

**Parental Financial Assistance and its Varying Consequences in the Transition to
Adulthood**

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Introduction

The transition to adulthood is elongating and diversifying, with old models of movement from school to work less viable in the new economy. With more young people pursuing higher education and for longer periods of time, and with wages for those without college or university degrees eroding, young people are taking longer to achieve financial independence. Young people are now more frequently in a semi-dependent state for a number of years as they invest in higher education, job training, or struggle to make ends meet in poorly paying jobs. In this context, parents are often providing significant practical and financial assistance well-past their children's 18th birthdays (Settersten & Ray 2010; Schoeni & Ross 2005).

Financial assistance from parents fosters higher educational attainment, reduces drop out among college students, and facilitates the movement of young adults into career-related work (Johnson & Benson 2012; Public Agenda 2010). Young adult children's living standards are improved through parental financial investments toward education and home buying (Semyonov and Lewin-Epstein 2001). As such, parent financial support during the young adult years is now recognized as an important mechanism in the intergenerational transmission of socioeconomic status (Swartz 2008; Fingerman et al. 2012; Settersten & Ray 2010).

While evidence mounts that financial support shapes attainment, much less is known about the effects of this extension of support on other aspects of young adult well-being. Does it bolster young adults' socioemotional health during a major transition period, softening or eliminating the blows to well-being that might stem from financial difficulty? Or might it be less salutary, if young adults feel they ought to be able to make it without their parents' help? For similar reasons, are emotional ties with parents supported through these transfers or are they weakened?

In this study I draw from multiple waves of the National Longitudinal Study of Adolescent Health (Add Health) to examine whether financial support during the transition to adulthood affects the well-being of young people as well as relationships between young people and their parents. I also examine whether movement into adult social roles moderates these relationships. While there is evidence that the prevalence of parental support varies according to whether or not their offspring have taken on adult roles (e.g., left school, marriage, etc.) signaling progress in the transition to adulthood (Fingerman et al. 2009; Siennick 2011; Swartz 2009; Swartz et al. 2011) we know little about whether the *consequences* of parental support vary by the young adult's progress in making the transition to adulthood.

Patterns of Parental Financial Support

Estimates of the prevalence of parental financial support to young adult offspring vary somewhat by the sample characteristics and measure of support, but generally indicate that it is commonplace. Siennick (2011) reports that seventy-five percent of Add Health respondents (ages 18-28 in 2001) received financial assistance from their parents in the previous 12 months; about 1/3 reported transfers of \$1000 or more (the top category). About 40% of NLSY97 young adults (age 19-23 in 2003) reported gifts of at least \$200 in the past year. Schoeni and Ross (2005) find in the Panel Study of Income Dynamics that 34% of 18-34 year olds no longer living with their parents receive money from them in a given year, with rates of support dropping with age. The average amount received among recipients was \$3,410.

Parental financial support of young adult children is significantly tied to the financial resources and other characteristics of the family of origin. Young adults from middle and upper class families receive greater financial support than do those from poor and working class families (Schoeni & Ross 2005; Fingerman et al. 2012; Siennick 2011; Swartz 2008). Many

studies indicate that racial/ethnic differences in financial support tend to reflect associated differences in familial financial resources (Berry 2006), although some indicate that Black and Asian American young adults receive more financial assistance than Hispanics and non-Hispanic whites after taking into consideration parental resources (Siennick 2011). Young adults from two-parent families also receive more financial assistance (Swartz et al 2011; Siennick 2011).

Characteristics of young adults and their circumstances also shape receipt of parental financial support. Financial support declines as young adults get older (Swartz et al 2011; Fingerman et al. 2009; Siennick 2011) and make progress in the transition to adulthood. For example, financial support is higher for young adults pursuing higher education and lower for those working full-time and those who have married (Swartz et al 2011; Fingerman et al. 2012; Siennick 2011). Whether young adults who have become parents receive more or less financial assistance may depend on their age and marital status (Sage & Johnson 2011).

While studies have not evaluated whether young adults' socioemotional well-being shapes the prevalence or extent of parental financial assistance, the fact that parents provide greater support to adult children experiencing difficulties (e.g., arrest, poor physical health, unemployment) suggests greater support may go to those with socioemotional problems as well (Fingerman et al. 2009; Siennick 2011). And while circumstances may override a poor relationship, young adults generally receive more financial assistance when they have better relationships with their parents (Swartz et al 2011; Siennick 2011; Amato, Rezac & Booth 1995). Thus in assessing the consequences of parental financial support, it is important to take into account characteristics of the family of origin and possible selection processes tied to well-being and family relationships.

Consequences of Parental Financial Support for Well-Being and Parent-Child

Relationships

Well-being and parent-child relationship quality demonstrate patterns involving both continuity and change from childhood through the transition to adulthood. With respect to well-being, the time after late adolescence is generally one of improvement for young people as a whole (Schulenberg et al. 2005). Self-esteem improves from the late teens through the twenties (Amato & Kane 2011; Schulenberg et al. 2000; Erol & Orth 2011). Depressive symptoms decline as well, at least through the early twenties (Amato & Kane 2011; Adkins et al. 2009; Wickrama et al. 2008). And within a pattern of considerable continuity in quality of parent-child relationships from adolescence through young adulthood (Johnson & Benson 2012), particularly when it comes to feelings of emotional closeness and warmth (Aquilino 1997), change is also evident. Parent-child relationships generally see improvement from the late teens through the early twenties (Thornton et al. 1995).

Most attention has been paid to co-residence and its effects on well-being and parent-child relations rather than financial assistance (Flanagan et al. 1993; Whiteman et al. 2011; Ward & Spitze 2007), so empirically this is a fairly open question. Yet there are multiple reasons to expect it may be consequential—some reasons pointing to positive outcomes and some to negative ones. Taking the positive first, parent financial support may provide an important material safety net that helps young people avoid financial stress. It may also enable them to make more deliberate and well-timed decisions about school, work, and family. Young adults subject to more financial stress or who are less able to pursue their goals may experience lowered well-being. Getting some money from parents may also reinforce that parents are always there for them. Even as the young person moves into adulthood, he or she learns that parents can still

be relied upon, facilitating continued or improving well-being and better parent-child relationships.

At the same time, independence is still considered a hallmark characteristic of adulthood. Independence broadly, and financial independence specifically, are considered among the qualities most frequently selected as necessary for attaining adult status (Arnett 1997), and a sense of independence predicts seeing oneself as an adult (Johnson et al 2007). Continued financial support may violate either the parent's or young adult's sense that the young adult should be able to do it on her/his own. "Establishing a relationship with parents as an equal adult" is also among the most popular criteria selected as necessary to be an adult (Arnett 2007), which could be undermined as long as parents are providing financial support. One recent study found that financial support from parents during young adulthood lowered young adults' sense of self-efficacy (Mortimer et al. 2010).

Looking at the range of practical and financial support provided in the transition to adulthood, it would seem parents who are providing these supports do not harbor deep resentments (Settersten & Ray 2010) and evaluate the support their children need as appropriate and similar to what other young adults need (Fingerman et al. 2012). Parents are particularly accepting of providing financial support to assist their adult children pursuing higher education (Goldscheider et al 2001; Aquilino 2005). But if young adults do not share that perspective, financial support from parents could feel like a sign of failure.

It would seem that for young people pursuing higher education, this violation of expectations is unlikely. Parents and young people generally share the expectation that parents will help pay for college (Goldscheider et al. 2001). But young people's expectations for support and their views of its appropriateness may vary by social class (Lareau & Weininger 2008), and

those out of school or otherwise moving into adult social roles like marriage and full-time work may see parental financial support as less desirable. Thus the consequences of parental financial support for well-being and parent-child relationships may be dependent upon progress in the transition to adulthood, with more deleterious effects for those who are older and those in adult statuses.

Data and Measures

This research uses data drawn from Waves I, III, and IV of the National Longitudinal Study of Adolescent Health (Add Health), a nationally representative study of American adolescents in grades 7-12 from 134 middle and high schools in 80 communities (Bearman, Jones, & Udry, 1997). The Wave 1 (in-home) survey interviews began during the 1995–1996 school year. Participants were re-interviewed between August 2001 and April 2002 for Wave 3 (at ages 18-28) and between 2007 and 2008 for Wave 4 (at ages 24-34). While the Wave 2 survey administration occurred later in adolescence and would potentially have provided a better starting point to examine change in well-being during the transition to adulthood, it excluded a large number of respondents (by design) that were included in the other waves, making it less desirable.

I examined socioemotional well-being with two indicators: self-esteem and depressive symptoms. Self-esteem was measured by four items in both Waves 1 and 3, which asked respondents how strongly they agreed that they “have a lot of good qualities,” “have a lot to be proud of,” “like yourself just the way you are,” and “feel like you are doing everything just about right” (reverse coded so that 1 = strongly disagree and 5 = strongly agree; $\alpha=.80$ in Wave 1 and $\alpha=.79$ in Wave 3). The items were averaged to form a scale. As none of the items were included in Wave 4, the analysis of self-esteem was limited to Waves 1 and 3.

Depressive symptoms were measured with nine items from the CES-D Scale (Radloff 1977) that appeared in all three waves used in the analysis. Respondents indicated how frequently (0 = never or rarely, 1 = sometimes, 2 = a lot of the time, 3 = most of the time or all of the time) they experienced these symptoms: “you were bothered by things that don’t usually bother you,” “you felt that you were just as good as other people (reverse coded),” “you had trouble keeping your mind on what you were doing,” “you felt depressed,” “you felt that you were too tired to do things,” “you enjoyed life (reverse coded),” “you felt sad,” and “you felt that people disliked you.” The items were averaged to form a scale (Wave 1 $\alpha=.80$, Wave 3 $\alpha=.81$, Wave 4 $\alpha=.82$).

Parent-child relationships were measured by how close respondents felt to their mother and to their father (1 = not at all, 5 = very much). The quality of relationships between respondents and their parents were indexed by multiple items each wave, but only closeness was common to all three.¹ At Wave 1, when most respondents were living at home, the mothers in the closeness measure represented the mother or mother-figure in the household. The same was true of fathers. At wave 3, respondents were asked separately about three potential mothers and three potential fathers. I used closeness to the current residential mother when available, followed by the previous residential mother, and lastly the nonresidential biological mother (who, by the question structure, had not been a residential parent in the prior wave either). In Wave 4, respondents were asked more broadly about their one mother (father) or mother-figure (father-figure).

Parental financial assistance in wave 3 was measured by whether a parent had given the respondent “any money or paid for anything significant for you during the past 12 months,”

¹ A measure of maternal and paternal warmth was available for the analysis of Waves 1 and 3 only. Results for this item were highly consistent with that presented for maternal and paternal closeness over the same interval.

excluding regular birthday or holiday gifts. Respondents receiving money were also asked the value of this financial help (1 = less than \$200, 2 = \$200 to \$499, 3 = \$500 to \$999, 4 = \$1000 or more). Respondents were asked about assistance from up to six parents (current and former residential mothers and fathers as well as nonresidential biological mothers and fathers). It is difficult to know whether respondents might attribute the same financial assistance to more than one parent or whether the amounts across parents can be accumulated. For example, just under 60% of respondents reported the same level of assistance from a mother as from a father. Accordingly, the cleanest measure of financial assistance is a dichotomous indicator of any assistance given by any parent. To assess whether the amount of assistance also affected the outcomes, the highest amount across potential parents was used. This may underestimate assistance if respondents reported separate assistance from more than one parent. In models of relationships to mothers (fathers), we also examine assistance given by any mother (any father) since parental assistance is unlikely to shape the parent-child relationship unless the child attributes that assistance to the parent in question. That assistance can truly be from only one parent, or even if parents' finances are jointly held, respondents may report it as given from both parents or only from one.

In wave 4, parental financial assistance was more narrowly defined around the respondent's living expenses. Respondents were asked the number of times a parent had "paid your living expenses or given you \$50 or more to pay living expenses in the past 12 months" (0 = never, 1 = yes, number of times unknown, 2 = yes, 1 or 2 times, 3 = yes, 3 or 4 times). In this case respondents were asked more broadly about their mother (or mother figure) and father (or father figure) rather than the series of potential parents referenced in the Wave 3 measure. Again analyses were based on both a set of dummy variables capturing the frequency of assistance, and

a dichotomous indicator of any assistance given. For this measure 73% of respondents reported the same frequency of assistance from their mother figure and their father figure. Parallel measures specific to assistance from mothers and fathers respectively were also used in the models of closeness to mother and father.

Adult role transitions, measured in both Waves 3 and 4, included whether the respondent was in school, working full-time (35+ hours/week), living independently of parents, had ever married, cohabited, and had one or more children. An alternative measure, the number of adult social roles taken on, is included in some models.²

Controls for chronological age, gender, and race/ethnicity (Hispanic/Latino, non-Latino white, non-Latino Black/African American, Asian/Pacific Islander, Native American/American Indian, and “other race”) as well as adolescent family structure, number of siblings, and socioeconomic status were included in all models. Family structure distinguished five categories including married biological parent families, single-mother families, single-father families, other two-parent families (largely stepfamilies), and other family structures. Parents’ education was measured by the average of mothers’ and fathers’ educational attainments (1 = completed grade 8 or less; 8 = graduate or professional training), reported by a parent. If the parent’s response was missing, adolescent reports were used. When only one parent’s educational attainment was available, it served as the final value. Family income was measured through a series of dummy variables that calculate household income during adolescence as a percentage of 1994 federal poverty thresholds (0-100 percent, 101-200 percent, 201-300 percent, 301-400 percent, and greater than 400 percent), which account for the number of people in the household. An additional variable indicates respondents who were missing income information.

² The range is from zero to 5, as cohabitation was excluded from the count.

Analytic Strategy

Conditional change models, in which a lagged measure of the dependent variable is included as an independent variable, are used to estimate the influence of parental financial assistance on self-esteem, depressive symptoms, and closeness to parents. As the measures available for parental financial assistance in Waves 3 and 4 are considerably different, I do not draw upon all three waves of data in the same model. Instead, I model change in the outcomes separately from Waves 1 to 3 and then from Waves 3 to 4. In each case I restrict the analysis to respondents participating in both waves and who were assigned a sampling weight (N=14,322 for Waves 1 and 3; N=12,288 for Waves 3 and 4). Due to missing responses on the outcome measures, the sample size is somewhat reduced in each case. For closeness to parents, particularly closeness to fathers, the sample size is reduced further reflecting differences in family structure histories and availability of living parents. As missing data on the independent variables was trivial, listwise deletion was used.³ I weight all analyses and used the survey analysis commands in Stata to adjust for the complex sample design (see Chantala & Tabor, 1999).

Results

Descriptive statistics for the measures in the analysis appear in Table 1. Financial assistance from parents was quite common in Wave 3, when respondents were ages 18-28. As shown in Table 1, approximately three-quarters of the sample reported that a parent had provided such assistance in the past year. The modal amount given was \$1000 or more. The measure of assistance in Wave 4 was specific to assistance with living expenses (of \$50 or more), and that,

³ In an exception to this, the lagged measures of closeness to mother and father had non-trivial rates of missing data, but these likely reflect differences in family structure and living arrangements in childhood and adolescence. As such, imputation would be inappropriate. Imputation of dependent variables is also inappropriate, as it only adds noise to the estimates (von Hippel 2007).

along with age, may account for the lower incidence of assistance in the later wave when respondents were ages 24-34. Still, 43% of the sample reported assistance of this type from a parent. Twenty percent overall, and almost half of those reporting assistance, indicated it had occurred an unknown number of times in the past year.

Average depressive symptoms lessened between Waves 1 and 3, but rose again somewhat by Wave 4. Self-esteem also improved between Waves 1 and 3 (and was not measured in Wave 4). Closeness to parents followed a different pattern. Closeness to both mothers and fathers was highest in Waves 1 and 4, with lower levels of closeness reported in Wave 3.

Results for multivariate conditional change models of depressive symptoms for the two intervals appear in Tables 2 (for Wave 1 to 3) and 3 (for Waves 3 to 4). In each case, I present only the coefficients for parental assistance, the lagged measure of depressive symptoms, and because later models involve interactions with them, age and the adult role statuses. Model 1 in Table 2 indicates that parental financial assistance was associated with increased symptoms of depression, with little difference based on the amount of financial assistance. Assistance amounting to \$1000 or more over the past years was not significantly different from no support, but adjusted Wald tests demonstrate it was also not significantly different from the lowest amount (<\$200) or the next highest amount (\$500-999). It is possible that high value transfers, or frequent transfers that cumulate to this level, are inconsequential. The evidence of this is not conclusive however, and a dichotomous indicator of any assistance explained as much change in depressive symptoms (Model 2) as did the set of dummy variables representing the amount of assistance.

Additional models (not shown) including interaction terms indicated there were no differences in the effects of parental support during this interval (using either measure) by age, gender, or parental socioeconomic status. There were statistically significant differences based on whether or not respondents had taken on adult statuses, however. Models 3-6 present coefficients from models including interaction terms between the dichotomous measure of parental assistance and the respondents' status as a student, full-time worker, having ever cohabited, and having ever married, respectively. In each case, the addition of the interaction term does not increase the variation explained by the model, but does indicate that the detrimental effects of parental financial assistance were limited to those who had moved into adult statuses—that is, they had left school, they worked full-time, and they had lived with a romantic partner, or in the last case, that the effects were stronger when they had married. These conditional effects by role status were also apparent in models using the amount of assistance (not shown). The final model includes an interaction between parental assistance and the number of adult social roles the respondent has entered. Consistent with the previous models, the findings indicate that the socioemotional consequences of parental financial assistance are worse the more progress the young person has made in the transition to adulthood.

Parental assistance with living expenses was also positively associated with change in depressive symptoms between Waves 3 and 4 (See Model 1, Table 3). For this interval the measure allowed assessment of the frequency with which assistance was provided rather than the dollar amount. Adjusted Wald tests show no statistically significant differences between the effects of the three frequency categories. A dichotomous indicator of whether assistance was provided also predicted as much variance, as shown in Model 2.

As was the case in the earlier interval, there were no conditional effects of parental assistance by gender or parental socioeconomic status. The effects changed with age ($p=.08$), as shown in Model 3. Holding the other variables at their means, the predicted level of depressive symptoms at age 24 is .52 among those who did not receive parental financial assistance and .56 among those who did ($p<.10$). At age 29 the predicted means are .55 and .64 respectively ($p<.001$) and at 34 they are .57 and .72 respectively ($p<.001$). There were also some differences by the adult role statuses, as shown in Models 4 and 5, although fewer than in the earlier interval. Assistance with living expenses was significantly related to change in depressive symptoms for non-students but not students, and for those living independently from parents, but not for those living with their parents. These conditional effects were also apparent in models using the frequency of assistance rather than the dichotomous measure (not shown). The final model again includes an interaction between parental assistance and the number of adult social roles the respondent has entered. Consistent with the previous models, the findings indicate that the socioemotional consequences of parental financial assistance are worse the more progress the young person has made in the transition to adulthood.

Analyses of self-esteem, evaluated only for the Wave 1 to 3 interval, indicated that parental financial assistance had no effect on change in self-esteem (not shown). Neither assistance from any parent, nor the set of indicators representing the amount of assistance significantly predicted change in self-esteem.

Multivariate conditional change models for closeness to mothers and fathers appear in Tables 4 (for the Wave 1 to 3 interval) and 5 (for the Wave 3 to 4 interval). As shown in Table 4, financial assistance from parents increased feelings of closeness to both mothers and fathers (Model 1 for each parent). Adjusted Wald tests indicate no differences by the amount of

assistance for closeness to mothers, but that higher levels of assistance improved closeness to fathers more so than did lower levels of assistance (adjusted Wald tests indicated statistically significant differences between the two higher amounts with each of the two lower amounts). In the second model, parental assistance was replaced with maternal assistance for the model of closeness to mother, and parental assistance was replaced with paternal assistance for the model of closeness to father. In many cases financial support may be attributed to both parents, but there are also cases in which support is attributed to a mother but not a father (or vice versa), either because it came only from that parent or because the respondent perceived it as stemming from that parent even if parents have joint finances. In each case, additional variation was explained in Model 2 using either mothers' or fathers' assistance instead of parental assistance. Also, for both mothers and fathers, higher amounts of assistance had stronger effects than smaller amounts of assistance (adjusted Wald tests indicated significant differences between maternal assistance of \$1000+ compared to <\$200; they indicated significant differences between paternal assistance of \$1000+ compared to both categories under \$500 and between assistance of \$500-999 and <\$200).

The frequency of parental assistance with living expenses in Wave 4 is also positively associated with changes in closeness to mothers and fathers in the second interval, between Waves 3 and 4 (Table 5). As was the case in the earlier interval, assistance attributed to mothers (Model 2) was tied more closely to change in closeness to mothers than parental assistance overall (Model 1). Likewise, assistance attributed to fathers was tied more closely to change in closeness to fathers (Model 2) than parental assistance overall (Model 1). Maternal and paternal assistance that occurred 3-4 times over the past year was also more strongly related to changes in closeness than when assistance only occurred 1-2 times, or an unknown number of times. If the

“unknown” frequency of parental assistance with living expenses is the category reflecting the highest frequency (in that it happens often enough not to have a count), then it is possible that commonplace assistance is of less consequence than more rare occurrences. That assumption would have to be tested in future work.

In both intervals, the effects of parental assistance with living expenses on relationships with parents were similar by age, gender, and whether or not the respondent had taken on adult roles.⁴ Thus in contrast to socioemotional well-being, in which there was a general indication that assistance was associated with poorer outcomes at older ages and further progress in the transition to adulthood, financial help is associated with improved parent-child relationships in a more general way.

Discussion

As the transition to adulthood has lengthened, with a longer period in which young people are not dependent, but not independent either, parental financial, material, and practical support has become recognized as an increasingly important “scaffolding” for those who have it (Swartz 2008). Financial support, in particular, is recognized as assisting young people in pursuing higher education, movement into career-like jobs, and improving living standards (Johnson & Benson 2012; Semyonov & Lewin-Epstein 2001; Public Agenda 2010). Because financial support during the young adult years is more forthcoming to young people from higher socioeconomic status families, it is also increasingly recognized as a key mechanism in the intergenerational transmission of socioeconomic status (Swartz 2008; Settersten & Ray 2010). The only problem, it might seem, is that which stems from inequality, not parental financial assistance itself. Yet other aspects of how young people are doing have not been extensively

⁴ In the Wave3-4 interval only, the interaction between parental assistance and both parents’ education level and family income was significant for closeness to mother and closeness to father. In both cases, the positive association between assistance and changes in closeness were strongest at the lowest SES levels.

examined. This study drew upon a nationally representative panel of young adults to test whether financial assistance from parents shaped parent-child relationships and socioemotional well-being as well.

Receiving financial assistance from parents was associated with increases in closeness with mothers and fathers, especially when assistance measures are specific to mothers and fathers respectively. The results were remarkably consistent across the period from adolescence (Wave 1) to the first wave of data in young adulthood (Wave 3, ages 18-28) and from then to the next assessment (Wave 4, ages 24-34). The amount of assistance, evaluated in the first interval, was positively related to changes in closeness to both parents. The frequency of assistance, evaluated in the second interval, was also related to changes in closeness—receiving assistance 3-4 times is tied to larger positive changes in closeness than assistance 1-2 times or an unknown number of times.

That closeness was strengthened through parental financial assistance is consistent with other research findings that parents generally do not resent assisting their young adult children in today's world (Settersten & Ray 2011) and that parents generally see that the assistance their children need is appropriate and similar to what other young people today need (Fingerman et al 2012). Extending financial support into young adulthood does not appear to be damaging parent-child relationships. Indeed, continued support may bring parents and children closer as it reassures the adult-child that the parents are “there” for them during this transitional period. The analysis here was limited to assessing closeness from the adult-child's point of view. Future research could examine relationship dynamics from parents' point of view as well.

With respect to the indicators of socioemotional well-being studied here, the findings are mixed. Changes in self-esteem were unrelated to parental financial assistance. Changes in

depressive symptoms, however, were positively associated with parental financial assistance. In general, assistance of any amount was related to increased depressive symptoms, although there was some evidence that assistance at the highest amounts (\$1000 or more in the past year) may be inconsequential. The findings also indicate that any financial assistance, rather than its frequency, was positively associated with change in depressive symptoms. Mortimer and colleagues also recently reported that financial support from parents during young adulthood lowered young adults' sense of self-efficacy (Mortimer et al. 2010).

The possibility that assistance at high levels may not be as detrimental deserves additional attention. Perhaps high levels of assistance occur in response to major crises in young adult's lives that would otherwise harm the young person. Or high level giving may indicate its acceptability within the family. Additional data is required to resolve these issues.

The effects of parental financial assistance on parent-child relationships and socioemotional well-being were no different for young men and women, and the effects on parent-child relationships were also no different by age or progress in the transition to adulthood. The negative effects on depressive symptoms were conditional on age in the later interval, however, and several indicators of progress in the transition to adulthood in both intervals. While the specific adult statuses that yielded statistically significant interactions with financial help differed somewhat for the two intervals (and, accordingly, the two measures of assistance), the differences point to the same story. Parental assistance was positively associated with changes in depressive symptoms in the first interval among non-students but not students, among those working-full-time but not others, and among those who had cohabited in a romantic relationship but not those who hadn't. It was also more detrimental for those who had married compared to those who had not. Parental assistance was positively associated with changes in

depressive symptoms in the later interval for non-students but not students, and for those living independently from parents but not those living with their parents. This pattern strongly suggests that financial help from parents violates the expectations of young adults who have otherwise moved into adulthood. These statuses, which are strongly tied to young people's sense of being an adult (Johnson et al 2007) may still hold meaning to young people about self-reliance (or reliance on a partner instead of parents). And while parents may not have a problem with the assistance they give, and it does not damage the parent-child relationship, parents may also not view their young adult children as fully adult until they are financially independent. Irrespective of age, independence, financial independence, and establishing a relationship with parents as equals are popular notions about what it means to be an adult (Arnett 1997; 2001).

The specific roles that demonstrated statistically significant effects varied by interval, though two commonalities are noteworthy. First, in both intervals students were immune to the worsening of depressive symptoms. Financial support for students is widely accepted by both young people and parents alike, and past studies have demonstrated the variable effects of parent-child relationships for students and those who have left school. Johnson and Benson (2011) report that parental financial assistance only bolsters young adults' perceptions of their status attainment among students. Fingerman and colleagues (2011) find that parental support (of many kinds) positively affects the life satisfaction of young adults, but again only among students. Second, in both intervals the effects of parental assistance were magnified the more adult social roles the young person had entered. The fact that fewer specific roles demonstrated significant interactions in the latter interval may reflect the aging of the sample. It may be that regardless of adult social roles, at a certain age parental assistance becomes less normatively acceptable.

Several limitations of the study are worthy of note. First, the measures of financial assistance were not as detailed as they could have been. Almost one-third of the Wave 3 sample reported assistance in the highest category (\$1000+), and it is likely a very heterogeneous group. This may be especially true at younger ages. Wightman, Schoeni and Robinson (2010) find with PSID data that the average amount of financial assistance among 18-24 year olds who received assistance was about \$11,000. Their measure is derived from amount value estimates for multiple categories of assistance, the most frequently occurring of which is tuition assistance, which does skew the mean. Yet the mean value of non-loan assistance exceeds \$1000 in every category, not just tuition. Half of those receiving any assistance received more than \$5,000.

Second, despite the use of longitudinal data and conditional change modeling, it remains possible that the causal influence is actually in the opposite direction to that discussed here. In other words, young people who grow more close to their parents, and those with worsening depressive symptoms, may get more financial help from their parents. More frequent measurements of assistance, relationships, and well-being would certainly assist in sorting out the causal direction of the relationships observed here. At least with respect to socioemotional well-being, however, the pattern of results casts strong doubt on this possibility. Conditional effects by social roles make much more sense if interpreted in the causal order presented in this paper. That is, getting help from one's parents is harmful when respondents have taken on adult social roles, but not if they are, for example, still students. If the causal order were reversed, we would be faced with explaining why parents respond financially to declining emotional health among their young adult children only when they are in more adult-like statuses (e.g., providing financial assistance to those who have married or are working full-time and have experienced

worsening depression, but not single young adults or those not working full-time who have otherwise experienced the same decline in mental health).

Finally, it also remains possible that other factors prompt financial assistance and changes in well-being and parent-child relationships. The models presented control a range of, but not all conceivable, factors that could play this role. Additional models (not shown) also considered a host of other possibilities that may have occurred during the time interval studied to see whether they could reduce the magnitude of association between parental financial assistance and the outcomes under examination. These factors included whether the respondent experienced some health limitation that restricted employment, arrest, conviction, incarceration, being fired or laid off (latter interval only), suffered a major injury (latter interval only) or the death of a sibling (latter interval only). None of these factors measurably altered the estimates of the impact of parental financial assistance on the outcomes.

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Table 1. Descriptive Statistics on Study Measures (Percentages, or Means and Standard Deviations)

Wave 3 Longitudinal Sample		Wave 4 Longitudinal Sample	
Self Esteem W1	4.08 (.64)		
Self Esteem W3	4.22 (.58)		
Depression W1	.63 (.48)	Depression W3	.50 (.50)
Depression W3	.50 (.46)	Depression W4	.58 (.51)
Closeness to Mother W1	4.54 (.79)	Closeness to Mother W3	3.41 (.93)
Closeness to Mother W3	3.42 (.84)	Closeness to Mother W4	4.50 (.93)
Closeness to Father W1	4.28 (.97)	Closeness to Father W3	3.07 (1.15)
Closeness to Father W3	3.08 (1.03)	Closeness to Father W4	4.13 (1.22)
Financial assistance from any parent	74.88	Living expense assistance from any parent	43.00
Amount of financial assistance from parent		Number of times parent paid living expenses	
None	25.56	Never	57.00
<\$200	12.72	Unknown	20.04
\$200-499	17.53	1-2 times	8.78
\$500-999	13.05	3-4 times	14.19
\$1000 or more	31.14		
Student at W3	36.34	Student at W4	15.63
Live independently at W3	56.33	Live independently at W4	82.41
Full-time work at W3	52.34	Full-time work at W4	82.24
Ever cohabit by W3	40.71	Ever cohabit by W4	49.59
Ever marry by W3	18.36	Ever marry by W4	49.48
Has child by W3	19.31	Has child by W4	49.24
Number of adult roles	2.10 (1.33)	Number of adult roles	3.48 (1.30)
Age	21.79 (1.88)	Age	28.24 (2.06)
Female	49.19	Female	50.88
Race/Ethnicity		Race/Ethnicity	
White	65.56	White	66.80
Hispanic	11.68	Hispanic	11.47
Black	15.97	Black	15.00
Asian	3.36	Asian	3.75
Other	2.95	Other	2.99
Number of siblings	1.38 (1.15)	Number of siblings	1.39 (1.27)
Parent Education	4.85 (1.83)	Parent Education	4.86 (2.03)
Family Income		Family Income	
Below FPL	13.89	Below FPL	13.50
100-200% of FPL	17.91	100-200% of FPL	18.18
200-300% of FPL	17.49	200-300% of FPL	17.55
300-400% of FPL	12.20	300-400% of FPL	12.39
400% or more of FPL	17.97	400% or more of FPL	18.33
Missing	20.54	Missing	20.06
Family Structure		Family Structure	
Two bio	56.62	Two bio	57.58
Single Mom	19.61	Single Mom	19.18
Single Dad	2.98	Single Dad	2.75
Other two parent	16.54	Other two parent	16.31
Other family	4.26	Other family	4.18

Table 2 Conditional Change Regression Model of Depressive Symptoms at Wave 3.

	[1]	[2]	[3]	[4]	[5]	[6]	[7]
Amount of financial assist.							
None (ref)	--	--	--	--	--	--	
<\$200	.06** (.02)	--	--	--	--	--	
\$200-499	.05*** (.01)	--	--	--	--	--	
\$500-999	.05** (.02)	--	--	--	--	--	
\$1000+	.02 (.01)	--	--	--	--	--	
Any financial assistance	--	.04*** (.01)	.06*** (.01)	.01 (.02)	.02 (.02)	.03* (.01)	-.04 (.03)
Depressive symptoms W1	.29*** (.01)	.29*** (.01)	.29*** (.01)	.29*** (.01)	.29*** (.01)	.29*** (.01)	.30*** (.01)
Student	-.04* (.01)	-.04** (.01)	.02 (.02)	-.04** (.01)	-.04** (.01)	-.04** (.01)	--
Full-time work	-.05*** (.01)	-.06*** (.01)	-.06*** (.01)	-.10*** (.02)	-.06*** (.01)	-.06*** (.01)	--
Ever married	-.02 (.02)	-.02 (.02)	-.02 (.02)	-.02 (.02)	-.02 (.02)	-.06* (.02)	--
Ever cohabited	.04** (.01)	.04*** (.01)	.04** (.01)	.04*** (.01)	.01 (.02)	.04** (.01)	--
Has child(ren)	.01 (.01)	.01 (.01)	.01 (.01)	.01 (.01)	.01 (.01)	.01 (.01)	--
Lives independ.	-.02 (.01)	-.02 (.01)	-.02 (.01)	-.02 (.01)	-.02 (.01)	-.02 (.01)	--
Student*assistance	--	--	-.07** (.03)	--	--	--	--
Full-time work*assistance	--	--	--	.06* (.02)	--	--	--
Ever cohabited*assistance	--	--	--	--	.05* (.02)	--	--
Ever married*assistance	--	--	--	--	--	.06* (.03)	--
Number of roles	--	--	--	--	--	--	-.03*** (.01)
Number of roles * assistance	--	--	--	--	--	--	.03*** (.01)
R-square	.13	.13	.13	.13	.13	.13	.13
N	13,903	13,986	13,986	13,986	13,986	13,986	13,986

***p<.001, **p<.01, *p<.05

Notes: Models also control for gender, race/ethnicity, age, family structure, number of siblings, parents' educational attainment, and family income.

Table 3. Conditional Change Regression Model of Depressive Symptoms at Wave 4.

	[1]	[2]	[3]	[4]	[5]	[6]
Frequency of assistance with living expenses						
Never	--	--	--	--	--	--
Unknown number of times	.07*** (.01)	--	--	--	--	--
1-2 times	.12*** (.02)	--	--	--	--	--
3-4 times	.09*** (.02)	--	--	--	--	--
Any assistance with living expenses	--	.09*** (.01)	-.19 (.16)	.10*** (.01)	.02 (.03)	.01 (.04)
Depressive symptoms W3	.38*** (.02)	.38*** (.02)	.38*** (.02)	.38*** (.02)	.38*** (.01)	.38*** (.01)
Student	-.01 (.01)	-.01 (.01)	-.01 (.01)	.02 (.02)	-.01 (.01)	--
Full-time work	-.07*** (.02)	-.07*** (.02)	-.07*** (.02)	-.07*** (.02)	-.07*** (.02)	--
Ever married	-.02 (.01)	-.02 (.01)	-.02 (.01)	-.02 (.01)	-.02 (.01)	--
Ever cohabited	.02 (.01)	.02 (.01)	.02 (.01)	.02 (.01)	.02 (.01)	--
Has child(ren)	.01 (.01)	.01 (.01)	.01 (.01)	.01 (.01)	.01 (.01)	--
Lives independ.	-.02 (.01)	-.02 (.01)	-.02 (.01)	-.02 (.01)	-.07** (.02)	--
Age	.01** (.00)	.01* (.00)	.01 (.00)	.01** (.00)	.01** (.00)	--
Age*assist.	--	--	.01+ (.01)	--	--	--
Student*assist.	--	--	--	-.07** (.03)	--	--
Living indep*assist	--	--	--	--	.08* (.03)	--
Number of adult roles	--	--	--	--	--	-.03*** (.01)
Number of adult roles * assistance	--	--	--	--	--	.02* (.01)
R-square	.21	.21	.21	.21	.21	.21
N	12,018	12,018	12,018	12,018	12,018	12,018

***p<.001, **p<.01, *p<.05

Notes: Models also control for gender, race/ethnicity, age, family structure, number of siblings, parents' educational attainment, and family income.

Table 4 Conditional Change Regression Models of Closeness to Parents at Wave 3.

	Closeness to Mother		Closeness to Father	
	[1]	[2]	[1]	[2]
Amount of financial assist.				
None (ref)	--	--	--	--
<\$200	.21*** (.03)	--	.09 (.05)	--
\$200-499	.23*** (.03)	--	.13** (.04)	--
\$500-999	.25*** (.03)	--	.21*** (.05)	--
\$1000+	.26*** (.03)	--	.24*** (.04)	--
Amount of financial assist. mother/father				
None (ref)	--	--	--	--
<\$200	--	.28*** (.03)	--	.26*** (.04)
\$200-499	--	.31*** (.03)	--	.35*** (.04)
\$500-999	--	.33*** (.03)	--	.42*** (.04)
\$1000+	--	.35*** (.03)	--	.44*** (.04)
Closeness to mother/father W1	.31*** (.02)	.30*** (.02)	.36*** (.02)	.34*** (.02)
R-square	.12	.14	.16	.19
N	12,922	12,890	9,535	9,520

***p<.001, **p<.01, *p<.05

Notes: Models also control for gender, race/ethnicity, age, family structure, number of siblings, parents' educational attainment, family income, and contemporaneous indicators of adult role statuses.

Table 5 Conditional Change Regression Model of Closeness to Parents at Wave 4.

	Closeness to Mother (Wave 4)		Closeness to Father (Wave 4)	
	[1]	[2]	[1]	[2]
Amount of financial assist.				
Never	--	--	--	--
Unknown number of times	.07* (.03)	--	.09** (.03)	--
1-2 times	.10** (.03)	--	.15** (.04)	--
3-4 times	.18*** (.03)	--	.15*** (.04)	--
Amount of financial assist. from mother/father				
Never	--	--	--	--
Unknown number of times	--	.11*** (.03)	--	.23*** (.03)
1-2 times	--	.19*** (.03)	--	.28*** (.05)
3-4 times	--	.25*** (.03)	--	.43*** (.04)
Closeness to mother/father W3	.40*** (.02)	.39*** (.02)	.48*** (.02)	.47*** (.02)
R-square	.19	.20	.24	.26
N	11,133	11,132	9,293	9,289

***p<.001, **p<.01, *p<.05

Notes: Models also control for gender, race/ethnicity, age, family structure, number of siblings, parents' educational attainment, family income, and contemporaneous indicators of adult role statuses.