pain, but people generally didn't mind it and it was ineffective. Adults were teachers, and teachers were boring and made students do work that appeared to be irrelevent and "busy work". Students did not want to become those types of people.
teachers saying don't rush through life. all of it is still in front of you. you'll have plenty of time to be a adult.   dances   parties   P.E. (i didn't want to lose my youth)
I saw a lot of teachers that failed to follow through on their own academic standards for struggling students. The "everybody gets a trophy" mentality was huge in my high school.
No
I feel like all of the rules that were enforced enabled the students to act less mature and did not enable us to mature by giving us independent responsibility. We always had to be supervised or we could not do basic things like go to the bathroom without asking. In addition, we could not walk in the halls without a hall pass.   On the flip side, this made us want to get out of high school so that we could finally be independent and not have to worry about following so many rules. Having to
I don't really think so - my high school was focused on preparing us for life, not delaying adulthood. We were not coddled, and rewards were based on merit, not to make people feel good.
I don't know, I guess I would say no. I remember there being emphasis on participating in drug/alcohol-free activities. I certainly didn't feel like an adult at this age, but I don't think it correlated with my school environment.
The environment was cultivated for selfishness, but it was not intentional. In fact, selflessness was encouraged outwardly, but selfishiness seemed to thrive.
n/a
Absolutely. In a way, I think that college is an extended adolescence for the majority of kids. Not that it is not a good thing or that it shouldn't be encouraged, but I think the strong push to get kids to go to college overshadows the push for independence and adult responsibility.
Not that I can recall right now.
I can't think of anything specific.
not making things challenging enough is the biggest culprit. All the things I'm most ashamed of in hindsight were a direct result of me being bored. I also wish they had tried to impress upon me the

concept that there was a much bigger world waiting for me outside of school and that it's easy to be a big fish in a small pond.
I do not remember these elements being evident at my school
The teachers were very much involved in choosing the paths that students took based on their perceptions of a student's abilities without regard for the student's preference and therefore guided their path daily according to what they thought best. It was simply a do this, then this, then this and you'll be this type of daily routine that didn't completely prepare for a reality that is never that simple.
Yes, the basic public schooling formula feels very adolescent.
I don't believe that there was anything "encouraging" students not to be adults. I believe that maturation as an administrative priority in high school is somewhat passive. There are those who use the opportunity to grow up and those who continue to act with immaturity. If the level of immaturity becomes too extreme then administrative discipline is encountered to let the individual know they have crossed a certain boundary line.
Hard work discouraged students because there would be consequences if they weren't successful in the work. Many students weren't independent and were lazy, not seeing as easily the great rewards that come with success in hard work.
I would not say we were encouraged into extended adolescence as opposed to enjoying the moment. We recognized we aren't young for forever and to be where you are at as opposed to always looking ahead or behind.
They made adults seem boring, tired, angry and irritable without actual care and love for others. "These are the best years of your life..." thoughts like that and that adulthood would just not be as fun as adolescence.

Question 17: When you made the transition to college, what elements of adulthood proved difficult? What things did you feel you were missing or needed improvement?

planning my time among social and school things and extracurricular activities. My access to new aquaintances helped and hindered my development as an adult. I don't feel like I missed anything, because I feel that growing up is a process of trial and error. I had enough role models and advice and help. Pretty much everything I did in college needed improvement-- grades, attitude, needed to be a more selfless. But it's a part of growing up. Can't regret it.
Learning how to handle money wisely
My basic grammar, writing and rhetorical skills were much worse than I realized. I wish I would have been challenged much more in that department. Dealing with complex cultural issues that don't exist in a small predominately white town.
It has been difficult to adapt to the responsibilities that come along with adulthood. The finances, taking care of a house, planning ahead, working, etc. Where, in high school, the largest cocern is a test in biology, as an adult, there seems to be a never-ending list of concerns.
making my own doctor appointments. but overall i transitioned well.
Time management and being able to manage my new freedoms. The ability to risk responsibly. I was always put in a bubble and never allowed to really make my own decisions.
Paying bills was not difficult, as my parents taught me to be a tight-wad, unlike my other high school peers. My parents sent me a check, and I paid the bills when due. Cleaning up after myself was the adult part that I worked on the most during this period. I still did not feel like I had that much responsibility. I did not understand what working a full day meant, or how difficult working 8 straight hours would be. I almost wish that high school would have prepared us for that by extending school hours and going year-round. When I started to work, it was difficult to keep going based on how much vacation I was used to. If employers had the 11 or 12 or so weeks of vacation a year that school did, this would have been no

problem. :)   Also, I had a pretty easy life growing up, so there was no need for time management. I learned a little of this in college, but not to the extent that I needed. I blame this on college being nowhere near a "normal" schedule.
You had to motivate yourself in order to do well in the classroom.
The passion to earn money to support myself. The care for money in general. I needed to think more logically not just make decisions by my feelings. I wasn't ready to be alone. I needed community and hated the transition between leaving mom and dad but having no one to 'cleave' too..
Independence was of course hard. I felt I had been living a very sheltered life. (However, even college life was sheltered)
The academic transition was more difficult than the "life" aspect. My school did not have AP classes and did not teach a lot of the classic literature and history that it seemed other schools did. Other parts of the transition to college, even moving far away for it, were not difficult.
I think this quote from Fight Club says it better for me than I can: "I see all this potential, and I see squandering. God damn it, an entire generation pumping gas, waiting tables; slaves with white collars. Advertising has us chasing cars and clothes, working jobs we hate so we can buy shit we don't need. We're the middle children of history, man. No purpose or place. We have no Great War. No Great Depression. Our Great War's a spiritual war... our Great Depression is our lives. We've all been raised on television to believe that one day we'd all be millionaires, and movie gods, and rock stars. But we won't. And we're slowly learning that fact. And we're very, very pissed off."
Making the transition from a small social life to a larger one. I needed to learn how to communicate better in my environment and feel socially comfortable in large crowds.
I felt, and still feel, like I could use more of a financial education and more of a forum to safely discuss and explore relationships.
Budgeting, saving, paying bills, practical living skills would have been nice to have learned.
I missed my relationships the most. I had difficulty creating relationships.   I didn't understand finances as much as I needed to.   My communication skills lacked.   I felt like I needed more guidance about how to structure my schedule.
I felt like I had a quality education that prepared me for college academically, but not socially.
Being disciplined and productive.
It was difficult understanding the overall purpose of college and why it was so important before becoming a working professional. There should have been some kind of "life after college" instruction class providing basic knowledge about finances, careers, cities, houses, and transportation.
Notta, but I also lived on my own senior year of high school. Still struggled with money though, who didn't? The biggest challenge was dealing with closed minded indivduals with newly found freedom and lack of respect for one another's independence.
I had trouble being away from my family and related to that, trouble forming relationships with my fellow students at first. I had not changed schools since elementary school, so I never had to learn how to make new friends in an unfamiliar place.
I had to learn how to learn more independently. College syllabi and courses were more challenging, and adjusting to managing my own academic life took time.
Not getting the respect I felt like I deserved. I never liked being treated like a kid, as long as I can remember. Actually, that's something I didn't mention before now -- how others treat you; privileges. I've forgotten it 'til now, but a huge aspect of feeling like an adult is the way you feel others view you. It's about being respected and valued. I've been fighting for that since I was 3 or 4 years old. Depending on who the person is, I sometimes feel like an adult, and other times less so.
During my first semester of college, I found myself deeply missing my high school friends and feeling very lonely. I found it hard to meet people at school and make friends. I struggled all through first

semester and ultimately transferred to another school. I might have transferred for all the wrong reasons but it ultimately worked out. My second semester of college my freshman year I flourished and met people and made friends with people I am still friends with to this day. Ultimately, the elements that proved difficult were loneliness, making friends, and putting yourself out there to meet people and not be fake in an effort to meet friends.
Nothing really. But I do remember when I first got to college they asked me if I was married. I told them I wasn't and they said given that fact I needed my parents to sign certain forms for me. But they also said how often you went to class was up to you. So that was frustrating.
I was not prepared for how fully you are responsible for getting things done all by yourself. There were helps made available but it required you to get the help. No one was seeking you out or holding your hand as had been the case in high school.
The transition from high school to college was pretty smooth. Looking back I wish I would have thought harder about what I wanted to do upon completing college. That may have reflected in my choice of majors and maybe even my choice in school.
a sense of personal responsibility for my own choices. too much of a sense of entitlement growing up.
I think the biggest thing was learning to deal with relationships with friends whom I'd had prior to college that weren't going to college with me. Should I keep in touch or move on? Otherwise, I felt pretty prepared for the challenges in college
Financial learning curve, hands down #1
The greatest challenge was time management. So much of my schedule was regulated by my parents that when I got to college things like going to bed at a decent time were lessons learned with the support of a lot of caffeine
My extreme naivety. I thought all people were good and that my landlord wouldn't rip me off or that my phone company would always send me accurate bills. I learned the hard way that you have to stand up for yourself and not be a pushover.
Managing money was difficult because I was not aware of how much money I needed to cultivate my lifestyle.
For me, finances. I was still supported by my parents for the most part, but I had a small part-time job to have money for recreation. I remember it being a rough transition.
The biggest difficulty was my relationship with my parents. That proved to be the biggest difficulty and proves to be to this day. This was the only difficulty that I remember. I would say that I don't remember this being the case until I was 19.
Time management, how to study

Question 18: Now that you are considered an adult, think about the transition you have taken. How has your transition to adulthood been similar or different when compared to your parents, older relatives, or older role models?

I feel like my transition is alot slower than my parents. They were forced into adult hood at a younger age as they were married at 19 and had to start family life. Nowawadays, the process is longer and finding yourself in adulthood is a process that takes time.
Similar in my mind, but I am the first to graduate from college.
I know neither of my parents had easy transitions into college, but for me it was easy. They prepared me to make decisions and be a self-starter.
It has been somewhat different from my parents' transitions; neither of them went to college very far from home. My dad had to work throughout college to pay for basic costs. Because of this, he and my mom wanted to make sure that I didn't have to work to have my basic needs met while in school. My transition has also been different from my parents' because they were married soon after graduating.
It's obviously much different, especially in terms of technology. Idealogically, I'm not much different in my beliefs than my liberal parents except maybe in terms of religion--I was raised half-heartedly

Christian and allowed to explore all the world's faiths, namely Wicca, before finding my own way towards Christianity.
I think my transition has been similar to most people I know. For both my parents, they claim that the time of their most significant growth happened during their college years.
I had more of an understanding of the wider world and different people and places. I am more comfortable venturing and traveling solo, and probably have more confidence in trying new things, or am more comfortable switching jobs frequently.
Both my parents dropped out of high school and don't have a college education, so my journey has been entirely different than theirs.
My parents and older role models seemed to have considered marriage as the moment they became an adult. They married younger. They all seemed to become "an adult" much more quickly. They might not have been looking for a career in their first job, but, most of them made their first job their primary career. But, I think this might be different in my family because no one sought to further their education after high school. It seems as if college delayed my adulthood.
I probably had an easier road than my elders. I also had an incredible amount of emotional support from my parents.
I think my parents grew up quicker than I did, because they were forced to get a job sooner after high school than me. I think that taught me the most about responsibility. However, I know I wouldn't have finished college if I would have had to manage a job at the same time.
I don't know anything about their transitions, honestly I don't have role models, I did not have family support in the same ways that many of my peers did.
I think my transistion to college was similar to my parents', but I probably had more parental support because my grandparents didn't attend college.
I think it is similar to my parents in that they didn't pay for my college education, which I think helped considerably. Compared to my peers that had everything paid for, I think they became "adults" much later. My family has a strong emphasis on independence and this helped.
The timeline of my transition to adulthood is similar to that of my relatives and older friends. The process seems the same.
I had to learn a lot of things without the help of my parents, whereas my parents had my grandparents. I had to seek out mentors that I could ask questions and gain insight from. But because I had to seek it out my own I feel very established, and like I have done a good job and am a great place for age.
Different from my parents in that I stayed dependent on them for a lot longer than they stayed dependent on their parents - financially and emotionally. They were married when they were 20 and 21. My husband and I married when we were 28 and 29. My parents became parents when they were 21 and 22. I'll be almost 30 when I have my first child. They were thrown into full-blown adulthood in their early twenties. I went to college, got a full-time job, changed careers twice, moved out of state, moved back in with my parents, and finally became an adult somewhere around age 27.
It is similar to my parents, but it has taken longer than for my grandparents, most of whom did not go to college.
My transition was simililar to my parents in the fact that they became financially independent after college, but different because they got married right away and how different financial concerns.
It is so much different due in most part to technology. We communicate in so many different ways now and honestly it is hard to keep up. This new level of communication changes the way people relate, make friends, maintain relationships and keep in touch. In many ways I think it stunts people's people skills and ability to relate to people without technology.
Other people seemed to have do this earlier and without much thought. It all seemed very sentimental to me like a never ending episode of 'The Wonder Years.'... I always feel teary.
It's been different for a few reasons. First of all, both of my parents were attorneys. So they were very well educated. I never finished a four year degree. My mom died from cancer when I was 19. That happened less than 2 months after I graduated from high school. So that changed my life forever. My

mom died 12 days before I started college. So I wasn't able to go to school full time.
I think I'm pretty much the standard scenario. And my older role models have pretty much followed the same roadmap: go to college, graduate in four years, get a job, marry a girl I met in college one year later, wait a few years, buy a house, start a family. Just gotta put up that white picket fence!!
my parents got married at around age 19. They were thrust into responsibility early on. I have taken more time and have probably been influenced by more peers. I have used facebook and other websites to keep in touch with many people who I otherwise wouldn't, and I feel this has influeced my views on adulthood. I used to feel it had more to do with partying and doing "adult stuff". Whereas the previous generation was finished partying and adulthood looked more to them like owning a home and having a family, which was much earlier than me.
definitely a slower transition than my parents.
Different
My transistion has been fairly similar to my mom's. My mom lived at home while she went to business school and until she got married. On the other hand, my Dad lived on campus at the University of Maryland but overall I can't imagine my transition being much different.
I'm very much on my own path -- going from business school to non-profit work to being an actor and freelancer -- I'm not sure if anyone, anywhere has done what I have, let alone in my family. That said, my mom was the general contractor of her first house when she was 26 or something, and that definitely gave me the confidence to believe I could own my own house by that age, too. My dad bounced around a little bit before deciding to become a teacher, even entertaining the idea of going into music, so that was an influence in some ways.
I focus on a lot more of my career and having kids are more of the frame of thinking that that is down the road. For my parents, they had kids late in their teens and throughout their 20's.
Seems similar. Just slightly different decisions. The biggest factor affecting the transition seems to be when people decide to get married and have kids. That changes everything.
My transition to adulthood has been different from my parents, in that, my parents were active and present in my life. I had parents who stayed married and loved each other, as opposed to their parents. I also went away to college and graduated after High School. My parents did not go to college after High School.
I feel its been similar in that my parents both paid their own way to college and were completely self reliant with in 1-2 years after college began.
Quite different I think. The years really change the world around us which changes the people.
I think the greatest difference is the amount of information that we are privy too. Also I think that interpersonal communication has been retarded by technology thus slowing the maturation process. I think our generation has much to learn about handling people.

Question 19: When you consider your high school experience, what supports would have been most helpful in assisting students as they transitioned to adulthood?

More supports from people who could assist young people in making the transition, maybe alumnae that could have come back and assisted students.
Making sure that students know they are responsible for making decisions and that they can't expect someone to fix it if they choose unwisely.
Information on the possibilties for education, because so many students at my school did not know that it was possible to go far away from home, even if they wanted to. Mentors would have also been helpful for encouraging students to stay in college past the first semester or year.
More emphasis on finances and how to do everyday things girls don't always learn like changing the oil/a tire on the car. Interviewing for jobs.
Financial classes and learning how to plan for the future. Our generation exists in "instant-gratification" rather than learning the importance of delayed satisfaction.

More practical advice about how to budget and handle loans or financial vocabulary.
I work for a program now called AVID which prepares students for college, life on their own and social skills. The best support I had was a mentor who helped me with college apps, scholarships etc.
People as resources: Teachers, other parents, youth leaders. Financial resources (how to budget, open a checking account, etc.) Job resources (properly making a resume, etc.) Resources and projects about how to be an effective communicator.
Learning responsibility, cause and effect, independence.
I think teaching us what a full workday is like would have been helpful for me and several others, as well as taking school all year. There would have been less repetition in teaching certain things year after year, we'd get closer to a college education while in high school.
Course work that specifically focused on life balance (work, school, social, health, etc.) and learning how to find and utilize resources available to improve, change or find information regarding work, school, social activities, and health.
I think my school did a good job.
My real-life problems/modeling perhaps in a business class or in a economics class.
Discussing finances more explicitly.
More education of finances
Honestly, I'm not sure anything in high school would have helped me become an adult. It's a different time. People become adults much later. I know not everyone attends college, but I think support in college to transition into adulthood is the more accurate focus.
I think extracurricular activities where you have to work together with others are the best at encouraging responsibilities
Mentor in college; more proactive, involved advisor available
It would have been helpful to me if my Guidance Office did a better job educating me about college options or post-secondary options. I went to a school I loved on the outside but really wasn't a good fit for me. This made my transition from high school to college and ultimately autonomy much harder. I wouldn't change the experience for anything but it was very hard. I also think too many people think college is there only option when in reality there are so many different opportunities young people have and some people just aren't ready for college on a personal level even if they are on an academic level.
It would have been really helpful to have a counselor at school who cared about my life not just which college I would get into. A mentor who didn't just help me decide 'what I wanted to be when I grew up' but who I wanted to be and who I was back then and why I was that way.
One thing a teacher told me when I was in high school that I've always remembered was that you shouldn't decide where to go to college based on what your friends do. Go to a college that fits your needs.
more independence in studies
Career counseling, money skills, spiritual guidance, the concepts of delayed gratification and self control
college students who were good role models. That was the age group and demographic I feel I lacked contact with in high school. Besides them, I feel many students would ignore or accept and quickly forget any advice until they are at "adult age"
Young adults to mentor the students as they become young adults themselves
Financial classes in high school would be an important addition to curriculum. The importance of prioritizing. Getting students to process more and think for themselves about who they are and what they excel in.
Adults/role models who I respected and respected me were the most influential and valuable to me. My wrestling coach had a big impact. Various teachers who supported me and encouraged me. Even some

who didn't - there's a certain aspect of wanting to prove people wrong that has driven me in various ways.
I don't really know.
I think I needed more assistance once I was away from home. High school is a hopeless bubble of security.
I think more classes and discussions regarding practical financial matters and economics would be most helpful in assisting students as they transition to adulthood. This would include more than just the general ideas. I think I could have used this more in my transition to adulthood.
Less hand holding??
Understanding.
I don't know that there are any. I think that responsibility is the great teacher of adulthood. The acceptance of that responsibility is an individual choice. When someone other than a parent forces responsibility on another you run into enforcement problems when an individual fails with their responsibilities. Thus strong parenting is really the greatest assistance in the transition to adulthood.

APPENDIX E. MEAN FOR SIX INDIVIDUAL TRAITS
(as emphasized by secondary school)

Independence

N	Valid		36
	Missing		5
Mean			6.7500
Std. Deviation			2.01955
Range			6.00

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	4.00	7	17.1	19.4	19.4
	5.00	5	12.2	13.9	33.3
	6.00	4	9.8	11.1	44.4
	7.00	6	14.6	16.7	61.1
	8.00	6	14.6	16.7	77.8
	9.00	4	9.8	11.1	88.9
	10.00	4	9.8	11.1	100.0
	Total	36	87.8	100.0	
Missing	System	5	12.2		
Total		41	100.0		

Histogram

Mean = 6.75
Std. Dev. = 2.02
N = 36

125
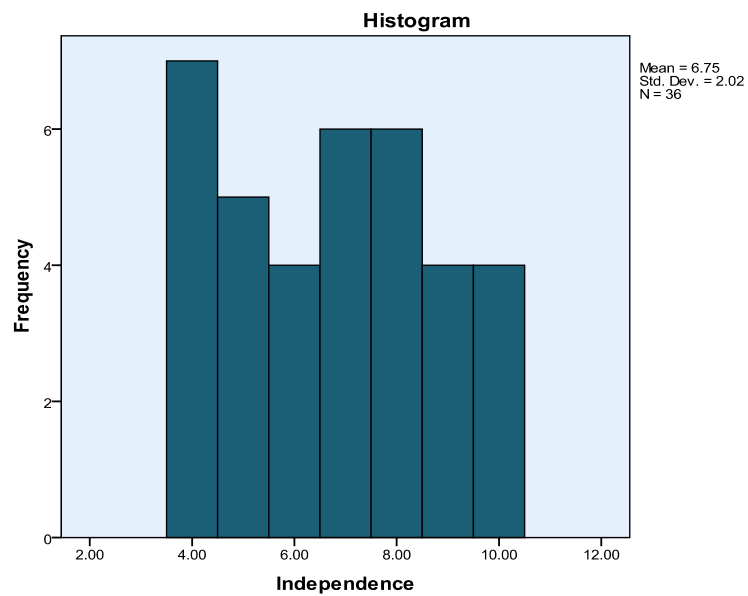
Productivity

N	Valid		36
	Missing		5
Mean			8.0000
Std. Deviation			1.77281
Range			6.00

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	4.00	3	7.3	8.3	8.3
	5.00	1	2.4	2.8	11.1
	6.00	2	4.9	5.6	16.7
	7.00	4	9.8	11.1	27.8
	8.00	12	29.3	33.3	61.1
	9.00	5	12.2	13.9	75.0
	10.00	9	22.0	25.0	100.0
	Total	36	87.8	100.0	
Missing	System	5	12.2		
Total		41	100.0		

Histogram

Mean = 8.00
Std. Dev. = 1.773
N = 36

126
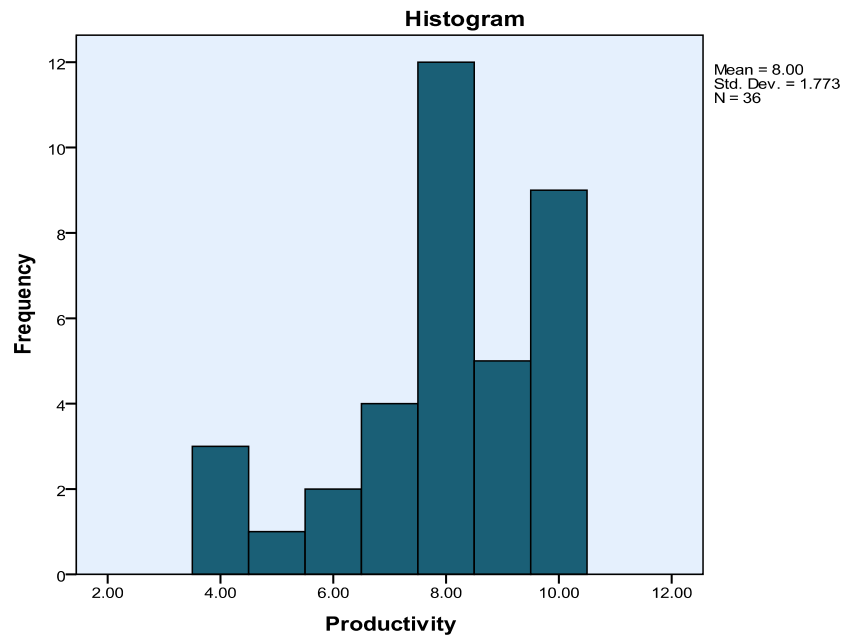
Communication

N	Valid			36
	Missing			5
Mean				7.1389
Std. Deviation				1.94426
Range				7.00

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	3.00	2	4.9	5.6	5.6
	4.00	3	7.3	8.3	13.9
	5.00	2	4.9	5.6	19.4
	6.00	3	7.3	8.3	27.8
	7.00	10	24.4	27.8	55.6
	8.00	7	17.1	19.4	75.0
	9.00	5	12.2	13.9	88.9
	10.00	4	9.8	11.1	100.0
	Total	36	87.8	100.0	
Missing	System	5	12.2		
Total		41	100.0		

Histogram

Mean = 7.14
Std. Dev. = 1.944
N = 36
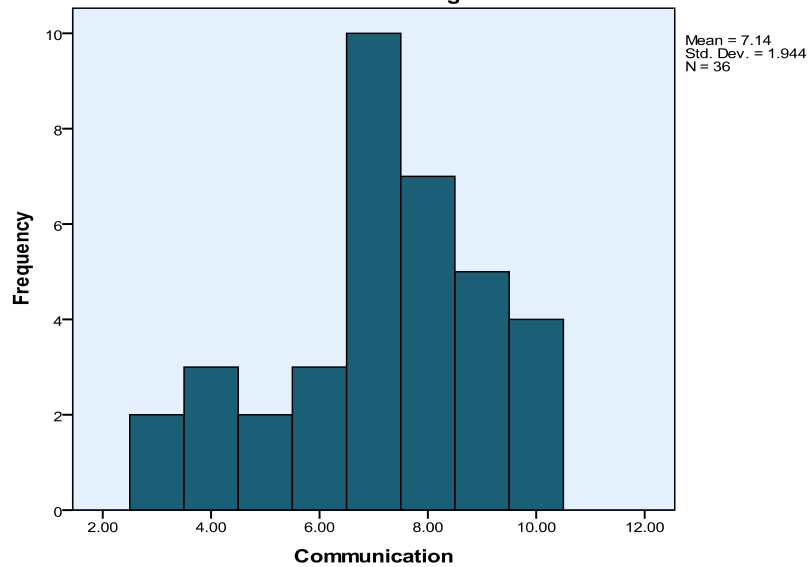
Finances

N	Valid		36
	Missing		5
Mean			4.0833
Std. Deviation			2.44219
Range			8.00

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	1.00	7	17.1	19.4	19.4
	2.00	7	17.1	19.4	38.9
	3.00	1	2.4	2.8	41.7
	4.00	5	12.2	13.9	55.6
	5.00	4	9.8	11.1	66.7
	6.00	5	12.2	13.9	80.6
	7.00	4	9.8	11.1	91.7
	8.00	2	4.9	5.6	97.2
	9.00	1	2.4	2.8	100.0
	Total	36	87.8	100.0	
Missing	System	5	12.2		
Total		41	100.0		

Histogram

Mean = 4.08
Std. Dev. = 2.442
N = 36

128
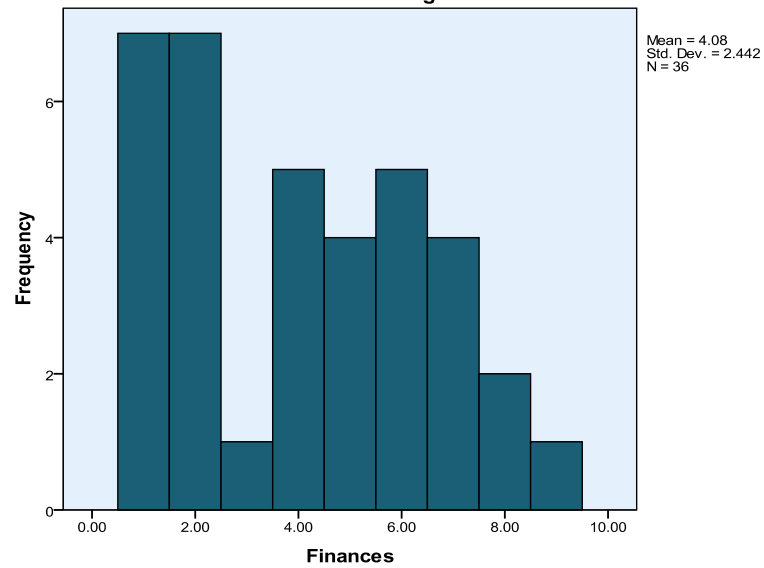
Relationship-savvy

N	Valid			36
	Missing			5
Mean				5.4444
Std. Deviation				2.46628
Range				9.00

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	1.00	3	7.3	8.3	8.3
	2.00	2	4.9	5.6	13.9
	3.00	4	9.8	11.1	25.0
	4.00	3	7.3	8.3	33.3
	5.00	5	12.2	13.9	47.2
	6.00	6	14.6	16.7	63.9
	7.00	5	12.2	13.9	77.8
	8.00	4	9.8	11.1	88.9
	9.00	3	7.3	8.3	97.2
	10.00	1	2.4	2.8	100.0
	Total	36	87.8	100.0	
Missing	System	5	12.2		
Total		41	100.0		

Histogram

Mean = 5.44
Std. Dev. = 2.466
N = 36
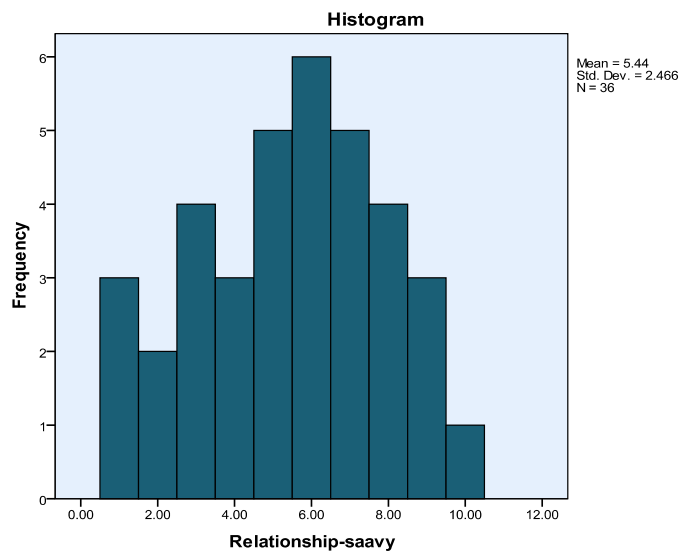
Adult-like

N	Valid			35
	Missing			6
Mean				6.9143
Std. Deviation				2.31836
Range				8.00

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	2.00	2	4.9	5.7	5.7
	3.00	2	4.9	5.7	11.4
	4.00	2	4.9	5.7	17.1
	5.00	3	7.3	8.6	25.7
	6.00	4	9.8	11.4	37.1
	7.00	5	12.2	14.3	51.4
	8.00	7	17.1	20.0	71.4
	9.00	6	14.6	17.1	88.6
	10.00	4	9.8	11.4	100.0
	Total	35	85.4	100.0	
Missing	System	6	14.6		
Total		41	100.0		

Histogram

Mean = 6.91
Std. Dev. = 2.318
N = 35

130
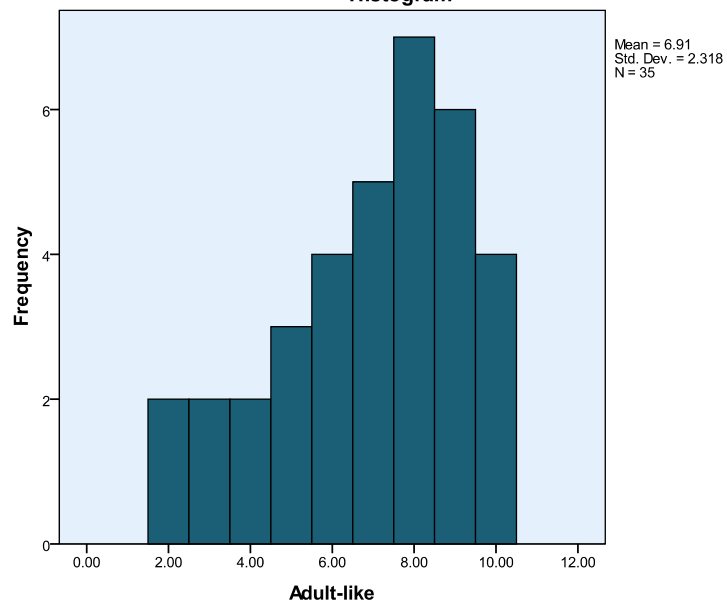
BREAKDOWN OF QUANTITATIVE RATINGS BY DEMOGRAPHIC

Gender

Males

		INDEPENDE NCE	PRODUCTIVI TY	RELATIONSH IPSAVVY	ADULTLIKE	COMMUNICA TION	FINANCES
N	Valid	16	16	16	15	16	16
	Missing	0	0	0	1	0	0
Mean		5.8750	7.7500	5.2500	6.9333	7.0625	3.6250
Std. Deviation		1.78419	1.57056	1.48324	2.15362	1.43614	2.47319
Range		6.00	6.00	5.00	8.00	5.00	7.00

Females

		INDEPENDE NCE	PRODUCTIVI TY	RELATIONSH IPSAVVY	ADULTLIKE	COMMUNICA TION	FINANCES
N	Valid	20	20	20	20	20	20
	Missing	5	5	5	5	5	5
Mean		7.4500	8.2000	5.6000	6.9000	7.2000	4.4500
Std. Deviation		1.95946	1.93581	3.06766	2.48998	2.30788	2.41650
Range		6.00	6.00	9.00	8.00	7.00	8.00

Relationship status

Married

		INDEPENDENCE	PRODUCTIVITY	RELATIONSHIPSAVVY	ADULTLIKE	COMMUNICATION	FINANCES
N	Valid	17	17	17	16	17	17
	Missing	2	2	2	3	2	2
Mean		6.3529	7.6471	5.0588	6.4375	7.1176	3.6471
Std. Deviation		2.02920	1.99816	2.56102	2.50250	1.76360	2.42232
Range		6.00	6.00	8.00	8.00	6.00	7.00

Single or in a Committed Relationship

		INDEPENDENCE	PRODUCTIVITY	RELATIONSHIPSAVVY	ADULTLIKE	COMMUNICATION	FINANCES
N	Valid	19	19	19	19	19	19
	Missing	3	3	3	3	3	3
Mean		7.1053	8.3158	5.7895	7.3158	7.1579	4.4737
Std. Deviation		1.99707	1.52944	2.39395	2.13574	2.14121	2.45783
Range		6.00	6.00	9.00	8.00	7.00	8.00

Parent status

Children

		INDEPENDENCE	PRODUCTIVITY	RELATIONSHIPSAVVY	ADULTLIKE	COMMUNICATION	FINANCES
N	Valid	10	10	10	9	10	10
	Missing	2	2	2	3	2	2
Mean		6.4000	7.4000	5.1000	6.5556	7.3000	4.0000
Std. Deviation		2.27058	2.01108	3.07137	2.00693	1.05935	2.66667
Range		6.00	6.00	8.00	7.00	4.00	7.00

No Children

		INDEPENDENCE	PRODUCTIVITY	RELATIONSHIPSAVVY	ADULTLIKE	COMMUNICATION	FINANCES
N	Valid	26	26	26	26	26	26
	Missing	3	3	3	3	3	3
Mean		6.8846	8.2308	5.5769	7.0385	7.0769	4.1154
Std. Deviation		1.94580	1.65669	2.24808	2.44100	2.20768	2.40544
Range		6.00	6.00	9.00	8.00	7.00	8.00

Age

Age 23-24

		INDEPENDENCE	PRODUCTIVITY	RELATIONSHIPSAVVY	ADULTLIKE	COMMUNICATION	FINANCES
N	Valid	4	4	4	4	4	4
	Missing	0	0	0	0	0	0
Mean		6.5000	7.5000	5.0000	5.7500	6.0000	4.5000
Std. Deviation		1.91485	2.51661	3.16228	3.77492	2.94392	3.69685
Range		4.00	6.00	7.00	7.00	7.00	8.00

Age 25-27

		INDEPENDENCE	PRODUCTIVITY	RELATIONSHIPSAVVY	ADULTLIKE	COMMUNICATION	FINANCES
N	Valid	15	15	15	15	15	15
	Missing	3	3	3	3	3	3
Mean		6.4000	7.6667	5.6000	7.1333	7.2667	4.2000
Std. Deviation		2.02837	1.75933	2.41424	1.59762	1.75119	2.21037
Range		6.00	6.00	7.00	5.00	6.00	7.00

133

Age 28-29

		INDEPENDE NCE	PRODUCTIV ITY	RELATIONS HIPSAVVY	ADULTLI KE	COMMUNIC ATION	FINANCE S
N	Valid	17	17	17	16	17	17
	Missing	2	2	2	3	2	2
Mean		7.1176	8.4118	5.4118	7.0000	7.2941	3.8824
Std. Deviation		2.08813	1.62245	2.50147	2.55604	1.89620	2.47190
Range		6.00	6.00	9.00	8.00	6.00	7.00

APPENDIX F. ADULT STATUS CROSSTABULATIONS

Independence

		Considers self an adult	Sometimes, Yes & No, Increasingly	Does not consider self an adult	Total
			Adult Status		
Independence	4.00	4	1	2	7
	5.00	5	0	0	5
	6.00	2	2	0	4
	7.00	4	2	0	6
	8.00	3	2	1	6
	9.00	2	2	0	4
	10.00	4	0	0	4
Total		24	9	3	36

Productivity

		Considers self an adult	Sometimes, Yes & No, Increasingly	Does not consider self an adult	Total
			Adult Status		
Productivity	4.00	2	1	0	3
	5.00	1	0	0	1
	6.00	1	1	0	2
	7.00	4	0	0	4
	8.00	8	2	2	12
	9.00	3	1	1	5
	10.00	5	4	0	9
Total		24	9	3	36

Relationship-savvy

		Adult Status			Total
		Considers self an adult	Sometimes, Yes & No, Increasingly	Does not consider self an adult	
Relationship-savvy	1.00	2	1	0	3
	2.00	1	1	0	2
	3.00	3	0	1	4
	4.00	1	2	0	3
	5.00	5	0	0	5
	6.00	4	2	0	6
	7.00	2	2	1	5
	8.00	2	1	1	4
	9.00	3	0	0	3
	10.00	1	0	0	1
Total		24	9	3	36

Adult-like

		Adult Status			Total
		Considers self an adult	Sometimes, Yes & No, Increasingly	Does not consider self an adult	
Adult-like	2.00	1	1	0	2
	3.00	1	1	0	2
	4.00	2	0	0	2
	5.00	2	0	1	3
	6.00	4	0	0	4
	7.00	5	0	0	5
	8.00	3	3	1	7
	9.00	3	2	1	6
	10.00	2	2	0	4
Total		23	9	3	35

Communication

		Adult Status			Total
		Considers self an adult	Sometimes, Yes & No, Increasingly	Does not consider self an adult	
Communication	3.00	0	2	0	2
	4.00	3	0	0	3
	5.00	1	1	0	2
	6.00	1	0	2	3
	7.00	8	2	0	10
	8.00	5	1	1	7
	9.00	4	1	0	5
	10.00	2	2	0	4
Total		24	9	3	36

Finances

		Adult Status			Total
		Considers self an adult	Sometimes, Yes & No, Increasingly	Does not consider self an adult	
Finances	1.00	4	2	1	7
	2.00	5	2	0	7
	3.00	1	0	0	1
	4.00	3	1	1	5
	5.00	1	3	0	4
	6.00	4	1	0	5
	7.00	4	0	0	4
	8.00	2	0	0	2
	9.00	0	0	1	1
Total		24	9	3	36

APPENDIX G. FOLLOW-UP SURVEY COMPOSITE

Total Participants – 8
Females – 6
Males – 2

High schools represented by state: Minnesota, Virginia, Wyoming, Nevada, Ohio, Michigan

Colleges represented by state: Minnesota, Virginia, Wyoming, Illinois

1. In which state did you graduate high school? (or country if outside USA)

Minnesota

2. In which state did you graduate college? (or country if outside USA)

Minnesota

3. In your survey, you answered "Adulthood is when a person gains autonomy from parents, takes responsibility for his/her own life, and makes decisions for his/herself." In your words, why do some people experience extended adolescence? What are some of the causes?

I think people experience extended adolescence when they are over-sheltered by well-meaning parents, or when they are not taught to take personal responsibility for their actions. There is a mentality some young adults have that they "deserve" to have fun and have their gratifications satisfied, which leads to an entitlement attitude that is not reflective of the adult world.

4. On Question 15, you answered the following question.

15. In high school, think about your relationships with teachers and administrators. This could be either inside or outside of class. On a scale of 1-10 (with 1 being the lowest, and 10 being the highest), how strongly did they encourage you to be:
Independent 9
Productive 10 Highest
Relationship-savvy 9
Adult-like 9
A good communicator 10 Highest
Financially adept 7

Your school showed very high marks for encouraging productivity and communication skills. What are the principal reasons you think these marks are so high? What is something that maybe your school did differently?

My school was faith-based (evangelical), private, and small. I attended it from kindergarten through 12th grade, and there was a lot of continuity and individual attention given to students. The mission of the school was unilaterally supported by faculty and administration, and the students tended to come from similar backgrounds religiously. The school had a strong emphasis on English, and generally had high academic standards. All these factors contributed to the high ratings that I gave my educational experience.

5. Your school showed somewhat lower marks for encouraging financial stability. In your opinion, do you feel placing a stronger emphasis on finances (in addition to the other areas) would improve a typical student's experience when transitioning to adulthood? Would it potentially reduce extended adolescence?

Managing finances wasn't a strong academic focus of the school, and that is why I gave it the rating of 7. I think that students can benefit from learning good financial management skills, which in turn would benefit them later in life. I think managing finances well is an important part of being an adult and living responsibly. So yes, emphasizing financial management could help reduce extended adolescence.

Participant Philip

1. In which state did you graduate high school? (or country if outside USA)

Virginia

2. In which state did you graduate college? (or country if outside USA)

Virginia

3. In your survey, you stated that you "reached adulthood at about age 24." In your opinion, why is there so much variety in how people experience this transition? Some see themselves as an adult at an early age, while others don't until much later. In your words, why do some people experience extended adolescence?

Some people feel the need to "experience stupid mistakes on their own", rather than learn from the mistakes of others. I feel at times I was enabled by those who financially supported me to keep on partying and make bad choices for myself, though they were mostly kept in the dark about how I did this. This is the case with many people, and why there is extended adolescence. I feel peoples' definition of adulthood is the biggest reason for a variety of transition. People believe they have matured when they "feel" responsible, or "feel" independent". This is too internalized to qualify one as an adult or not. One cannot determine his or her adulthood by these mere feelings, without much thought or evidence based on how others perceive this person. This can cause a great variety in ages at which people feel mature, because depending on how the day or month is going, they can give you a different response.

4. On Question 15, you answered the following question.

15. In high school, think about your relationships with teachers and administrators. This could be either inside or outside of class. On a scale of 1-10 (with 1 being the lowest, and 10 being the highest), how strongly did they encourage you to be:
Independent 5
Productive 6
Relationship-savvy 3
Adult-like 5
A good communicator 8
Financially adept 2

Your school showed higher marks for encouraging productivity and communication. What are the principal reasons you think these marks are higher? Was there something that maybe your school did differently?

I feel that I was overall unproductive in high school, but I was encouraged beyond what I showed to be productive. I stayed after school a few times, and was surprised by teachers' willingness to help me understand what they were teaching. Some teachers also had no problem working with my parents when they asked for help in getting me to do my work, and showed interest in doing more to help. Communication: I was always given many opportunities to communicate in different ways. Teachers constantly gave me opportunities to communicate through papers, through speaking in front of the class, through projects on poster board, projects making videos, and through drawing. I was given the opportunity to intake their and other students' communication at the same time. Many projects required my input on others' work. Open discussion was also encouraged, especially in English and Social Sciences class.

5. On the flip side, your school showed the lowest marks for encouraging financial ability and relationships. In your opinion, do you feel placing a stronger emphasis on finances and relationships (in addition to the other areas) would improve a typical student's experience when transitioning to adulthood? Would it potentially reduce extended adolescence?

I believe the structure of education does not allow for encouragement of relationships or financial ability.   Relationships just build or fall apart, no matter what counselors would say or teachers would do. The peer influence was stronger than any other force regarding relationships and relationship savvy. Influence is put on groups within the school, with after school programs, but those are merely putting a name to a gathering of students that

could naturally happen any ways. I feel If there were a way to emphasize relationships outside of student to student, such as student to parent or student to employer, then students would learn to thrive and reach adulthood earlier, since those are the people from whom they have the torch passed to. My teachers did little to encourage financial ability. I feel the only way to learn that is to give actual money to a student and through trial and error and time, see if they can save it or spend it on worthwhile investments. I also feel that relationships and financial ability are strongly correlated. So many times, I was unable to say "no" to eating out, going on a road trip, going to bars, etc. because of the relationships I had with people. I was unable to feel like I could keep the relationship without saying "no". Also, I spent so much time with so many people, that I could not focus on or even think about buying a house, buying a car, investing, and saving. With teaching responsibility in relationships, not just being good at them, can come financial savvy. Also, teaching people to be happy with what they have and to not go after the latest fads or trends would help students to reach adulthood quicker.

Participant Mandy

1. In which state did you graduate high school? (or country if outside USA):

Wyoming

2. In which state did you graduate college? (or country if outside USA):

Wyoming

3. In your survey, you mention that you had peers who became "adults" much later. In your opinion, why is there so much variety in how people experience this transition? Some see themselves as an adult at an early age, while others don't until much later. In your words, why do some people experience extended adolescence?

I think it a majority of it relates to parenting and how these people were taught by their parents. If parents are enablers and pay for everything, in my opinion, they mature much later, because their responsibility comes much later. Of course, also, in any group of people at any age, there is a range of maturity levels. Not all 6 year olds are the same maturity, even if they were raised in identical environments. Probably just a genetic tendency towards their understanding of the world has something to do with it as well.

4. On Question 15, you answered the following question.

15. In high school, think about your relationships with teachers and administrators. This could be either inside or outside of class. On a scale of 1-10 (with 1 being the lowest, and 10 being the highest), how strongly did they encourage you to be:

Independent
7

142

Productive 4	
Relationship-savvy 1 Lowest	
Adult-like 7	
A good communicator 7	
Financially adept 1 Lowest	

Your school showed higher marks for encouraging independence, adult-like traits and communication. What are the principal reasons you think these marks are higher? What is something that maybe your school did differently?

I just felt like I wasn't coddled. My teachers had high expectations. I had one teacher who would call us "slackers" or "scumbags" if we were tardy or didn't do our homework. Nobody wants to be called a scumbag in front of their class. Or at least, I didn't want to be. ☺

5. On the flip side, your school showed the lowest marks for encouraging financial abilities and relationships. In your opinion, do you feel placing a stronger emphasis on finances and relationships (in addition to the other areas) would improve a typical student's experience when transitioning to adulthood? Would it potentially reduce extended adolescence?

I don't know if more school time needs to be spent on relationships if parents would do their jobs (disgruntled teacher talk here). I had this wonderful class in college though, Love and Relationships, that I learned so much from. Wonderful course and if something like that was offered in high schools it would be nice. I think it would teach people how to communicate with others around them better (partners or not) and that is an important part of adulthood, how to communicate.
As for financial matters, I still feel like I'm on a huge learning curve. For example, I haven't started saving independently for retirement yet. My fear lies in that I don't know what questions to ask. What makes a good financial institution? What fees do they charge? How do I compare them (there are so many!)? A class in high school on this would have been extremely valuable to me. Looking at our culture today, there are many that are in my position. Why is this? What can we do to prevent it?

Participant Evelyn

1. In which state did you graduate high school? (or country if outside USA)

 Minnesota

2. In which state did you graduate college? (or country if outside USA)

Illinois

3. In your survey, you stated, "Adulthood is a continual process of discovering that I am independent of my parents …" In your opinion, why is there so much variety in how people experience this transition? Some see themselves as an adult at an early age, while others don't until much later. In your words, why do some people experience extended adolescence?

Experiences are subjective, so feeling like you've arrived at adulthood is subjective. I think some people feel like they've reached adulthood when seminal touch points have been passed in their lives, like moving out of their parents, controlling their finances, getting married, etc. I agree with these things, and think by these standards I probably would feel like I've reached adulthood quickly. These things happen more quickly with different people, too. If I had moved out into my own apartment instead of a college dorm I probably would feel more independent more quickly. I find myself marking my adulthood in less key moment kinds of ways, though. When I navigate a tricky interpersonal conflict without calling and asking advice, or when I go through a difficult time without feeling like I need to rely on my parents, I feel more independent. I've found that a lot of my peer group and friends are experiencing extended adolescence, so much so that the phrase 'quarter life crisis' is common. I think it has to do with feeling a societal expectation to quickly leave adolescence and have some sort of glamorous roaring experience of being young and in your twenties. Part of this is the need to face reality that being in your twenties is not necessarily instantly having questions answered, but the pressure to know what you're doing and where you're going remains. Part of the extended adolescence, I think, is rooted in cultural changes away from it being okay to have strong intergenerational relationships with family members/social groups. There is something that is affirmed when an older person encourages or gives feedback to a younger person that helps answer questions that young person might have about themselves that lead to greater self-knowledge. Without the relational room to figure these things out it takes people longer to grow out of adolescence as they try to answer questions about themselves without a sounding board.

4. On Question 15, you answered the following question.

15. In high school, think about your relationships with teachers and administrators. This could be either inside or outside of class. On a scale of 1-10 (with 1 being the lowest, and 10 being the highest), how strongly did they encourage you to be:

Independent
9

Productive

144

10 Highest

Relationship-savvy
7

Adult-like
8

A good communicator
8

Financially adept
4

Your school showed very high marks for encouraging independence and productivity. What are the principal reasons you think these marks are so high? What is something that maybe your school did differently?

I like to tell people my high school was built in the 1960's in a circular shape and with no walls--so there was originally one common room to encourage 'free learning'. This is true, although there were plenty of walls and structure when I attended. There is still a sense of freedom there that places a heavy emphasis on independence and challenging academics. There was a strong emphasis placed on learning social history and being aware of social movements. In tandem with this was a ethos of personal responsibility for your grades and classes and that you would carry what you learned outside of the classroom.

5. On the flip side, your school showed lower marks for encouraging health with finances and relationships. In your opinion, do you feel placing a stronger emphasis on finances and relationships (in addition to the other areas) would improve a typical student's experience when transitioning to adulthood? Would it potentially reduce extended adolescence?

Placing a stronger emphasis on finances and relationships would probably reduce extended adolescence. It's hard to imagine, for me, based on my experiences of education and growth, learning about relationships and finances within the classroom. They seem like areas where lessons are better learned through experience. I think that better education in middle school in these areas would be great--beginning to teach middle schoolers about the costs of college and how to manage money in preparation for it, or about how to navigate relationships in high school.

Participant Mackenzie

1. In which state did you graduate high school? (Or country if outside USA)

Minnesota

2. In which state did you graduate college? (Or country if outside USA)

Minnesota

3. In your survey, you stated that you feel like an adult and that you have a strong desire "to be responsible in all areas of my life." In your opinion, why is there so much variety in how people experience this transition? Some see themselves as an adult at an early age, while others don't until much later. In your words, why do some people experience extended adolescence?

I think that a lot of it depends not only on a person's high school experience but also on the living situation. In my case, I had to learn how to be responsible for myself at a young age because my family structure was not healthy. I had not choice, if I did not learn how to take care of myself no one else would have been there to pick up the slack. While other people are blessed with a family who takes care of them as they should while they are growing up, so they may not be as used to having to take on a lot of responsibility. By no means do I think that I am better off for having to learn it younger, because I missed out on a lot of great things that most people experience growing up. I think that there is a learning curve every person goes through regarding how to take on responsibility, I just happened to learn it a lot earlier in life.

4. On Question 15, you answered the following question.

15. In high school, think about your relationships with teachers and administrators. This could be either inside or outside of class. On a scale of 1-10 (with 1 being the lowest, and 10 being the highest), how strongly did they encourage you to be:
Independent   10 Highest
Productive   9
Relationship-savvy   10 Highest
Adult-like   10 Highest
A good communicator   10 Highest
Financially adept   7

Your school showed very high marks across this array of traits. What are the principal reasons you think these marks are so high? Was there something that maybe your school did differently?

I feel that my school did a great job of hiring quality teachers; I was very involved with an array of activities in school, from music (band, choir, Music Honor Society, special music groups ect...), athletics (a sport each season), NHS, yearbook, CSA, and a few other student organizations. Because of my school involvement and leadership opportunities within these activities, I was able to get to know my teachers very well. The teachers really cared about the growth of the students, and that made a HUGE difference in feeling like I was prepared to be an adult.

I am sure there are things they could and or should do differently, but what they did do worked well for me. I had an amazing high school experience; it is a time in my life that holds a lot of great memories. But for other personality and learning types/ styles I am sure there are things that would work better.

5. The lowest mark your school showed concerned financial ability. In your opinion, do you feel placing a stronger emphasis on finances (in addition to the other areas) would improve a typical student's experience when transitioning to adulthood? Would it potentially reduce extended adolescence?

FOR SURE. When I started college, I had to take a class that kind of went over the transition into college... I think it would be great for high school to offer something similar. Before I transferred to [....] I was at a state school, while there I did not have to take any kind of transition class, and then when I transferred I did. I think something that helps go talk through the transition is a great tool.

For me, I did not see money handled well growing up, and could not really talk to my parents about how to handle it well, I just knew that I wanted to. I know that many people are in that situation, so to know that there is a place to ask questions is HUGE!

Participant Sarah

1. In which state did you graduate high school? (or country if outside USA)

Las Vegas , Nevada

2. In which state did you graduate college? (or country if outside USA)

Minneapolis, Minnesota

3. In your survey, you state that you feel like an adult and that you have "taken responsibility" for yourself. In your opinion, why is there so much variety in how people experience this transition? Some see themselves as an adult at an early age, while others don't until much later. In your words, why do some people experience extended adolescence?

It has to do with taking responsibility for yourself. A person who lives with his mother until age 26 per say doesn't mature outside of adolescence because he is still letting his mom take responsibility for him. Adversity creates character. Responsibility creates maturity. We change because the circumstances around us change. If there is no change, no adversity, no challenge, there usually is no growth in a person.

4. On Question 15, you answered the following question.

15. In high school, think about your relationships with teachers and administrators. This could be either inside or outside of class. On a scale of 1-10 (with 1 being the lowest, and 10 being the highest), how strongly did they encourage you to be:
Independent   9
Productive   8
Relationship-savvy   6
Adult-like   7
A good communicator   7
Financially adept   6

Your school showed higher marks for encouraging independence and productivity. What are the principal reasons you think these marks are higher? Was there something that maybe your school did differently?

Well I've always been self motivated, so maybe I'm projecting a little bit when I give them such high marks, but I feel like my teachers allowed my drive and rewarded my individuality. I was allowed to do a lot of classes as self study because the courses that I felt would challenge me weren't offered. I was also given free space and creative control over several large school wide projects (yearbook, leadership, homecoming) and I believe my teachers created a safe place for me to find my own individuality and productiveness by doing so.

5. On the flip side, your school showed lower marks for encouraging relationships and financial abilities. In your opinion, do you feel placing a stronger emphasis on relationships and finances (in addition to the other areas) would improve a typical student's experience when transitioning to adulthood? Would it potentially reduce extended adolescence?

I believe those are things that parents should be teaching their children, schools could maybe do a little more financial awakening exercises such as I do now with

my students (having them pick a career and then make a budget), but for the most part I believe these things are best learned in the home. I think teaching kids about financial abilities encourages growing up and taking responsibility, not extended adolescence.

<div align="right">Participant Erin</div>

1. In which state did you graduate high school? (or country if outside USA)

Ohio

2. In which state did you graduate college? (or country if outside USA)

Minnesota

3. In your survey, you state that you feel like an adult and that you have "changed significantly in the past 8-10 years." In your opinion, why is there so much variety in how people experience this transition? Some see themselves as an adult at an early age, while others don't until much later. In your words, why do some people experience extended adolescence?

I think that some people experience extended adolescence because they have not moved into their own lives (as opposed to staying enmeshed in their family's lives and circumstances). Personally, I moved away from my family and was able to establish myself as an adult. The causes of extended adolescence is not moving on.

4. On Question 15, you answered the following question.

15. In high school, think about your relationships with teachers and administrators. This could be either inside or outside of class. On a scale of 1-10 (with 1 being the lowest, and 10 being the highest), how strongly did they encourage you to be:
Independent 6
Productive 9
Relationship-savvy 2
Adult-like 9
A good communicator 3
Financially adept

149

Your school showed higher marks for encouraging productivity, and adult-like traits. What are the principal reasons you think these marks are higher? Was there something that maybe your school did differently?

I think that the marks are higher because of my individual situation. I often experienced social services trying to protect me and my sibling. Therefore, I think that the teachers and administration took special notice of me to assist. I had tough family circumstances. I was an overweight child who was often the brunt of jokes. I do not think that my school did anything differently.

5. On the flip side, your school showed the lowest marks for encouraging relationships, communication and financial abilities. In your opinion, do you feel placing a stronger emphasis on relationships, communication and finances (in addition to the other areas) would improve a typical student's experience when transitioning to adulthood? Would it potentially reduce extended adolescence?

I think that placing a stronger emphasis on relationships, communication and finances would improve the student's experience and reduce extended adolescence.

Participant Wesley

1. In which state did you graduate high school? (or country if outside USA)

   Michigan

2. In which state did you graduate college? (or country if outside USA)

   Minnesota

3. In your survey, you state that you feel like an adult and that you "have learned to make decisions for myself and take more responsibility for my actions." In your opinion, why is there so much variety in how people experience this transition? Some see themselves as an adult at an early age, while others don't until much later. In your words, why do some people experience extended adolescence?

I think people experience extended adolescence in large part because our culture has made it easier for students to stay home. As students stay home they are more likely to rely on their parents for things. Also, for some reason some teenagers are doing things later like getting a drivers license etc. As these rights of passage come later and later, adolescence will get longer and longer.

4. On Question 15, you answered the following question.

150

15. In high school, think about your relationships with teachers and administrators. This could be either inside or outside of class. On a scale of 1-10 (with 1 being the lowest, and 10 being the highest), how strongly did they encourage you to be:	
Independent 5	
Productive 8	
Relationship-savvy 5	
Adult-like 5	
A good communicator 7	
Financially adept 3	

Your school showed higher marks for encouraging productivity and communication. What are the principal reasons you think these marks are higher? Was there something that maybe your school did differently?

I had very strong English teachers that stressed good communication, writing, productivity and attention to detail. I found myself in college prep courses so I may have had a different experience from those who may have been in lower classes. In fact, I know I had a different experience than others I knew who were in lower level classes. These same teachers stressed productivity and getting things done.

5. On the flip side, your school showed lower marks for encouraging financial abilities. In your opinion, do you feel placing a stronger emphasis on finances (in addition to the other areas) would improve a typical student's experience when transitioning to adulthood? Would it potentially reduce extended adolescence?

I do think it would improve a student's experience in transitioning into adulthood. It would prepare them to think and be fiscally responsible. This would help with their independence. I also think it would reduce extended adolescence in that these students would have the skills to be financially independent and not rely solely on their parents. This would probably help with students leaving the house earlier.

A long time focus of mine has been to look at individual development within contexts. In my application statement before coming to Mason, I wrote: "During my undergraduate studies, I began to take an interest in post-secondary individuals and the transformations they experienced …. I studied current social and academic changes students experience and investigated the extent to which these serve as catalysts for future adult behavior/success. There were so many influences surrounding college students, both in the classroom and out, and there seemed to be a wide variety of responses to these influences, some positive and some negative, and most at a time when parental involvement was suddenly absent. It revealed the tremendous potential of a college classroom and the leadership of professors and university officials who are in prime position to shape."

My desire has always been to understand human individuals, understand how they develop, understand how they find their purpose, how they accept or reject their own uniqueness. Relationships, community, and environment are major components of that understanding. It's one reason I initially thought about studying social or cultural psychology. I saw in it the potential of understanding theories in real world situations, of constructs in action. There are so few behaviors that aren't dependent upon cultural, familial, and interest-group related expectations that it's hard to imagine a world without them.

One of my disappointments with modern research is the comfort level that some have when explaining vastly complex and intricate behaviors through small quantitative lenses, seeking to find a solitary "code" or structure which defines behavior across all domains. It's inefficient to simply look at one human attribute and claim that, disconnected from other attributes, manipulating its end will lead to success. In his writings, William James agreed:

"Man is too complex a being for light to be thrown on his real efficiency by measuring any one mental faculty taken apart from its consensus in the working whole … No elementary measurement, capable of being performed in a laboratory, can throw any light on the actual efficiency of the subject; for the vital thing about him, his emotional and moral energy and doggedness can be measured by no single experiment, and becomes known only by the total results in the long run.... The total impression which a perceptive teacher will get of the pupil's condition, as indicated by his general temper and manner, by the listlessness or alertness, by the ease or painfulness with which his school work is done, will be of much more value than those unreal experimental tests, those pedantic elementary measurements of fatigue, memory, association, and attention, etc., which are urged upon us as the only basis of a genuinely scientific pedagogy. Such measurements can give us useful information only when we combine them

152

with observations made without brass instruments, upon the total demeanor of the measured individual, by teachers with eyes in their heads and common sense, and some feeling for the concrete facts of human nature in their hearts." (Berliner, 2006, p. 10).

Human beings are so deep, so rich and complex, and they exist in an interwoven web of decisions and mutual affections, few of which are able to be adequately summarized by a number. Yet in education, where so much personal development takes place, they are assigned a number, thousands of numbers over multiple decades. What do these numbers tell them? What do they mean? Do they really lead a person to "scientifically" lead a better, more successful life? And by what measure is that success judged?

These are some of the questions I find interesting in the joint fields of educational psychology and human development. It's about finding that personal stamp of uniqueness in each life and releasing it to fulfill what it was meant to accomplish. No simple program to improve the competitive landscape of test scores will be sufficient. No one-size-fits-all rehearsal of facts will be complete. As Dewey said about developing programs at his school:

"Most important were the urgent needs, impulses, and habits that each child possessed. It was when the teacher found these and created an environment to free these qualities that the greatest and most meaningful learning took place. Dewey, therefore, believed in a personal and idiosyncratic curriculum for each child …. Dewey, the pedagogue, was against imparting mere knowledge, which he believed was either wrong or would soon be outdated. He was against rote learning and approaches that used drill and practice. He was for what we would call today the development of thinking skills, and against the attainment of decontextualized, inert forms of knowledge. In the fullest functionalist tradition he said that knowledge was a tool, not an end in itself" (Berliner, 2006, p. 13).

This is my hope, that we would use institutions and methods of learning to empower people with tools, to enable them to develop and grow in unique passions. This encompasses academic life only as much as the individual is truly passionate about academics. In truth, it encompasses everything about the person: their family, career, sacrifices, and legacy. Schools should further these ideals, not simply exist in proximity to them.

My goals still involve drawing connections between various domains of research (counseling/cognitive/social psych, marriage and family studies, educational research (especially higher ed.), human development, etc.), as they relate to an individual's ability to make decisions and subjectively "grow" within a context. The more connections that are drawn (especially when looking at the narrow lenses of policy), the more I'll be able to add to the field.

For things I still need to learn …. I still need to learn research methodologies that can investigate broader concepts which both have statistical significance and clear specificity. How do you test these connections, and what implications will they have for future educational practice?

APPENDIX I. EDUCATIONAL PSYCHOLOGY PROGRAM AT GEORGE MASON UNIVERSITY

EDUCATIONAL PSYCHOLOGY, MS

CONCENTRATION IN LEARNING, COGNITION & MOTIVATION

The Educational Psychology program offers a Master of Science degree in Educational Psychology. The program is designed to offer professionals and students the opportunity to: (a) apply principles of learning, cognition and motivation to vital problems in the area of education; (b) develop a solid understanding of research, assessment, and evaluation methodologies; and (c) develop an analytical and scholarly approach to critically assessing theoretical perspectives, research, and practice within and across content domains. By creating a supportive and collegial environment with faculty from numerous educational disciplines and expertise, prospective students are expected to develop skills to meet the needs of diverse populations and design and implement effective educational programs appropriate for a broad range of cultural contexts.

The Program offers three concentrations: (1) Learning, Cognition, and Motivation; (2) Assessment, Evaluation, and Testing; and (3) Teacher Preparation. The program prepares educational leaders:

- to conduct basic and applied research and program evaluation in government agencies and private and public educational and organizational settings;
- to provide classroom instruction, instructional support and/or supervision to K-12 schools or community colleges;
- to engage in curriculum and educational program development and policy development;
- to serve as consultants in business and industry settings; and
- to enroll in doctoral-level programs in educational psychology.

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