THE QUARTERLIFE CRISIS:
SUPPORTING YOUNG ADULT MENTAL
HEALTH AND WELLBEING DURING
THE COLLEGE-TO-CAREER
TRANSITION

Transitions to Adulthood Center for Research (Transitions ACR)
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The 31st Annual Research & Policy Conference on Child, Adolescent, and Young
Adult Behavioral Health - Tampa, Florida
March 5, 2017
The mission of the Transitions to Adulthood Center for Research is to promote the full participation in socially valued roles of transition-age youth and young adults (ages 14-30) with serious mental health conditions. We use the tools of research and knowledge translation in partnership with this at risk population to achieve this mission.

Visit us at: http://www.umassmed.edu/TransitionsACR

The contents of this presentation were developed in collaboration with The Jed Foundation and a grant from Takeda Pharmaceuticals – Promoting Mental Health in the Transition from College to the Workplace.
Our Objective

Gain a better understanding of the challenges college graduates face, including challenges to their emotional and mental health, as they transition to the workforce.
Why is this work important?

- Research on this topic is rare
- Expanded focus to include those with and without diagnoses

- College-to-career transition occurs during an age associated with mental health concerns
  - Young Americans (18-33 years old) experience the most stress of any generation and admit they are not managing it well.\(^1\)
  - 50% of all lifetime cases of mental illness begin by age 14 and 75% by age 24.\(^2\)
  - The % of adults seriously considering suicide is highest (7.4%) between ages 18 to 25.\(^3\)
METHODS
Methods – National Survey

- National telephone survey – approx. 20 minutes long
- Informed by literature review
- Conducted by Harris Poll

Sought information related to:
- Specific challenges young adults experienced during the college-to-career transition
- Existing strategies to support young adults and their emotional health
Methods – National Survey

• 1,929 interviews across 3 groups (April-July 2017)
  • College seniors
  • Recent college graduates
  • Employers of recent graduates

• Respondents were selected from among those who have agreed to participate in Harris Poll surveys – limitation in representation
Examples of Questions

College Seniors
• How would you describe your senior year of college?
  • (lengthy list of adjectives to choose from)

Recent Graduates
• Rate level of agreement: “I had the support and resources I needed to help me deal with the transition out of college”
  • (multiple choices: strongly agree, somewhat agree, somewhat disagree, strongly disagree)

Employers
• How well do you feel your company trains new hires?
  • (multiple choices: not at all well, not very well, somewhat well, very well)
PARTICIPANT DEMOGRAPHICS
College seniors (n=421)

Eligibility Requirements:
- US resident
- Age 20-26
- Currently in their final year at a 2 or 4 year college in the U.S.
- Attend all/most classes in person

Respondent Demographics:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Gender</th>
<th></th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>55%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>45%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Transgender</td>
<td>1%</td>
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</tbody>
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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Race/Ethnicity</th>
<th></th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>White</td>
<td>54%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hispanic/Latino</td>
<td>19%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Black/African American</td>
<td>13%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Asian/Pacific Islander</td>
<td>8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other/declined to answer</td>
<td>6%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Recent college graduates (n=1,008)

Eligibility Requirements:

- US resident
- Age 19-27
- Graduated from a 2 or 4 year college between 2013 and 2016
- Currently employed or have been employed since graduation

Participant Demographics:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>43%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>57%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Transgender</td>
<td>1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Another gender not listed</td>
<td>1%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Race/Ethnicity</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>White</td>
<td>69%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hispanic</td>
<td>11%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Black/African American</td>
<td>8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Asian/Pacific Islander</td>
<td>7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other/declined to answer</td>
<td>5%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Mental Health Diagnoses

- Anxiety: 32% Seniors, 27% Recent Graduates
- Depression: 23% Seniors, 22% Recent Graduates
- Insomnia: 9% Seniors, 3% Recent Graduates
- ADHD: 8% Seniors, 6% Recent Graduates
- Self-harm: 6% Seniors, 3% Recent Graduates
- Disordered eating or eating disorders: 4% Seniors, 3% Recent Graduates
- Prescription or illegal drug abuse: 2% Seniors, 2% Recent Graduates
- Alcohol abuse: 2% Seniors, 2% Recent Graduates
- Borderline personality disorder: 2% Seniors, 1% Recent Graduates
- Bipolar disorder: 1% Seniors, 3% Recent Graduates
- Schizophrenia/psychosis: 1% Seniors, * Recent Graduates

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Employers (n=500)

Eligibility Requirements:
• US resident
• Age 18+
• Employed full or part time
• Manage at least 1 employee who graduated from a 2 or 4 year college and has been working for 0-4 years

Respondent Demographics:
• Mean age: 42 years old
• 56% Male, 44% Female
• 75% White, 12% Hispanic

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Industry</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Professional services, (e.g., legal, engineering)</td>
<td>21%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Service industries (e.g., retail, hospitality)</td>
<td>19%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Manufacturing</td>
<td>13%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Healthcare</td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Transportation, communications, utilities</td>
<td>7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Education</td>
<td>7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Agriculture, mining or construction</td>
<td>6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Some other type of business</td>
<td>16%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Findings: Emotional Wellbeing during the College-to-Career Transition
College seniors are ambitious and confident!

- The majority of seniors know what they want to do after graduation, and they are generally confident they will succeed.

- Almost 3 in 4 trust in their ability to make any big decisions related to their career.
Nearly all seniors stressed during final year

- Nearly 4 in 10 seniors describe their final year of college as **very** stressful.

- Over 70% of seniors report stress over how much is **unknown about the next few years**.
Young adults (college seniors and grads) feel pressure to succeed

“I feel pressure to succeed in the professional word.”

87% of young adults

I feel pressure from…

- Myself: 89%
- Others: 11%
Financial Stress of Young Adults

"I feel pressure to…"

- Be financially secure: 87.50%
- Maintain a successful image: 63.50%
- Be happy: 57.50%
- Other: 4.50%
- Decline to answer: 1.50%

Stress of Current Finances

- Very or somewhat stressful: 68%
- Not very or not at all stressful: 32%
Recent grads are relatively satisfied with their jobs

- Recent grads - relatively high level of satisfaction with most aspects of their job
  - relationship with their boss
  - workplace culture
  - job security
  - work-life balance

- Over 8 in 10 recent grads feel:
  - proud to tell people what they do
  - they are gaining valuable skills for the future
Expectation Gaps

• At the same time, >50% say their job right now does not match up with their long-term goals

“My current job is not what I expected to be doing post-graduation.”

“I have been frustrated by the lack of advancement in my first few years in the workplace.”

58% agree

46% agree
Recent grads wish they had more support with transition

“I had the support and resources I needed to help me deal with the transition out of college.”

“Agree, 67%”

“Disagree, 33%”

“I wish I had more help preparing to transition to the workforce after college.”

62% agree"
FINDINGS: PREPARATION FOR THE COLLEGE-TO-CAREER TRANSITION
Variety of Services Available at College, Though Not Many Young Adults Take Advantage

- Most common reasons for not utilizing services were:
  - Lack of time
  - Thinking one doesn’t need help
# Preparation for Transition out of College

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Action Taken</th>
<th>Young Adults</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Talked with my family</td>
<td>66%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Talked with peers and/or friends</td>
<td>62.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Talked with my professors and/or professional mentors</td>
<td>48%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>...</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>10. Talked with a mental health professional</td>
<td>15%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Preparation for College Graduation (among those with a diagnosed mental health condition)

- Set up a plan for continuing care: 29%
- Planned for a work environment that is supportive of my health needs: 22%
- Planned for a career path that is conducive to my health needs: 19%
- Planned how to disclose my mental health condition to future employers: 10%
- None of these: 37.50%
## Perceived Top Job Concerns of Young Adults

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Seniors</th>
<th>Recent Grads</th>
<th>Employers</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.</td>
<td>Making Enough Money</td>
<td>Making Enough Money</td>
<td>Time Management</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>$ 71% (27%)</td>
<td>$ 69% (31%)</td>
<td>56% (14%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.</td>
<td>Creating Work/Life Balance</td>
<td>Creating Work/Life Balance</td>
<td>Understanding Employer Expectations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>69% (13%)</td>
<td>61% (16%)</td>
<td>55% (13%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.</td>
<td>Meeting Employer Expectations</td>
<td>Decrease in Physical Activity</td>
<td>Creating Work/Life Balance</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>61% (12%)</td>
<td>56% (13%)</td>
<td>53% (12%)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*The Transitions to Adulthood Center for Research*
KEY TAKEAWAYS
For Young Adults

• Take advantage of services offered by school and work, *including mental health services*!

• Plan early for the college-to-career transition

• Set ambitious yet realistic career goals

• Learn about state of finances & student loans before graduation – strategize to avoid $$ stress

• Add self-care to the list of to-do’s! Don’t only focus on achieving post-graduation benchmarks (e.g., getting a job, living independently)
For Young Adult Supporters

Work with young adults to…

1. Set realistic & practical expectations for post-grad life

2. Create game plans for maintaining emotional health
   • in particular a transitional treatment plan for young adults with mental health conditions

3. Tap into a variety of support services available to cultivate a comprehensive support system (college counseling, employee benefits, etc.)

4. Increase financial literacy/access financial resources, and recognize the affect of $ issues on mental health
References


Thank You!

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