

# From Emerging Adulthood to Established Adulthood: A new Theory of Development from Ages 30 to 45

**Clare M. Mehta, PhD**

**Jeffrey Jensen Arnett, PhD**



# Outline

- Conceptualizing established adulthood
- Distinguishing established adulthood
- Connecting the lifespan
- Oh, the places you'll go!



# **CONCEPTUALIZING ESTABLISHED ADULTHOOD**

# The Missing Piece



# Conceptualizing Established Adulthood

- Most intense, demanding, and rewarding years of adult life
- The Crunch



# Conceptualizing Established Adulthood

- May influence the direction of a person's adult life
- Implications for policy, intervention, and support



# **DISTINGUISHING ESTABLISHED ADULTHOOD**

# Distinct Developmental Tasks

	Emerging Adulthood	Established Adulthood	Midlife
Romantic Relationships	Transient into long term	Long term into committed Divorce/Separation - 2nd Relationship	Long term committed
Career	Information gathering Job changes Exploration	Committing to field Building expertise Responsibility Stability	Seniority Acquired expertise Mentoring next generation
Family	Unmarried Child free Parental support	Married Planning /first child Aging parents	Married for some time Older children/support Adjusting to loss of parents



# Distinct Developmental Experience

	Emerging Adulthood	Established Adulthood	Midlife
Physical Development	Risky behaviors Unhealthy eating Unstable sleep High energy Strong immunity	Few risky behaviors Healthy eating Disrupted sleep Waning energy Declines in metabolism	Higher risk of heart disease and cancer Higher risk of obesity
Cognitive Development	Acquiring knowledge High fluid intelligence Problem solving	Narrowing knowledge Developing expertise Problem finding	Deep knowledge Expertise Problem anticipation Wisdom
Social Development	Lower positive affect More friends Leisure time Identity exploration	Rise in positive affect Reduced friendships Reduced leisure time Rise in identity stability	Higher positive affect Few, close friends Rise in leisure time Identity stability

The diagram illustrates two trends across the developmental stages:

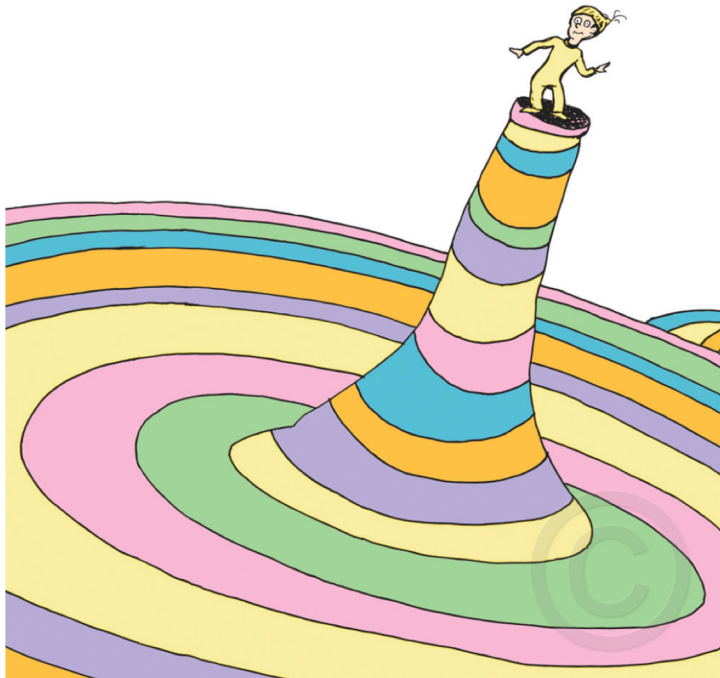
- Processing speed:** Represented by a blue line that slopes downward from Emerging Adulthood to Midlife, indicating a decline in speed.
- Crystallized Intelligence:** Represented by a blue line that slopes upward from Emerging Adulthood to Midlife, indicating an increase in knowledge and expertise.

# **CONNECTING THE LIFESPAN**

# Connecting the Lifespan

- Continuation of developmental processes
- Flourishing and floundering in emerging adulthood has implications for adulthood
  - Positive events/choices during emerging adulthood: *Thriving and arriving*
  - Negative events/choices during emerging adulthood: *Regret and renovation*





**OH, THE PLACES (WE'LL) GO!**

# Ideas for Future Research

- Measure of any good theory is the research it inspires
  - Quantitative and qualitative projects
  - National, cultural, racial/ethnic, and social class differences
  - Longitudinal research
  - Time horizons and decision making
  - Friendships





## Conclusion

- Sketch of a theory
- Promote new developmental research
- Evolution of economy, families, gender roles

# Thank you!

Welcome opportunities to collaborate

Email: [mehtac@emmanuel.edu](mailto:mehtac@emmanuel.edu)

