

## Defining Second Adulthood\* Together Teleconference - Part I 3/20/2013

### Session Goal

Reflect on and discuss how second adulthood may be developmentally differentiated from the life stages that precede and follow it relative to specific context domains.

### Development Defined:

Defined by Taylor, Marienau, and Fiddler (2000), based on a variety of Western definitions, as “a process of **qualitative change in attitudes, values, and understandings** that adults experience as a result of ongoing transactions with the social environment, occurring over time but not strictly as a result of time” (p. 10).

### Reflection Questions:

1. What, in your opinion, is the age range that encompasses second adulthood?
2. Considering the definition of development above, and the context domains listed below, what are some key experiences (or ah-ha moments) that marked either your own or another’s entry into second adulthood? How did you/they distinguish it from what came before? How did you/they distinguish it relative to your current definition of old age?

### Context Domains

(Based on The Life Planning Network’s “Life in the Second Half” Wheel):

Domain	Earlier Adulthood	2 <sup>nd</sup> Adulthood	Old Age
Paid Work			
Non-Paid Work/Community			
Lifelong Learning			
Family/Relationships/Caregiving			
Finances & Legal Issues			
Health & Fitness			
Spirituality			
Housing & Lifestyle			
Leisure & Travel			
Others?			

## Other Key Definitions

### **\*Second Adulthood/Adulthood II/Encore Phase/Third Chapter:**

Bateson (2010) suggests that “we have opened a new space partway through the life course, a second and different kind of adulthood, the proceeds old age, and as a result every stage of life is undergoing change...a new developmental stage...not an extension tacked on to old age” (pp. 12-13). **Note:** There are other “names” for this stage, including a recent suggestion by Freedman (2011) to call it the “encore phase” of life and Sarah Lawrence-Lightfoot’s (2009) notion of a “third chapter”.

### **Generativity:**

Originally defined by Erikson (1980) as “primarily the interest in establishing or guiding the next generation” (p. 104). Kotre (1984) describes four expressions of generativity: 1) giving birth; 2) being a parent; 3) creating and producing through work; and 4) maintaining one’s culture. McAdams (1993) defines the generative adult as one whom:

“...nurtures, teaches, leads and promotes the next generation...creates things and ideas that aim to benefit and continue the social system...One may be generative in a wide range of life pursuits and in a vast array of life settings, as in work life and professional activities, volunteer endeavors, participation in religious, political, and community organizations, in friendships, and even in one’s leisure activities” (p. 228).

## References

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- Kotre, J. (1984). *Outliving the self: Generativity and the interpretation of lives*. Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press.
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- McAdams, D. P. (1993). *The stories we live by: Personal myths and the making of the self*. New York: The Guilford Press.
- Taylor, Marienau, and Fiddler (2000). *Developing adult learners*. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.