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The Implications of Adult Identity for Educational and Work Attainment in Young Adulthood

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Abstract

This study investigates the relation of young adult identities (ages 18-22), reflecting subjective age and psychosocial maturity, to educational and career attainment in young adulthood (ages 25-29). Add Health data show that having an older subjective age alone does not curtail attainment; the critical issue is the level of psychosocial maturity that accompanies subjective age. Those with older subjective ages and low psychosocial maturation have the lowest attainment at ages 25-29 while those with older subjective ages and high psychosocial maturation show considerable progress toward work-related attainment. For those with younger subjective ages, a lower level of psychosocial maturity is not as detrimental to attainment.

Keywords

transition to adulthood; identity; attainment; career; life course

The changing landscape of the young adult transition presents many challenges for attainment and career development. Youth today face more uncertain and unstable labor market conditions than did older generations, and a college degree is increasingly important in establishing a successful career (Kerckhoff, 2003). Research has identified pathways between family socioeconomic context in adolescence, school-work experiences, and subsequent attainment in the young adult years (Mortimer et al., 2008). Our understanding of how key social psychological factors, such as identity and self-perceptions, relate to these pathways and shape attainment is less developed, however.

Self-perceptions are the ways by which young people make sense of themselves and situations. They are fundamental to the exercise of agency, and thus play an important role in how early developmental experiences influence subsequent attainment (Shanahan and Macmillan, 2008; Mortimer, 1996). In recent years, scholars have turned their attention to how the deinstitutionalization of the transition to adulthood has influenced perceptions of aging and oneself as an adult. Studies have linked contexts of economic deprivation, the timing of adult role entry, and the assumption of adult-like responsibilities with accelerated subjective aging, and in some cases early “adultification” (Johnson & Mollborn, 2009; Johnson et al., 2007; Burton, 2007). Perceiving oneself as older and more like an adult than same-aged peers may motivate behaviors consistent with attainment such as establishing financial independence, but embracing adulthood too early may curtail key explorations and investments, and bring about responsibilities that young people may not be prepared to handle.

We contend that the impact of subjective age on subsequent attainment depends on one's level of psychosocial maturation. Psychosocial maturity may serve as a protective factor, limiting the potential deleterious effects of growing up fast (Greenberger & Steinberg, 1986). Moreover, psychological capacities, particularly those associated with adaptation, are important for traversing the school-to-work transition in the contemporary context of weak institutional and social support (Mortimer, 1996; Schwartz, Cote, & Arnett, 2005). In this study, we examine how the interplay of subjective age and psychosocial development at age 18-22 influences status attainment and a successful transition to a career at age 25-29.

A Developmental Model of Young Adult Identity

We draw upon a holistic, developmental model of adult identity we developed earlier that views subjective age and psychosocial maturation together (Benson & Elder, 2011). This model enables us to examine the within-person heterogeneity of these developmental processes and their implications for subsequent attainment (Magnusson & Cairns, 1996). Consistent with previous research (Johnson et al., 2007), we conceptualize subjective age as how individuals perceive their own aging and maturation process in comparison with same-age peers and their identification with certain age groups. We expect subjective age to shape status attainment and career development because individuals tend to choose behaviors consistent with their internalized sense of self, including their age identity (George, Mutran, and Pennybacker, 1980; Neugarten & Hagestad, 1976). For example, those who perceive themselves as an adult will be more likely to take steps toward financial and residential independence, including anticipating and committing to the responsibilities that go along with these roles. It is also true, however, that taking on adult-like responsibilities and roles fosters self-perceptions of oneself as adult (Johnson & Mollborn, 2009; Galambos et al., 2009).

Following Greenberger's (1984) model, we conceptualize psychosocial maturity as autonomy (i.e. independence, self-reliance, and the ability to set and meet goals) and social responsibility (i.e. contributing to the well-being of society and tolerating differences in others). These traits provide youth with resources important for the school-to-work transition, such as self-reliance, responsible autonomy, and adaptive potential (Greenberger and Steinberg, 1986; Elder, 1999). We expect youth with high levels of psychosocial maturity to be better equipped to navigate life pathways, formulate plans, manage responsibilities, and make decisions with attainment implications.

According to this developmental model, young adult identities can be represented with four profile types (Benson & Elder, 2011). *Early* adults have older subjective ages and relatively high levels of psychosocial maturation. *Pseudo-adults* also have older subjective ages but low levels of psychosocial maturation. Both *anticipatory* and *late* adults have relatively young subjective ages, but anticipatory adults have relatively higher, and late adults have relatively lower, psychosocial maturity. The earlier study empirically documented these profiles and examined familial factors and adolescent experiences as precursors to them. We build directly on this past work, investigating their attainment-related consequences.

We expect pseudo adults to have the lowest attainment in young adulthood, as their older subjective age will motivate adult behavior, but their lower psychosocial maturity will leave them less equipped to make the best long-term decisions and to manage the responsibilities that come with their movement into adulthood. In contrast, early adults, who share an older subjective age with pseudo adults, will fare better. Because an older subjective age is linked cross-sectionally with being out of school and working full-time (Johnson et al., 2007), early adults may not achieve high levels of education, but their greater psychosocial maturity is

likely to promote work-related attainment, with higher earnings and movement into career jobs.

For the two profiles that share a younger subjective age, anticipatory and late adults, we expect they will have lower work-related attainment in young adulthood than early adults. Their younger subjective ages are tied to investments in education rather than full-time work (Johnson et al., 2007), and they can be expected to have achieved higher education levels in young adulthood. However, their different levels of psychosocial maturity should distinguish between them. We expect anticipatory adults, who possess higher levels of psychosocial maturity, will have more successfully planned and implemented their transition from school-to-work, resulting in more work-related attainment than late adults.

Identity and the School-to-Work Transition

As noted above, the adult identity profiles should be related to status attainment and career development in part (but not solely) due to their connections to the school-to-work pathways of youth. It is likely that subjective aging and psychosocial maturation are dynamically related to decisions about school and work investments over time. Scholars have argued, for example, that more intensive paid work in adolescence may stem from “precocious development” (Newcomb & Bentler, 1988). In this study, we are not able to disentangle the interrelationship between adult identity profiles and school-to-work pathways since the profiles are only measured once (ages 18-22). We control school and work indicators from adolescence (ages 12-16) in order to assess whether subsequent adult identity profiles have ongoing effects on status attainment.

How to address contemporaneous educational and employment statuses is less clear, given the unknown causal order. Although their connection to adult identity profiles is not yet known, research shows contemporaneous school and work statuses are linked to subjective age in the early twenties. Those out of school and working more often perceive themselves as adults (Johnson et al., 2007). Adult identity profiles at ages 18-22 may reflect the school-to-work pathways in which these current statuses are embedded and vice versa. As such, we estimate models with and without the contemporaneous indicators of educational and employment statuses in order to document the extent to which the effects of the adult identity profiles are tied to the school and work pathways young people take. Because we theorize the identity profiles affect status attainment in ways that extend beyond decisions to attend school and work, we expect that they will continue to have significant effects.

Data and Methods

Source of Data

Add Health is a longitudinal, nationally representative survey of 20,745 7th-12th grade students (Bearman, Jones, & Udry, 1997). Four waves of in-home survey data were collected in 1995 (Wave I), 1996 (Wave II), 2000-2001 (Wave III), and 2007-2008 (Wave IV). Because we build on and use key measures from an earlier study (Benson & Elder, 2011), we follow the same sample selection process. The analytic sample includes respondents who were interviewed in Waves I, III, & IV ($n=13,034$), who were between the ages of 12 and 16 in Wave I ($n=7,758$), had a valid sampling weight ($n=7,232$), and had complete data on the dependent variables ($n=7,107$ except for earnings where $n=6,788$).

We imputed missing data on the independent variables using the “ICE” procedures in Stata (Royston, 2005), averaging empirical results across 20 imputation samples. The findings presented here are similar to those from analyses using listwise deletion of missing data and

mean replacement. We weighted all analyses and use survey analysis techniques to adjust for the complex sample design (see Chantala & Tabor, 1999).

Attainment, Ages 25-29

We measure objective and subjective attainment in young adulthood at Wave IV (ages 25-29), including educational attainment, annual income, perceived attainment and career state. Educational attainment is based on self-reports of highest level of education received. This variable is coded from 1-11, with “1” indicating 8th grade or less and “11” indicating a doctoral or professional degree. We use the natural log of self-report annual income in the year prior to the interview to measure earnings.

Because educational and occupational attainments are loosely correlated in the early life course (House & Harkins, 1975), we also consider two subjective indicators. These measures provide a broader sense of achievement and career development at this point in the life course. Subjective attainment is measured using a question based on the MacArthur Scale of Subjective Social Status (Adler et al., 1999); it asks respondents to rank themselves in comparison to other Americans in terms of having the most money, most education, and the most respected jobs, with “1” indicating lowest level and “10” the highest level. Working a career job is measured by a dichotomous item that distinguishes between those working in jobs they say are related to or are in preparation for their long-term career goals and those who say it is not related or that they do not hold long-term career goals. While career jobs can vary in quality, they reflect people’s evaluations of a job’s long-term potential (Mortimer et al., 2008).

Adult Identity Profiles, Ages 18-22

We replicate the four adult identity profiles developed in the earlier study using the same indicators and methodological technique (see Benson & Elder, 2011 for a full description). The indicators of subjective age include perceived age, acquisition pace of social maturity, acquisition pace of adult responsibilities, and perceived adult status. Perceived age is based on a question that asks “How old do you feel compared with others your age? (0=younger all of the time to 4= older all of the time). For social maturity and taking on adult responsibilities, respondents were asked to rate how fast they grew up in regard to their same aged peers: faster, at about the same rate, or slower. Finally, perceived adult status is based on a question asking respondents, “How often do you think of yourself as an adult?” (0=Never to 4=all of the time). The indicators of psychosocial maturation include independence, confidence, and consideratenessⁱⁱ in young adulthood. Each item is based on self-reports of how well each trait describes the participant (1=not at all to 4=very).

We reproduced the four identity profiles by first standardizing each of these seven indicators. Second, we used K-means clustering in STATA, a nonhierarchical partition clustering method that assigned observations to the appropriate cluster through an iterative procedure using z scores on the seven subjective age and psychosocial maturation items.

School and Work Statuses

We measure academic achievement, college importance, and work status in Wave 1 (ages 12-16). Academic achievement is based on the average of self-reported grades across four subjects: language arts, social studies, science, and mathematics. College importance is based on the questions that ask respondents how disappointed they would be if they did not graduate from college (1= low and 5=high). Informed by earlier research (National Research Council, 1998), adolescent work is based on reports of the number of hours worked during

the school year and includes three categories: not employed, part-time work (less than 20 hours per week), and intensive work (>20 hours per week).

We combined self-reports of education and work statuses at ages 18-22 (Wave III) into four categories: employed students, students only, employed only, and neither a student nor employed. We also include a dummy variable for educational status coded “1” for enrollment or graduation from a four-year college, otherwise “0”. This variable predominantly captures enrollment in a four-year college. Only five percent of the sample had received a four-year degree by Wave III.

Control Variables

We control for a host of background characteristics measured at Wave 1. Parent educational attainment is measured by the highest of mothers’ and fathers’ educational attainments (1=completed 8th grade or less; 8=graduate or professional training). When only one parent’s educational attainment was available, it served as the final value, and when neither was available, we used students’ reports. Family income is measured using the natural log of parents’ self-reported earnings. Family structure is a dichotomous measure coded “1” for two biological parents, otherwise “0”. Race-ethnicity is measured by self-report and includes five categories: Hispanic American, non-Hispanic white, non-Hispanic black, Asian American, and other. Gender is a dichotomous variable coded “1” for male and “0” for female. Chronological age is measured in years at Wave 4.

We also control for adolescent developmental characteristics that were associated with adult profiles in the previous study (Benson & Elder, 2011) if they also had effects on the outcomes in this study. Only self-esteem met that criterion. Self-esteem is indexed by six positively worded questions: (1) “You have a lot of good qualities”; (2) You have a lot to be proud of”; (3) “You like yourself just the way you are”; (4) “You feel like you are doing everything right”; (5) “You feel socially accepted”; and (6) “You feel loved and wanted.” Items one and two are taken from Rosenberg’s Self-Esteem scale (Rosenberg, 1989); the other items are similar to those in Rosenberg’s scale. Each item was rated from “strongly disagree” (1) to “strongly agree” (5) (Cronbach’s alpha = 0.84). Descriptive statistics on all study measures are presented in Table 1.

Results

The bivariate associations in Table 2 show that attainment at ages 25-29 is linked to young adult identity profiles at ages 18-22. By their mid-to-late twenties, late adults, those with younger subjective ages and lower psychosocial maturity, have attained the highest level of education. While late adults were investing in education, early adults, those with older subjective ages and higher psychosocial maturity, and anticipatory adults, those with younger subjective ages but higher psychosocial maturity, made the most progress toward developing a careerⁱⁱⁱ. Pseudo adults, those with older subjective ages but lower psychosocial maturity, have not excelled in either education or work. They are less likely than early and anticipatory young adults to be in a job they consider a career. They have lower annual earnings compared to early adults, and they report lower levels of perceived attainment than all other profile types.

In Tables 3 and 4 we present two multivariate models for each of the four measures of attainment. The baseline model includes the adult identity profiles and controls, and the second model introduces the school and work roles measured contemporaneously with the profiles. The pseudo-adult profile is the reference group in all models, though we also test differences between identity profile coefficients in each model and note when these contrasts are statistically significant.

As shown in Table 3, the late adult profile is associated with higher levels of educational attainment compared to the pseudo-adult profile in model 1. Adjusted Wald tests indicate their attainment is higher than the anticipatory and early adult profiles' as well ($F < 0.05$). These differences are completely explained in model 2 by educational and work patterns at ages 18-22, indicating that the adult identity profiles are tied in with ongoing work and educational investments. Attending college, regardless of work status^{iv}, is associated with higher levels of education compared to working or idle statuses, and attendance at a four-year college is particularly advantageous for this outcome. Whether late adults are more likely to pursue higher education or whether their student status shapes their adult age identity is not discernable with these data.

While late adults attain the most education, early adults report higher earnings at ages 25-29. Table 3 shows that early adults out-earn pseudo adults, and adjusted Wald tests between coefficients indicate that these young people also earn more than those with anticipatory and late adult profiles. These differences remain robust across the two models.

Table 4 presents models relating identity profiles to subjective attainment and career status. Pseudo adults report lower subjective attainment and are less likely to hold career-type jobs than anticipatory and early adults. Adjusted Wald tests between coefficients indicate that late adults also have lower subjective attainment and are less likely to have a job they considered a career than anticipatory and early adults ($F < 0.05$). Patterns of work and school at ages 18-22 did not attenuate these differences for either outcome.

For the three work outcomes, in which the profiles show statistically significant effects in Model 2, we also estimated models in which we controlled Wave IV measures of educational attainment^v and employment status^{vi} (not shown). This did not alter the pattern of differences between the identity profiles, nor did the introduction of controls for family roles.^{vii} It is also important to note that the magnitude of the significant adult identity coefficients in each of these models is larger than family structure, a variable widely considered to have a strong relationship with attainment.

Discussion

Young adults today acquire adult-like conceptions of self at different rates. The important developmental question is whether an early definition of self as an adult is coupled with the maturity that enables planning well and adapting effectively to the new situations, such as the role of worker. Four types of young adult identity profiles have emerged in research that relate claims of adult status and maturity—early and late, the concordant types; and the discordant types, pseudo (adult self-definition not matched by maturity) and anticipatory (more mature but sees self as younger). Our findings show that the implications of subjective age for educational and work attainment are conditioned by an individual's ability to cope and adapt to the multiple challenges associated with the school-to-work transition, particularly for those with older subjective ages.

While both claim older subjective ages, early adults' higher levels of psychosocial maturity equip them to be more successful than pseudo adults. Early adults do not obtain the education levels of late adults, but otherwise they do relatively well with respect to attainment during the transition to adulthood. They earn more, have higher subjective attainment, and possess higher rates of employment in career jobs than both late and pseudo adults.

Pseudo adults, on the other hand, exhibit the lowest levels of attainment compared to all other profile types. Lacking the same psychosocial resources, young people with pseudo adult identities are not as able as early adults to make plans and choices associated with a

successful school-to-work transition. Although pseudomaturity tends to be associated with poorer adjustment on a range of indicators in adolescence, including lower levels of academic achievement and engagement, low self-esteem, and delinquency (Newcomb & Bentler, 1988; Galambos et al., 1999), the attainment differences between pseudo and early adults remained robust after controlling for these factors, suggesting that having a pseudo-adult identity at ages 18-22 is associated with school and work decisions beyond these factors.

While psychosocial maturity is particularly important among those who are on a faster track to self-defined adulthood, it is less consequential for those who exhibited younger subjective ages. Maintaining a younger identity and taking a “slower path to adulthood” may facilitate attainment by allowing for key developmental investments and the accumulation of experience that will serve young people well (Settersten & Ray, 2010). Both late and anticipatory young adults show considerable attainment by ages 25-29. Late adults, those with younger subjective ages and relatively lower psychosocial maturity, achieve the highest levels of education in young adulthood of any identity profile. They have lower incomes compared to early adults and lower subjective attainment and career-like work than both early and anticipatory adults, but this most likely reflects a delay in establishing their career rather than lower lifetime levels of attainment (House & Harkins, 1975). As the most educated group, they will eventually hold jobs within their career plans and out-earn their peers. Anticipatory adults, those with younger subjective ages but greater psychosocial maturity, completed fewer years of postsecondary education, compared to late adults, but they began their pathway to a career somewhat earlier, and reported higher levels of subjective attainment.

Scholars and policymakers are rightfully concerned about the downward extension of adulthood and the negative effects of growing up too quickly (Elder, 1999; Burton, 2007), but the results of this study show that this developmental pattern is most problematic for those with low psychosocial maturity. In our earlier work, high self-esteem, parent-child relationships, and household responsibilities differentiated these two profile types (Benson & Elder, 2011), but these factors did not account for the attainment differences between early and pseudo adults in this study. To prepare youth for the transition to work, future research should identify additional factors associated with pseudo-maturity in the young adult years and how youths with different identity profiles plan for and experience the school-to-work transition.

As with all research, the present study has a number of limitations that suggest directions for future research. We relied exclusively on self-reports of attainment, subjective age, and psychosocial maturity. In addition, Add Health does not include measures that speak more to underlying processes in navigating the transition from school to work. Finally, we were not able to pinpoint causal processes between school and work investments and the adult identity profiles because adult identity is only measured at one point in time. For our three work-related measures of attainment, the adult identity profiles were significant predictors even controlling these statuses measured concurrently (though contrasts between specific profiles weakened somewhat); for educational attainment, however, late adults no longer significantly differed from the other profiles with these status controlled. While unable to document any dynamic processes that may underlie these relationships, the findings of this study affirm that school-to-work pathways are indeed associated with the combined developmental processes captured by the adult identity profiles. This provides a solid rationale for further pursuits to understand how adult identity and these pathways play out over time.

The current study considered one important source of adaptation and resiliency, but future work should examine additional sources, such as social capital acquired through peer and mentor relationships. Future research needs to examine how these perceptions of development are linked to other life outcomes, such as family formation, health, and well-being in the young adult years and beyond.

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Table 1

Description and Summary Statistics (weighted) of Study Measures (n=7107)

Variable	Range	Prop / Mean
Young Adulthood Attainment Outcomes (25-29)		
Educational Attainment	1-11	5.58
Log Annual Earnings (n=6788)	0-13.73	9.49
Perceived Economic Success	1-10	4.92
Career Status	0,1	0.64
Adult Identity Profile Types (18-22)		
Late Adult	0,1	0.19
Anticipatory Adult	0,1	0.22
Pseudo-adult	0,1	0.28
Early Adult	0,1	0.31
School and Work (12-16)		
Not employed	0,1	0.39
Part-time work (less than 20 hrs/week)	0,1	0.36
Intensive work (>20hrs/week)	0,1	0.25
College importance	1-5	4.19
Grade Point Average	1-4	3.02
School and Work (18-22)		
Idle	0,1	0.13
Student only	0,1	0.14
Work only	0,1	0.41
Student and worker	0,1	0.32
Enrolled in 4-year College	0,1	0.34
Control Variables		
Male	0,1	0.48
Race/ethnicity		
Non-Hispanic White	0,1	0.70
African American	0,1	0.14
Latino	0,1	0.11
Asian	0,1	0.03
Other race	0,1	0.02
Family income (log)	0-6.91	3.48
Parent Education	1-8	5.35
Two biological parent family	0,1	0.58
Age at Wave 4	25-29	27.14
Self-esteem	1-5	3.13

Source: National Longitudinal Study of Adolescent Health

Table 2

Young Adult Attainment by Adult Profile Type (N=7107)

	Late	Anticipatory	Pseudo	Early
Young Adult Attainment				
Educational Attainment	6.02 ^{bcd}	5.60 ^a	5.41 ^a	5.45 ^a
Log Annual Earnings	9.57	9.45	9.30 ^d	9.62 ^c
Perceived Attainment	4.95 ^c	5.03 ^c	4.67 ^{abd}	5.06 ^c
Career Status	0.62 ^b	0.68 ^{ac}	0.60 ^{bd}	0.66 ^c

Source: National Longitudinal Study of Adolescent Health

Note: Means significantly different ($p < .05$) from^a Late^b Anticipatory Adult^c Pseudo-Adult^d Early.

Table 3

Ordinary Least Squares Regression Models of Educational Attainment (n=7,107) and Earnings (n=6,788) at Wave 4

	Educational Attainment		Educational Attainment		Earnings		Earnings	
	<i>B</i>	Model 1 <i>SE</i>	<i>B</i>	Model 2 <i>SE</i>	<i>B</i>	Model 1 <i>SE</i>	<i>B</i>	Model 2 <i>SE</i>
Adult Identity Profile Types (18-22)								
Late Adult	0.27	0.08 **	0.05	0.08	0.06	0.14	-0.01	0.13
Anticipatory Adult	0.06	0.09	-0.02	0.08	0.01	0.13	-0.03	0.13
Early Adult	0.07	0.07	0.07	0.07	0.29	0.12 *	0.25	0.12 *
Pseudo-adult (Omitted Category)								
School and Work (12-16)								
Not employed (omitted category)								
Part-time work (less than 20 hrs/week)	0.03	0.08	-0.03	0.06	0.10	0.13	0.06	0.12
Intensive work (>20hrs/week)	-0.15	0.08 +	-0.10	0.06	0.43	0.10 ***	0.39	0.10 ***
College importance	0.39	0.03 ***	0.23	0.03 ***	0.12	0.05 *	0.05	0.05
Grade Point Average	0.59	0.05 ***	0.29	0.04 ***	0.09	0.07	-0.01	0.07
School and Work (18-22)								
Idle			-1.32	0.10 ***			-1.34	0.17 ***
Student only			-0.08	0.07			-0.46	0.12 ***
Work only			-0.96	0.08 ***			-0.06	0.11
Student and worker (omitted category)								
Enrolled in 4-year College			1.32	0.07 ***			0.62	0.10 ***
Control Variables								
Family income (log)	0.26	0.05 ***	0.11	0.04 **	0.25	0.08 **	0.17	0.08 *
Parent Education	0.28	0.02 ***	0.17	0.02 ***	0.07	0.03 *	0.03	0.03
Two biological parent family	0.27	0.06 ***	0.09	0.05	0.27	0.09 **	0.19	0.08 *
Male	-0.36	0.06 ***	-0.32	0.05 ***	0.87	0.10 ***	0.86	0.10 ***
Non-Hispanic White (omitted category)								
African American	0.08	0.11	0.00	0.08	-0.24	0.18	-0.13	0.16
Latino	0.13	0.09 *	0.09	0.08	0.40	0.18 *	0.39	0.17 *
Asian	0.29	0.20	0.13	0.13	0.15	0.20	0.11	0.21
Other	-0.18	0.21	-0.27	0.17	-0.22	0.35	-0.24	0.34
Age at Wave 4	0.07	0.03 ***	0.10	0.02 ***	0.01	0.04	-0.02	0.04
Self-esteem	0.06	0.05	0.03	0.05	0.01	0.07	-0.03	0.07
<i>R</i> ²	0.31		0.50		0.05		0.09	

Note:

+ p<.1

* p<.05

**
p<.01

p<.001

Table 4

Ordinary Least Squares Regression Models of Subjective Attainment and Logistic Regression Models of Career Status at Wave 4 (n=7107)

	Subjective Attainment			Subjective Attainment			Career Status			Career Status		
	Model 1	SE	B	Model 2	SE	B	Model 1	Ratio	SE	Model 2	Ratio	SE
Adult Identity Profile Types (18-22)												
Late Adult	0.12	0.08	0.05	0.08			-0.11	0.90	0.11	-0.20	0.82	0.12
Anticipatory Adult	0.23	0.08**	0.19	0.08*			0.21	1.23	0.11 ⁺	0.18	1.19	0.11
Early Adult	0.33	0.08***	0.33	0.08***			0.21	1.23	0.09*	0.21	1.23	0.10*
Pseudo-adult (Omitted Category)												
School and Work (12-16)												
Not employed (omitted category)												
Part-time work (less than 20 hrs/week)	0.16	0.07*	0.14	0.06*			0.03	1.03	0.08	0.00	1.00	0.08
Intensive work (>20hrs/week)	0.11	0.08	0.12	0.07			0.25	1.28	0.08**	0.25	1.29	0.08**
College importance	0.14	0.03***	0.08	0.03*			0.13	1.14	0.03***	0.07	1.07	0.03*
Grade Point Average	0.25	0.04***	0.14	0.04***			0.22	1.25	0.04***	0.11	1.11	0.04*
School and Work (18-22)												
Idle			-0.52	0.13***						-0.50	0.60	0.13***
Student only			-0.08	0.08						-0.16	0.85	0.11
Work only			-0.29	0.08***						-0.26	0.77	0.10**
Student and worker (omitted category)												
Enrolled in 4-year College			0.53	0.08***						0.66	1.94	0.11***
Control Variables												
Family income (log)	0.14	0.05**	0.09	0.05 ⁺			0.18	1.20	0.05**	0.12	1.13	0.05*
Parent Education	0.08	0.02***	0.04	0.02 ⁺			0.05	1.05	0.02*	0.01	1.01	0.02
Two biological parent family	0.23	0.05***	0.16	0.05**			0.22	1.25	0.07**	0.16	1.17	0.07*
Male	0.05	0.05	0.06	0.05			0.35	1.42	0.07***	0.38	1.46	0.08***
Non-Hispanic White (omitted category)												

	Subjective Attainment			Career Status		
	Model 1		Model 2	Model 1		Model 2
	<i>B</i>	<i>SE</i>	<i>B</i>	<i>B</i>	<i>SE</i>	<i>SE</i>
African American	−0.06	0.08	−0.09	0.08	0.08	0.08
Latino	0.15	0.09	0.14	0.09	0.09	0.09
Asian	0.22	0.15	0.17	0.13	0.22	0.23
Other	−0.45	0.18 *	−0.48	0.19 *	0.26	0.26
Age at Wave 4	0.10	0.03 **	0.10	0.03	0.03 *	0.03 *
Self-esteem	0.25	0.05 ***	0.23	0.05 ***	0.07 *	0.07 *
<i>R</i> ²	0.10		0.14			
<i>Log Likelihood</i>					−4416.13	
<i>Likelihood ratio chi-square</i>					417.36(17df)	
					−4317.50	
					614.61(21df)	

Note: Likelihood ratio chi-square test indicates that the overall fit significantly improved between M1 & M2.

[†] *p* < .1

* *p* < .05

** *p* < .01

*** *p* < .001

ⁱ Benson and Elder (2011) made this age restriction to capture variability in pubertal development.

ⁱⁱ Independence and confidence tap into autonomy and self-reliance while consideration taps into social responsibility.

ⁱⁱⁱ The mean difference in career status between “late” and “early” is significant at the 0.10 level (*p* = 0.08).

^{iv} Adjusted Wald tests between coefficients show differences between student and work only and idle statuses are statistically significant (*F* < 0.05).

^v Coded the same as our educational attainment dependent variable.

^{vi} Dichotomous indicators of full- and part-time employment (not employed as a reference).

^{vii} Dichotomous indicators of cohabitation, marriage, and parenthood status.