Title

[Author Name(s), First M. Last, Omit Titles and Degrees]

[Institutional Affiliation(s)]

Author Note

Title

Emerging adulthood is a phenomenon that has remained a prevalent subject in developmental research through the ages. The article being analyzed here studies the significance of college education in the transition to adulthood. Called “*Does College Matter for Emerging Adulthood? Comparing Developmental Trajectories of Educational Groups*,” the authors, Mitchell & Syed, (2015) as they studied different educational groups as they transitioned into adulthood. The basic goal of the research was to study and compare the developmental trajectories, comparing college educated youth to non-students and analyzing the quality of their life. It sought to see the field they worked in, their wages, their relationships and their financial independence, courtesy of having received quality college education.

The researchers employed the use of data from the Youth Development Study and used latent curve growth model to study a group’s development. The main trajectories used here were wages, use of government aid, financial dependence on spouses or/and parents, a number of hours worked, and a number of children to care for (as defined by Konstam, 2007). Thus, it could provide a clear picture of the problem faced by both college educated youth and the non-students as emerging adults. The primary analysis was carried out between three groups, i.e. college graduates, those that had some college experience and those that had no college experience. The sample population selected for the purpose of the study were high schools in 9th grade and their progress was tracked into their early 30s. Furthermore, 15 waves of data were collected, both personally and through email. The sampled population comprised of over a 1000 participants, which identified as White (63.3%), Black (8.6%), Southeast Asian (10.9%), Native American (5.3%), Latino (4.0%), Asian (0.8%), mixed race (5.3%) and other (5.7%). In terms of gender, 47.7% of the original sample were identified as male while among the remaining 49.6% were female. Further classifications included if the parents of the sample group had received basic high school education have they received and later completed a college education, did they get an associate’s degree, etc. They were further divided on the basis of where they worked and how much were they able to earn. Additionally, their financial independence was also brought into question, as well as their love life and their marital status.

The most interesting thing about this article is its approach. It studies the future prospects of non-students as emerging adults, while most studies tend to focus on college students or graduates (Hendry & Kloep, 2010; Waters, Carr, Kefalas, & Holdaway, 2011; Zorotovich, 2014). The way this study has been able to do that is by studying potential college goers in their adolescence, as 9th graders, and then keeping track of their progress over a period of time. Furthermore, it studies its subjects longitudinally, over a period of 15, which allows the study to keep track of its participants through various stages of life, as adolescents, emerging adults and later adults.

According to this study, a notable difference was found between those that never attended college, those that went to college and those that had some college experience. It showed that those with some college experience were able to grow in a continuous manner while those that never received any college education reached a plateau. The individuals also worked more hours in high school as compared to those that did go to college. They also started a family sooner and were able to also dependent on their spouses, although the employment rates were similar across all groups. This showed stark similarity with the book by Settersten & Ray (2010), with those college-bound individuals taking their sweet time to start a family and get their life in order and are able to lead a much more successful life than those that rush into things.

In conclusion, both studies show that no matter how old you get or what stage of life you are in, choosing to take your time before taking a step and not rushing into things because others around you are “doing it” is one way to ensure success and happiness in life.

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