

Schulenberg, J. E., & Maggs, J. L. (2002). A developmental perspective on alcohol use and heavy drinking during adolescence and the transition to young adulthood. *Journal of Studies on Alcohol, Supplement 14*, 54-70.

Abstract

Objective: This article offers a developmental perspective on college drinking by focusing on broad developmental themes during adolescence and the transition to young adulthood.

Method: A literature review was conducted.

Results: The transition to college involves major individual and contextual change in every domain of life; at the same time, heavy drinking and associated problems increase during this transition. A developmental contextual perspective encourages the examination of alcohol use and heavy drinking in relation to normative developmental tasks and transitions and in the context of students' changing lives, focusing on interindividual variation in the course and consequences of drinking and on a wide range of proximal and distal influences. Links between developmental transitions and alcohol use and other health risks are discussed in light of five conceptual models: Overload, Developmental Mismatch, Increased Heterogeneity, Transition Catalyst and Heightened Vulnerability to Chance Events. We review normative developmental transitions of adolescence and young adulthood, focusing on the domains of physical and cognitive development, identity, affiliation and achievement.

Conclusions: As shown in a selective review of empirical studies, these transitions offer important vantage points for examining increasing (and decreasing) alcohol and other drug use during adolescence and young adulthood. We conclude with a consideration of research and intervention implications.