EMERGING ADULTHOOD: Religion, Faith, Spirituality & Culture…
And What Some of Us Are Doing About it at UCF

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I. “EMERGING ADULTS”: A New “Life Stage”

- Some labels you may have heard…


- A Caution…
II. SOCIAL FORCES AFFECTING THEIR LIVES: Emerging Adults in Our Society

- Distinct social situation
- Longer period of vocational/career exploration
  - Postponement of Marriage
  - Lengthening of education
  - More precarious/unpredictable economics
  - Willingness of parents to extend help
Preponderance of dual-income & its consequences
New “Distractions” crowd out/make a variety of “participations” difficult

- An “In-Between” time...
- “Settling down is for later…”
- Window for freedom… yet...
- One result…LESS TIME
III. SOME CONSEQUENCES FOR EMERGING ADULTS

- TENSION…

- Daunting Challenges
  - Multiple transitions…
  - Stressful and lonely
  - High level of FEAR (“Quarter-life crisis”)
  - Few structures after college…
  - So much to “figure out”…
IV. “SPIRITUAL BUT NOT RELIGIOUS”???

• A popular designation, but…

• Christian Smith “Souls In Transition” study of Emerging Adults:
  ◦ 15% “traditionally religious”
  ◦ 30% “selective adherents”
  ◦ 15% “spiritually open”
  ◦ 25% “religiously indifferent”
  ◦ 15% “disconnected spiritually”
• “A Faith of Their Own”, Lisa Pearce & Melinda Denton study (2011)
  ◦ “Assenters”
  ◦ “Adapters”
• “Spiritual tinkering”…
V. SIX COMMON THEMES ACROSS TRADITIONS FOR “SEEKING” EMERGING ADULTS

- EA desire to feel their presence is valued
- EA desire a sense of ownership
- EA’s interests in religion are multifaceted
- EA thrive when “met where they are”
- EA welcome opportunities to feel emotionally affected (experience counts!)
- EA seek balance between particular & universal
VI. SNAPSHOTS: EMERGING “CATHOLIC” ADULTS

- Most like being Catholic…but 10% no longer self-identify
- Majority still think of selves as “Catholic”
- Constructing a Catholic identity on their own terms (“tinkering”)—SELECTIVE adherence
- Practice of faith varies WIDELY
  - 15-25% participate in Mass weekly
- No longer learning Catholicism by “osmosis”; can’t take anything for granted in terms of knowledge/experience of Catholic faith & practice
- Lack of “internalized” structures
- While significant number of most active Catholic EA drawn to “traditional Catholic pieties & practices”—clearly NOT majority of them
- American Individualism PERVASIVE force but significant number of EA drawn to community & communal expression of faith
VII. CONCLUSIONS…for Now…

- NOT a “Lost Generation”…but Emerging Adults participating in faith communities & traditions = SIGNIFICANT MINORITY

- 3 Factors Increasing Religiosity:
  - Strong Bonds to religiously committed & supportive family, friends, mentors
  - Beliefs must be internalized
  - Faith’s principles must be learned first then behaviorally practiced
AN OPEN INVITATION...

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THE CENTRAL FLORIDA HILLEL CENTER at NORTHVIEW
SOURCES & RESOURCES


• Pew Research Center
  ◦ **Religion Among the Millennials: A Portrait of Generation Next**
  ◦ **Confident. Connected. Open to Change. Millennials: A Portrait of Generation Next**

• **Finding Faith: The Spiritual Quest of the Post-Boomer Generation**, Richard Flory & Donald E. Miller (2008)
• Googling God: The Religious Landscape of People in their 20s & 30s, Mike Hayes (2007)
• Lost & Found: The Younger Unchurched & the Churches that Reach Them, Ed Stetzer, Richie Stanley, Jasur Hayes (2009)
• Changing SEA: The Changing Spirituality of Emerging Adults
• Young Catholic America: Emerging Adults In, Out of, and Gone from the Church, Christian Smith, Kyle Longest, Jonathan Hill & Kari Christofferson