EMERGING ADULTHOOD SERIES

THE LIFE STORY, DOMAINS OF IDENTITY, AND PERSONALITY DEVELOPMENT IN EMERGING ADULTHOOD

Integrating Narrative and Traditional Approaches

Michael W. Pratt and M. Kyle Matsuba

OXFORD

The Life Story, Domains of Identity, and Personality Development in Emerging Adulthood

EMERGING ADULTHOOD SERIES

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Series Foreword

The *Emerging Adulthood Series* examines the period of life starting at age 18 years and continuing into and through the third decade of life, now commonly referred to as emerging adulthood. The specific focus of the series is on flourishing (i.e., factors that lead to positive, adaptive development during emerging adulthood and the successful transition into adult roles) and floundering (i.e., factors that lead to maladaptive behaviors and negative development during emerging adulthood as well as delay and difficulty in transitioning into adult roles) in the diverse paths young people take into and through the third decade of life.

There is a need to examine the successes and struggles in a variety of domains experienced by young people as they take complex and multiple paths in leaving adolescence and moving into and through their 20s. Too often the diversity of individual experiences is forgotten in our academic attempts to categorize a time period. For example, in proposing his theory of emerging adulthood, Arnett (2000, 2004) identified features of the development of young people, including *feeling in-between* (emerging adults do not see themselves as either adolescents or adults), *identity exploration* (especially in the areas of work, love, and world views), *focus on the self* (not self-centered, but simply lacking obligations to others), *instability* (evidenced by changes of direction in residential status, relationships, work, and education), and *possibilities* (optimism in the potential to steer their lives in any number of desired

directions). Although this is a nice summary of characteristics of the time period, the scholarly examination of emerging adulthood has not always attempted to capture and explain the within-group variation that exists among emerging adults, often making the broad generalization that they are a relatively homogenous group. For example, emerging adults have been categorically referred to as "narcissistic," "refusing to grow up," and "failed adults." While there certainly are emerging adults who fit the profile of selfish, struggling, and directionless, there are others who are using this period of time for good. Indeed, there is great diversity of individual experiences in emerging adulthood. Hence there is a need to better examine various beliefs/attitudes, attributes, behaviors, and relationships during this period of time that appear to reflect positive adjustment, or a sense of flourishing, or conversely that lead to floundering.

For example, recent research (Nelson & Padilla-Walker, 2013) shows that young people who appear to be successfully navigating emerging adulthood tend to engage in identity exploration, develop internalization of positive values, participate in positive media use, engage in prosocial behaviors, report healthy relationships with parents, and engage in romantic relationships that are characterized by higher levels of companionship, worth, affection, and emotional support. For others who seem to be floundering, emerging adulthood appears to include anxiety and depression, poor self-perceptions, greater participation in risk behaviors, and poorer relationship quality with parents, best friends, and romantic partners. Thus, while various profiles of flourishing and floundering are starting to be identified, the current work in the field has simply provided cursory overviews of findings. This series provides a platform for an in-depth, comprehensive examination into some of these key factors that seem to be influencing, positively or negatively, young people as they enter into and progress through the third decade of life and the multiple ways in which they may flourish or flounder. Furthermore, the series attempts to examine how these factors may function differently within various populations (e.g., cultures and religious and ethnic subcultures, students vs. nonstudents, men vs. women). Finally, the series provides for a multidisciplinary (e.g., fields ranging from developmental psychology, neurobiology, education, sociology, criminology) and multimethod (i.e., information garnered from both quantitative and qualitative methodologies) examination of issues related to flourishing and floundering in emerging adulthood.

It is important to make one final note about this series. The choice to employ the term "emerging adulthood" is not meant to imply that the series will include books that are limited in their scope to viewing the third decade of life only through the lens of emerging adulthood theory (Arnett, 2000). Indeed, the notion of "emerging adulthood" as a universal developmental period has been met with controversy and skepticism because of the complex and numerous paths young people take out of adolescence and into adulthood. It is that exact diversity in the experiences of young people in a variety of contexts and circumstances (e.g., cultural, financial, familial) that calls for a book series such as this one. It is unfortunate that disagreement about emerging adulthood theory has led to a fragmentation of scholars and scholarship devoted to better understanding the third decade of life. Hence, although the term "emerging adulthood" is employed for parsimony and for its growing familiarity as a term for the age period, this series is devoted to examining broadly the complexity of pathways into and through the third decade of life from a variety of perspectives and disciplines. In doing so, it is my hope that the series will help scholars, practitioners, students, and others better understand, and thereby potentially foster, flourishing and floundering in the lives of young people in the various paths they may take to adulthood.

The Life Story, Domains of Identity, and Personality Development

In our attempt to better understand the factors that lead to flourishing and floundering during the *third* decade of life, the danger exists that we forget that the third decade of life is still attached to the numerous other decades of life that precede and follow it. The lived experiences of individuals shape the trajectories of their lives as they enter, progress through, and leave their 20s. Young people attempt to draw meaning from their experiences during this time to help them answer the age-old question, "Who am I?" The ordering of individuals' lived experiences makes up people's *life history*, but the things they learn from the experiences and the meaning they attribute to them become people's *life stories*. In this book, Drs. Michael W. Pratt and M. Kyle Matsuba provide a fascinating look into the processes that enable young people to draw information and meaning from their experiences to shape their stories or, in other words, their personal identities. The authors capture it so

well in the opening lines of their book: "As people mature, they come to develop a way of talking about who they are, what their past, present, and future experiences have been or will be, and what these experiences mean about them."

So much of the scholarly work on identity focuses broadly on concepts of exploration and commitment and a multitude of statuses that reflect the current state of one's processes of exploring and committing. Without a doubt, this is important work because it helps us better understand the development of emerging adults. However, this work seldom takes us inside the minds of young people where the actual processing of their choices and experiences (i.e., exploration) and deciding on what those choices and experiences mean for them (i.e., commitment) is taking place. The authors of this book provide a strong theoretical lens and review of existing literature to provide the foundation for the study of the development of the life story. They then present results of their own work, garnered through both quantitative empirical research and qualitative, narrative approaches, to examine the development of personality and life story during the third decade of life. The work that they present stems from a longitudinal study that followed young people from their teens, through their 20s, and into early adulthood. This approach allows them to provide an in-depth look into the role that personal narratives play in shaping the trajectories of young people and in influencing their personality and how they see themselves in regard to various aspects of their lives, including religion, romantic relationships, work, and civic engagement. The book succeeds in conveying the central role that the life story plays in shaping the development of young people. Indeed, this book employs strong scholarship, as well as the actual "voices" of emerging adults, to show that success (i.e., flourishing vs. floundering) is largely connected to the meaning that young people derive from their experiences to shape how they see themselves and the role that plays in explaining their beliefs, attitudes, choices, and behaviors during the third decade of life and beyond.

Larry J. Nelson
Series Editor

Preface

Much of our social life is occupied with conversations, and many of these conversations revolve around stories. As people mature, they come to develop a way of talking about who they are, what their past, present, and future experiences have been or will be, and what these experiences mean about them. This personal story is thus a kind of depiction of one's identity, which has been described by Dan McAdams, a personality psychologist, researcher, and theorist of narrative, as the life story. People tell these stories to others, as well as to themselves, as a way of making sense of their lives.

This is a book about the life story and the contexts of its development and expression. We consider how this phenomenon of the life story, or narrative identity (McAdams, 2015), grows and changes over the early period of its development. In doing this, we set the life story in its developmental context, from its emergence in adolescence to its consolidation in young adulthood. We follow the framework of Erik Erikson's (1963) broad stages of personality development, focusing on the early adult stages of identity, intimacy, and generativity within Erikson's model, and review research on the life story during this period of the life course.

To do this, we set the life story within the context of personality and its development during this key period, drawing on a comprehensive framework described by Dan McAdams and his colleagues, which treats

the personality as composed of three broad developing levels of the life course: first as an actor via early traits and dispositions; next as an agent via developing values, motives, and personal concerns; and finally as an author via the life story, conveying a sense of personal identity. Each of our review chapters in the book draws on this three-part model as a way of organizing the research literature on aspects of personality.

The roles of the life story and identity development are viewed as well through the lens of a range of life concerns or identity domains, including ideological domains such as religion, morality, and vocation, and various relational domains, such as the family, close peer and romantic relationships, and community concerns. In a series of chapters we review each of these domains and describe how the growth of the life story is closely linked to a thematic description of development in these different domains as well.

In addition, the book focuses on both quantitative empirical research on the development of personality and more qualitative, narrative approaches to this topic, ultimately attempting to integrate what we know from these distinctive approaches so far. In covering these different identity domains and topics, we review the research literature and then present information from our own ongoing longitudinal study following a sample of young Canadians from late adolescence (age 17) into young adulthood (age 32). We discuss relevant empirical findings from this study, and also draw frequently on narrative examples from personal life stories to illustrate and explore this development in depth through the voices of our sample.

At the end of each review chapter, we finally present a case study of the emerging adulthood of a well-known contemporary or historical figure. Our aim in doing this is to help the reader to appreciate how the approach and evidence from the book may be used to illuminate the issues in an individual life within the wider research context, in a concrete and meaningful fashion. In the concluding chapter, we aim to tie together these various approaches and lines of evidence to draw some broader, though preliminary, understanding of the meaning of this body of work on the life story and its contexts, for future study of personality development.

Our book is part of a series focused on the period of "emerging adulthood," a term introduced by Jeffrey Arnett (2000) to describe the period between adolescence and young adulthood, when youth in modern societies focus on settling into adult roles and lives. This period overlaps completely with the development and consolidation of

the life story, and so we have drawn extensively on recent work by Arnett and many others on this emerging adulthood period, which we discuss throughout the book. We believe that the research on this topic is illuminating for our discussion of the life story and its role in personality development. We hope that the reader will find these various perspectives of interest in understanding the contexts of the life story and its role in the development of the personality.

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The Life Story, Domains of Identity, and Personality Development in Emerging Adulthood

1

Personality Development in Emerging Adulthood

Erikson's Legacy

In this opening chapter, we outline our purposes in writing this book and describe the key role of Erik Erikson's theory in our framework for thinking about our topic. One of us (Pratt) remembers hearing Erikson as a keynote speaker in the mid-1980s at a large conference in San Francisco. It was an inspiring moment for me. Erikson was in his mid-80s at the time, and his voice was quiet, but his presence was commanding, and for me, as for many in the audience that day, it was a chance to touch the history of our field.

In this book, however, we argue that Erikson's work is of more than historical interest. Indeed, Erikson's eight-stage theory of personality development still has much richness and depth to recommend it, and it has not received enough attention in the way of systematic research to date. Erikson's particular focus on the period of transition from adolescence into young adulthood (the fifth of his eight stages) was on identity development (Erikson, 1968). Close attention to Erikson's work on identity can provide a way of illuminating the many complex and blurry corners that are part of the transition from adolescence to adulthood in personality development.

The Book's Purposes

This book has three interrelated purposes. It is, first and foremost, designed to discuss the development of personality during the key period of the transition from adolescence to adulthood, which has come to be called "emerging adulthood" by many scholars of development in recent years (Arnett, 2014a). Our aim is to discuss the research on this transition period, drawing on a broad model of personality formulated by McAdams and Pals (2006), and further elaborated by McAdams and Olson (2010), which includes three distinctive "levels" or layers of

personality: (1) behavioral traits, (2) characteristic motives and values, and (3) the most novel of these levels, the life story. The book covers research on these different levels with regard to a broad set of developmental tasks or contexts that are relevant to this period of the life span across a series of chapters, including the development of religious ideology, morality, work and vocation, family relations, peer and romantic relationships, civic engagement, and general emotional adjustment. Each of these topics or domains can be seen as closely linked to and reflective of the major Eriksonian task of this entire period from adolescence to adulthood, that of identity development, and this is how we approach the reviews here. Most of the domains can also be seen as reflective of aspects of socialization, representing important institutions within society: the family, peers, romantic relations, religion, civic engagement, and work, which operate in the socialization of the self and identity across the life course (Pratt & Hardy, 2014). We focus particularly in several chapters on the role of the family of origin in personality development in emerging adulthood across the three levels of the McAdams model of personality just mentioned. We explain this model further in Chapter 2.

Our second aim is to focus on the use of mixed methodology approaches, particularly on the integration of narrative and traditional questionnaire approaches to these topics in personality development. We examine both quantitative and qualitative research approaches in our reviews, and try to both compare and integrate these two literatures as much as possible, highlighting work drawing on mixed methods in our discussions. This period of the life course is especially important because it represents the time during which the sense of personal identity becomes consolidated, according to Erikson's (1963) stage formulations on personality growth. Identity development in the Erikson model has been studied traditionally by the use of both interview and questionnaire measures (e.g., Marcia, 1993). More recently, however, it has also been examined using narrative methods to elicit people's "life stories," designed to investigate how meaning is made and interpreted by youths as they move through this transition period and come to acquire an established personal "narrative identity" (McAdams & McLean, 2013). We focus on both of these methodologies, traditional and narrative, and particularly their correspondence and divergence in examining these various domains of personal identity in the chapters that follow. Erikson's work can be seen as the major predecessor to both of these streams of identity research (McLean & Pratt, 2006), and we describe this history later in this chapter.

Our third broad aim in the book is to discuss a research program, the Futures Study, on which we have been engaged for some years, studying the transition from adolescence to early adulthood in a sample of young Canadians over a period of 15 years, from ages 17 to 32. We want to describe the shape of the research results from this work that are relevant to personality development, as well as to highlight the voices of members of this sample of young people in the narratives that they tell about their lives. We use a methodology that elicits personal stories of particular autobiographical events, based on the approach of McAdams (1993), which are closely integrated into the person's sense of identity. These personal stories are presented throughout the book to illustrate and further deepen understanding of the research questions that are central to issues of development during this key emerging adulthood period of the life course. Later in this chapter, we provide a descriptive overview of this research program, and details of the methodology are discussed in Chapter 3.

Overview of Chapter 1

In this chapter, we cover the general purposes of this book, and more specifically, its focus on the Eriksonian approach to personality development. We use Erikson's own life as a way of illustrating some of the issues of the transition to adulthood. Erikson's theory plays a role in the development of identity research streams, both traditional and narrative in nature, and we outline both of these notions here. The idea of emerging adulthood (Arnett, 2000) as a framework for thinking about historical changes in the patterning of the adolescent to adult transition is covered, and some of its ambiguities are discussed. Finally, we present the Futures Study of young Canadians, and summarize its general features, the sample itself, and its broad patterns of development as background for its use throughout the rest of the book.

▲ Identity Development in the Life of Erik Erikson: A Brief Case Study

Erik H. Erikson is in many respects the father of modern psychological research on identity and its development. His theory of personality and ego development, involving eight stages of psychosocial development

across the life span, was first published in his book, *Childhood and Society* (1950). For the rest of the 40 or so remaining years of his long life, Erikson continued to elaborate and clarify this broad vision of human development and its sociocultural context. But the central period of interest and focus for Erikson's lifelong work was always identity development, characterizing the period of adolescence to young adulthood (Erikson, 1968). In the next section, we will outline his general model in more detail. Here, we want to introduce the ways in which identity development, the growth of a clear, coherent sense of self, was linked to Erikson's own personal life during this transition period, as an illustration and perhaps also as something of a partial explanation for the direction that his theorizing took.

Erikson was born in 1902, to a Danish mother from a Jewish family background. His father was apparently an unknown Danish man who was not identified by his mother. Erikson's mother left Denmark with the birth of her child, and settled in Karlsruhe, a smaller city in Germany. Erik's health was cared for by a Jewish pediatrician, Dr. Homburger, who fell in love with his mother and married her when Erik was very young. Erikson was adopted by Homburger and was not told for some years about the adoption. His name was changed to Erik Homburger, but his attendance at Jewish school with his obvious Nordic physical features led to his being teased as a child (Coles, 1970). Eventually, Erikson learned the complicated truth of his family history. He obviously struggled to sort out this past and its meaning for his own sense of identity. One of the most telling later indications of this was his eventual change of his name to Erik Homburger Erikson in his early 30s, after immigrating to the United States. This name seems to represent, as names do, a significant marker. Calling himself literally Erik, son of Erik, suggests that he was a son of himself and of his own unique journey.

Erikson, though obviously brilliant in retrospect, was a rather indifferent student (Coles, 1970), perhaps partly in reaction to his "outsider" status in the school communities he attended in Germany. As we will see, this outsider status was a continuing and likely key theme in Erikson's work life as well. His stepfather wanted Erikson to become a pediatrician, but Erik, perhaps predictably, was not swayed by these wishes. After finishing his high school level education, he decided to travel for some time to sort out his sense of self and purpose, as well-off European youths often did. Erikson hiked, and read, and visited the great Italian cities, especially Florence, which he loved (Coles, 1970). He was a good artist, and was drawn to art as a possible profession.

After several years of travel through Europe and Italy, he returned to his home and enrolled in art school, but this venture was also short-lived. By this time, at age 25, Erikson was living back in Karlsruhe without any clear sense of the life direction he wanted.

At this point, then, Erikson's story seems to fit quite well the "emerging adulthood" themes that Arnett (2000) articulated as typical of this period of the life span in modern cultures nearly a century later (we discuss these in more detail later in the chapter). These include a strong focus on identity exploration, a sense of uncertainty as well as wide possibilities for the future, and feelings of being "in-between" childhood and adulthood. Erikson at 25 had not found his vocational place in the grown-up world. At the same time, his culture and environment provided considerable space for the exploration of possibilities, and did not make his searching or uncertainty into a "problem" (Coles, 1970). This sort of tolerance may have its costs, but it can also be very beneficial to the individual's growth and development (Arnett, 2007). Just as important, Erikson seems to have had the capacity and the will to tolerate this level of exploration and uncertainty based on the promise that eventually something would work out from this extended period of what he later came to call, in his theory, a "psychosocial moratorium." Not all youths today (or likely those early in the 20th century either) may have been as fortunate as Erikson to have the means or opportunity to take on such a moratorium (Hendry & Kloep, 2007).

At this juncture in his life, Erikson received a fateful letter from his high school friend, Peter Blos, subsequently a very famous psychoanalyst and theorist of adolescent development (Coles, 1970). Blos had been engaged as a tutor for the children of Dorothy Burlingame, a well-to-do American woman who was receiving psychoanalytic treatment from, and sometimes staying with, the family of Sigmund Freud, the founder of psychoanalysis. The position involved working particularly with Freud's youngest daughter Anna (also a very well-known child psychoanalyst and writer). Eventually, Blos's employers (Anna Freud and Burlingame) decided to offer him a full-time position and the chance to establish a school for the children of these two families. Blos decided to accept this position, but realized that he needed assistance in teaching in this situation, so he wrote to Erikson, inviting him to join him as a full-time teacher at the new school. Erikson, his artistic career not seeming to be moving along very quickly, was attracted to this offer, and decided to move to Vienna and assume this new role (Coles, 1970). In doing so, he put himself into a setting that was to change the direction of his life

course dramatically. This decision would certainly be a prime candidate for a "turning point" in the Erik Erikson life story.

By all accounts, the young Erikson was an excellent teacher, and one who was open to exploration and collaboration with the students he taught in the creation of novel learning settings (Coles, 1970). At first, he served mainly as the instructor of art and history in the new school, but gradually he became more involved in the psychological underpinnings of children's education, with Anna Freud as his guide and eventually his personal psychoanalyst for a "training analysis" as well, which was part of the program required in Freud's model. For in a household and a movement such as Freud's, the appropriate form for understanding and creating pedagogy quite naturally required the effort to understand the self through the new method of psychoanalysis. Through this creative process, Erikson became increasingly engaged in the psychoanalytic world, and gradually found himself drawn to it as a vocation (Coles, 1970). Nevertheless, Erikson remained particularly interested in the intersection of psychoanalysis as a methodology for self-exploration in adults and its implications for the development and education of the child. During these years, he also pursued training in the new educational formulations of Maria Montessori, which he drew on in his role as a teacher of the children at the school. From these various roots, 20 years later, came his major life's work, *Childhood and Society*, in 1950. While Erikson's mature theoretical framework of development covered eight periods of the life span, from infancy to old age, the core issue of this model is surely the development of a sense of identity, the first of his adult stages, which comes to the fore in the periods of adolescence and what is now referred to as "emerging adulthood."

During the next few years, the period from his late 20s to early 30s, Erikson achieved many milestones on the way to a clearer sense of his own adulthood. He eventually studied within the Vienna Psychoanalytic Society, and was supervised by a consortium of psychoanalytic luminaries surrounding the Freuds. In 1933, he graduated from this august body as a trained analyst. For various reasons, largely to do with sociopolitical developments in Hitler's takeover of Germany, Erikson and his family chose to move to the United States, and Erik took up a position as a child psychoanalyst in Boston. He also became attached to the Harvard Medical School, remarkable for someone with so little formal educational background.

During this same period of time, as Coles (1970) notes, several other key role changes took place in Erikson's life. Perhaps the most

momentous was his courtship and marriage to a young woman of Canadian-American background named Joan Serson. Serson was a dance instructor with considerable academic credentials, including an undergraduate degree in education from Columbia University and a master's degree in sociology from the University of Pennsylvania. Their marriage in 1930 was followed by her inclusion in the Burlingham-Freud school program as an additional faculty member. Indeed, Erik and Joan had a continuing partnership over the next 60 years, until Erikson's death in 1992, and her influences on his work were profound. They were partners in many creative ways in both work and life. For example, Coles (1970, p. 24) notes of their early marriage: "In retrospect, one can see that both of them [Erik and Joan] were struggling to establish a life rooted in both art and science." The scope of this joint interest and perspective was striking as it grew over the next half century.

The Eriksons' transition to marriage was followed shortly by their transition to parenthood. By the time the Eriksons left for America in 1933, they had two young sons and were managing the complicated process of work-family balance through collaboration and careful structuring of their lives. Joan taught at the school and brought her infants to be cared for and reared as a part of the students' lives. These two transitions, to marriage and to parenthood, are typically important demographic markers for the attainment of adulthood in many cultures around the world, and are seen as accompanying the transition out of emerging adulthood today by Arnett (2013) and others.

What is important to understand is that these various role transitions to adulthood, career investment, marriage, and parenthood are key influences on identity development and, in a larger sense, on all of personality as well. As we discuss in Chapter 2, the attainment of these roles involving the acceptance of mature social responsibility to others and to society has been argued to have an impact on the key features of personality. Roberts and Mroczek (2008) term this the "social investment" model of personality development, which shapes increases in personality traits such as conscientiousness and agreeableness at this period of the life span. However, such social investment likely influences not only personality traits but also goals and values and the life story, as we discuss throughout this book. With regard to Erikson's own life story, these transitions clearly shaped the growth of a sense of personal identity in his own life, as they have in other lives throughout history and across cultural contexts (Coles, 1970). This book will trace

evidence for this in our sample of emerging adults as they travel their own personal journeys.

On the other side of this momentous development, we have Erikson moving into the world of adulthood as a mature clinician and scholar, writing creatively and confidently regarding the applications of his views on psychoanalytic thought to the explanations of personality development in varied social and cultural contexts. Erikson, as an independent thinker and observer, found in psychoanalysis a stimulating perspective from which to view development across the life span. Perhaps because of his independence and openness of thought, and his "outsider" status with regard to the Freud circle (Coles, 1970), Erikson was able to connect to these ideas in a novel and creative way across his long career in the United States. Erikson was a theorist, a clinical observer, and a biographer of several contemporary and historical figures, such as Gandhi and Martin Luther. His writing ranged widely across many issues, none more penetratingly than that of identity, which he continued to discuss, and to treat, throughout his lifetime. We turn now to a discussion of the broad outlines of Erikson's life span framework on personality development as it evolved and its relations to identity development.

An Outline of Erikson's Broader Theory of Personality

In this section, we briefly summarize Erikson's general model of personality development in adolescence and adulthood, describing the stage framework he initially presented in his 1950 book and elaborated throughout the rest of his career, and its similarities and differences with the Freudian psychoanalytic model of development, which Erikson expanded a great deal. We especially want to stress the central role of identity in this framework and the ways in which Erikson reoriented Freud's ideas by bringing his stages into contact with the wider social and cultural context of human lives (Coles, 1970).

Erikson's model describes a sequence of eight stages across the life span, which are each focused around a particular "crisis" or challenging developmental task that is appropriate to human development during this time period. These tasks are set in the context of the evolutionary and biological features of the human life course, as well as in the context of broad human social and societal institutions, which also show

significant cultural variability. The first four of these stages, from infancy to late childhood, are quite closely linked to Freud's stages of *psychosexual* development, although they are framed much more broadly, as *psychosocial* stages, by Erikson. The last four stages (identity, intimacy, generativity, and ego integrity) are an expansion of Freud's single stage of "mature adult sexuality," and provide a much more complex, psychosocial view of personality and its development over this adulthood part of the life span. Identity development, in later adolescence in the Erikson framework, is the first of these mature stages, and provides a crucial introduction to adulthood and all that follows.

The Erikson stages have several characteristic features that serve to integrate the overall model. Erikson (1968) described the model in general terms: "Each of the stages comes to its ascendance, meets its crisis, and finds its lasting resolution, toward the end of the period mentioned" (p. 95). Each of these points deserves some discussion as a way of illuminating the Erikson framework. In Erikson's view (as even more so with Freud's), the stages are seen as deeply rooted in the biological and evolutionary legacy of the human life cycle. This is most clear in the earliest of the stages, those up through adolescence, during which there are marked developmental changes in capacities and interests, including sexual development, that lead to the ascendance of certain tasks or "crises" (maybe not the best term given its everyday language connotations of severity). Nevertheless, this biological underpinning is also true of the adult stages, including the formation of stable romantic and sexual partnerships during the intimacy stage, the development of a capacity for caring for future generations during the period of active childrearing and parenting, and the resolution of a sense of completion of the life course and preparation for death during the period of ego integrity. All of these adult stages thus are deeply embedded in the natural life cycle of the individual (and of the family). This is the driving force of the developmental process (the reference to coming to ascendance in the quote cited previously).

Each of the stages is also characterized by a set of culturally typical patterns for resolving or dealing with these issues, as depicted in the idea of "meeting its crisis" in the previous quote from Erikson's writing. Identity is an excellent example of this point, as Erikson's (1968) discussion shows. Different social and cultural settings provide different characteristic ways of dealing with the need to settle on a coherent sense of identity. Modern societies, Erikson argued, are likely to provide an extended period of time for the exploration of different identity choices by

young people, without serious consequences for making tentative and changing patterns of commitment. Erikson termed this a period of *psychosocial moratorium*, and it is even more characteristic of the period now designated as emerging adulthood, as we discuss later (Arnett, 2007). Traditional societies, on the other hand, require much more rapid and less autonomous choices for one's vocation—farmers' sons, especially the first born, get started early in training to take over the land, for example. One of us (Pratt) was fortunate, or not, depending on how you view his writing talents, to not have this inevitable tradition passed on to him, mainly because his father recognized how hopeless he looked as a future farmer. Of course, there must always be some degree of latitude for human differences. Nevertheless, typical ways of handling these stage crises differ by context and culture, and shape their outcomes to a large degree.

Erikson's third point, "finds its lasting resolution," is also key to his framework. There are a range of potential outcomes available within each of the stages. Erikson focuses attention in his model on broadly successful versus unsuccessful adaptations, as a way of framing what he sees as the core achievements of each personality stage. For identity, this positive pole is called *identity achievement*. For Erikson, it reflects the sense, both conscious and unconscious for this master clinician, that one has developed a self across various tasks or domains, such as vocation, ideology, sexual identity, and so on, that is comfortable and feels genuine, providing a sense of optimism for the future as well as satisfaction with past and present. The dangerous pole in this stage for Erikson is *identity confusion*—as it sounds, a sense of uncertainty and a feeling of being less than genuine and confident in the expression of self in one's life experiences.

As we discuss later, this model for identity has been elaborated and developed in several directions following the original Erikson framework. What it illustrates for us are the fundamental features of each of the stages, representing more versus less successful outcomes from the processes at each point, which represent the two broad poles of stage resolution. A further point to be derived from the general theory is the impact of such resolutions for later development. Erikson's idea of a "lasting resolution" also conveys the point that how a stage "turns out" has implications for how one deals with the following task or crisis. A successful resolution of identity issues, for example, should be predictive of a better likelihood of resolving the next period's crisis, that of intimacy (e.g., Beyers & Seiffge-Krenke, 2010), in a successful fashion.

This idea makes the scope of the model thoroughly developmental across the life span. However, Erikson (1968), the clinician, is careful to point out in his writings that there is much possibility for renegotiating and dealing with past crises and outcomes during the tasks of later stages. This optimism is largely in contrast to the pessimism of Freud, who generally argued that early developmental problems were deeply persistent and very difficult to resolve.

Understanding the implications of this idea fully also means recognizing that the stages are more complex than a simple linear progression. Erikson (e.g., 1968) came to represent and detail quite fully the ways in which the various elements at each stage of personality growth have both precursors and legacies with regard to characteristic elements at the other stages. This model was realized fully in the Eriksonian chart of eight stages across eight different periods of the life cycle—a chart that represents a kind of "history" of each of these characteristic features as they unfold. By implication, it also makes the whole framework much more complex, less discrete with regard to each period, and in our view, much more interesting with regard to the processes of development. In particular, as we discuss throughout the book, the later adult features in the Erikson system, particularly intimacy and generativity, have important precursors at the earlier level of identity development (e.g., Pratt & Lawford, 2014).

Two Approaches to Identity Based in Erikson's Theorizing

Erikson's theoretical framework on identity has been pursued more recently in two fairly distinctive ways of great interest for the present book (McLean & Pratt, 2006). In the late 1960s, James Marcia (1966) formalized Erikson's rich writings on the topic of identity growth patterns by developing a model of *identity statuses,* based on the extent to which young people have explored and committed to a personal identity. There were four such statuses in the original Marcia framework: identity diffusion (low exploration, low commitment), identity foreclosure (low exploration, high commitment), identity moratorium (high exploration, low commitment), and identity achievement (high exploration, high commitment) (Kroger & Marcia, 2011). The first and last of these were intended to capture what Erikson had meant by the "dangerous" or negative pole of adaptation that might result during this period (identity diffusion) versus the optimal, positive pole of

identity achievement. The intermediate statuses of identity foreclosure and identity moratorium were seen as both way stations in development and possible alternative outcomes of the developmental process. These four statuses were thus defined as expressions of two processes, exploration and commitment, and captured all logical possibilities for the presence or absence of these two processes (Kroger & Marcia, 2011).

Empirical research in this status tradition used both interview and questionnaire methods to establish membership in these categorical statuses. A great deal of such research has been conducted on this construction over the past 50 years (see Meuss, 2011), and there have been many interesting and fruitful findings (Kroger & Marcia, 2011). There have also been many proposals for revision of this simple model to accommodate the complexity of findings by adding some further statuses and interpreting these in more detailed ways. We discuss this identity status revision work further in Chapter 2 and throughout the book.

An alternate framework on identity that also derives from aspects of Erikson's writings and theorizing, however, has developed more recently. This is based on a different approach to thinking about identity and to studying it, termed the *narrative identity* model (McAdams, 2011). This model uses a different methodology (typically personal stories elicited from participants about their lives), and constructs the notion of identity in an alternative way, as a *life story*. The idea of the life story is the notion that people in most modern cultures, at least, attempt to make meaning and sense of their lives by generating an account of their past, present, and future selves that is grounded in critical episodes of their experiences and helps to generate a sense of unity and purpose across both time and context (McLean & Pratt, 2006). This approach is framed not around a set of categories, but rather around measures of the quality and expressiveness of meaning (sometimes termed "autobiographical reasoning") that is revealed in the narrative (McAdams, 2008; McAdams & McLean, 2013).

This approach defines identity through a different set of procedures than those used in the Marcia status model, but it does not necessarily represent an antithetical framework for the understanding of identity. Indeed, the authors of this framework, principally McAdams and his students and colleagues, see their approach to identity as growing out of Erikson's body of work as well (McAdams, 2001; McLean & Pratt, 2006). Erikson's rich clinical work and writings on individual psychobiography in his case studies and analyses of historical figures such as Martin Luther and Gandhi reflected the potential of this

narrative approach, and encouraged the growth of this framework for studying the life story (McAdams, 2006). This is the framework that is most salient for the present book.

The question of how the status and narrative identity approaches may be both similar and different is partly a theory-driven one, but also an empirical issue (Alisat & Pratt, 2012; McLean & Pratt, 2006). The evidence to date on this point suggests that there is some modest overlap between the two frameworks in describing more and less adaptive resolutions to the issues of identity formation. For example, McLean and Pratt reported on analyses, based in the Futures Study data set that is one focus of the present book, indicating that individuals who were less likely to show identity exploration or commitment based on measures from the Marcia framework were also less likely to tell personal narratives that were high in meaningfulness (see also Dumas et al., 2009). However, McLean and Pratt (2006) also noted that the degree of overlap between these two approaches to identity was modest, and it seemed likely that the two approaches, by concentrating on somewhat different features of identity, would also describe this differently to a considerable extent (see also Alisat & Pratt, 2012; McLean et al., 2014).

In the present volume, we will explore these issues in greater detail. We want to show how traditional and narrative approaches may serve to illuminate both similarities and differences in models of identity growth and development. However, it is certainly our contention that both of these approaches have drawn on the Erikson framework to understand this central issue in the transition to adulthood (and beyond), and that analyzing and synthesizing these two approaches will give us a richer picture of this critical topic in personality development across a range of topic and content areas.

▲ Emerging Adulthood: A New Stage for Erikson's Model?

About 15 years ago, Jeffrey Arnett (2000) introduced the idea of a new stage in development, which he called "emerging adulthood." This stage referred, at least initially, to the period of about age 18 to 25 in the life course, a period after adolescence and before the attainment of young adulthood. Relative to the standard treatment of Erikson's theory, this would lie between the identity and intimacy "stages" in ego or personality development. Over the past few years, this period

of emerging adulthood has been extended in many cases to the late 20s, particularly in modern societies as changes in the workforce and education, as well as demographic trends, have further delayed full entry into adult roles. Arnett (2007, p. 69), more recently argues, in the context of distinguishing the end of emerging adulthood: "It makes more sense to reserve 'young adulthood' for the age period from about age 30 to about age 40 (or perhaps 45) because by age 30, most people in industrialized societies have settled into the roles usually associated with adulthood: stable work, marriage or other long-term partnership, and parenthood." Indeed, the new journal, *Emerging Adulthood*, founded by Arnett and the Society for the Study of Emerging Adulthood in 2013, explicitly states that its mandate focuses on development during the period from ages 18 to 29 (van Dulmen, 2013).

Arnett (2000, 2007, 2011) has consistently argued that this period is best understood as a new stage in development, and is characterized by a number of key features, which we discuss later. The most notable of these is perhaps the central role of identity exploration, which was at the core of Erikson's (1968) thinking about identity in modern society, as discussed previously. On the other hand, Arnett's ideas have been challenged by a number of other theorists, including Hendry and Kloep (2007), and more recently, James Cote (2014), largely critiquing the need for, or evidence in support of, considering this period as a new and distinctive stage. After we examine Arnett's framework, we will consider these critiques. However, it is important to recognize that Arnett's view (2014a) of "stage" is not necessarily the traditional model in developmental psychology research. In a recent address he explained, ". . . to me, stages are useful heuristics. They can give us a helpful framework for understanding development as long we acknowledge that they are not universal (they depend on cultural and historical context) and they are not uniform (they do not occur in the same way for everyone, everywhere) . . ." (p. 157). This definition would hardly have satisfied the traditional notions of stage as described by Piaget (1970) or Kohlberg (1969), for whom universality and uniformity were key properties of stages.

In his initial description of emerging adulthood, Arnett (2000, 2007) articulated five basic features as representative of the unique character of individuals in this age period: identity exploration, feelings of instability, a period of predominant self-focus, feeling oneself in-between, and a sense of possibilities (frequently identified with a characteristically high level of optimism about the future). These five features were

initially empirically based on a set of interviews collected by Arnett with 18- to 29-year-old American youths (Arnett, 2014a). It seems that the first of these characteristics, the age of *identity exploration*, may be the feature that most closely links Arnett's model to Erikson's stage of identity formation, which has been traditionally located during the period of adolescence, though Erikson himself (1968) viewed this period as frequently extending into the mid-20s. Erikson was also highly sensitive to the context-dependent nature of this experience, which depends a great deal on the sociocultural opportunities for a "moratorium" period. Arnett's argument has been strongly linked to the changing demographic trends in societies like the United States and Canada, where the assumption of adult role responsibilities, such as commitment to work, to a romantic partner, and to parenthood, has been increasingly delayed in the past 30 years, owing to various social forces (Pew Research Foundation, 2014). Such cultural forces have clearly fostered a more extended period of exploration before commitment, though the specifics of how this exploration is expressed seem complex, as we discuss later.

Instability is the second key feature to which Arnett (2000) draws attention. For example, he points out that young people during this period show a great deal of diversity in terms of their residential statuses. The large majority of adolescents younger than 17 or 18 years in modern cultures reside with their parents. After this time, however, they frequently move out of, and then sometimes back into, their parents' homes. This phenomenon has acquired its own name as an identifying characteristic of these young Millennials (the "Boomerang Generation"). They may spend periods of time residing at university, working in another location, or cohabiting with a romantic partner, only to move back home again for financial or personal reasons (e.g., Arnett, 2000). This instability of residence gradually settles down, so that by the age of 30 most young adults in the United States and Canada have established their own homes and families. Still, the age of acquisition of adult roles in many such societies has become later on average over the past generation (Arnett, 2007).

A third feature—the seeming *self-preoccupation* of emerging adults—has generated considerable controversy. Arnett (2013) argues that this is a positive feature of this period of the life course, one that makes sense in terms of the need to prepare for the assumption of adult roles and to achieve a resolution of the explorations of the self that characterizes this period. Others are not as generous in their interpretations (e.g., Twenge, 2013; Twenge et al., 2012). Twenge marshals evidence on changes in

values, on growth in narcissism, and on lower levels of empathy that this self-absorption is an indicator of what she terms "Generation Me" among current college-aged youths versus their predecessors in earlier generations. This term is meant to characterize a rather selfish focus that goes along with an accompanying lower interest and investment in the needs and perspectives of others. Arnett (2013), of course, disagrees.

One of Arnett's (2000) signature findings has been the strong feelings of being "in between" childhood/adolescence and adulthood that are expressed by 18- to 29-year-olds. Surveys have shown quite clearly that when asked about their feelings regarding their attainment of adulthood, youths in this age range are most likely to describe themselves as feeling both like adults and not like adults (i.e., choosing the option "yes and no" in answer to this question more often than "no," which is typical of adolescents, and "yes," which is naturally typical of most adults). These self-report data suggest that emerging adults tend to make the sort of distinctions that one would expect in terms of their own conscious awareness of developmental markers during this period, typically articulating criteria such as being able to make important life decisions independently and being financially responsible for oneself as signs of full adulthood (Arnett, 2013). Interestingly, these findings on the most important criteria for adulthood are also said to be widely shared across modern cultures in recent surveys (Arnett, 2014a).

The final feature discussed by Arnett as characteristic of those in this period is a *sense of possibilities*, typically evidenced by general optimism about the future. Arnett (2014a) reports data from several surveys that indicated that young people are both stressed and optimistic about their future possibilities, which they feel strongly will be better than those of their own parents' generation. For instance, nearly 90% of emerging adult youths in the United States in a recent survey agreed with the item, "I am confident that someday I will get what I want out of life," while 77% agreed that "I believe that, overall, my life will be better than my parents' lives have been" (Arnett, 2014a). Given current economic conditions around the world following the Great Recession of 2008, this does seem a tad overly optimistic! Again, however, these findings are reported to be quite common across both varied cultures and social class groups. Others, however, dispute these findings and report that working-class and lower-class youths are much less optimistic than their middle-class counterparts (Hendry & Kloep, 2007).

Evidently, then, there is considerable disagreement about the generality of the evidence regarding the "emerging adulthood" period, as

we have just reviewed. In addition, however, there has also been considerable dispute about the theoretical nature and status of the construct itself. Most notably, there have been many questions about the claim that it represents a new "stage" of development. In addition, from a more sociological perspective, there have been questions about its universality and about the factors that may underpin some of these phenomena (e.g., Cote, 2014). Cote argues that one of the main problems is the conflation of different uses of the term, particularly between a simple descriptive usage to refer to the transition period between adolescence and adulthood, and the more freighted notion of a new "stage" in development, for which Arnett (2000, 2007) argues. As Cote says, "What muddies the water most is a conceptual inconsistency that can be found in this literature wherein, depending on their purpose, writers switch between using the term emerging adulthood in some instances as a description of a transitional age period and in other instances in support of Arnett's stage formulation . . . " (Cote, 2014, p. 179). Cote sees Arnett as being guilty of this conceptual muddying. He goes on to document a number of limitations in both the data on which Arnett bases his formulations and the conceptual problems of the stage idea.

In this, Cote follows and extends the comments of others, such as Hendry and Kloep (2007), who pointed out the many limitations of traditional general stage formulations as they have been used in developmental psychology. In particular, Cote (2014) and others have been especially critical of the universalism claims of stage theories, which holds that the model should apply to all youths across cultures and classes. Instead, they argued that this conception of emerging adulthood may be reasonably applied only to higher socioeconomic status samples in modern cultures that have opportunities to choose such an extended moratorium in exploring identity development over this period. (Erikson's own life was a crystal-clear exemplar.) As we noted earlier in discussing Erikson's (1968) original model, there is already provision in the model for a range of variations in how identity exploration takes place across cultures and social classes. Erikson suggests that different cultural contexts for development during this period offer distinctive types of "psychosocial moratoria," which provide opportunities for trying out roles without serious, long-term consequences of mistaken or unsatisfying choices. Cote thus argues that Arnett's formalization of this period as a new stage is unnecessary (as well as empirically and conceptually unsupported) because the original Erikson model already handles these variations sufficiently well.

It is not our intention to try to resolve this complex dispute in the present book. We use the notion of emerging adulthood mostly as a descriptive period, and do not claim that the stage model of this quite newly minted construct is necessarily the "truth." However, the arguments that have been marshaled around these positions have helped to generate research, and have served to illuminate the features of this crucial period in clearer terms and the boundary conditions under which these features are manifested. At a minimum, we believe that this construct extends the ideas of Erikson in interesting ways. In particular, it also guides the way in which we discuss the coherence of the stage and narrative frameworks on identity development during this period, as they extend from Erikson's seminal work. We use it as a helpful descriptive, heuristic model throughout the book, acknowledging the controversies that surround its interpretation.

Introducing the Futures Study

The Futures Study was begun in 1997 as a project focused on the transition from high school to adulthood. It was developed initially by a collaboration of three investigators at Wilfrid Laurier University in Waterloo, Ontario, Canada: Bruce Hunsberger, Mark Pancer, and Mike Pratt. Hunsberger and Pancer were social psychologists, while Pratt was a developmental psychologist. A sample of nearly 1000 students was drawn from 16 high schools in the cities around the university, including both Public and Separate (generally Roman Catholic schools in Ontario) school boards. Questionnaires with a broad range of measures were collected within the 11th-grade classrooms of these schools in two separate sessions of about 30 to 40 minutes each. The study was quite wide-ranging, and was designed to investigate various aspects of this transition period, with a follow-up planned for two years later, at age 19, when students had finished high school. Measures included data on adjustment (e.g., depression, optimism), social attitudes (e.g., right wing authoritarianism), and self-reported behaviors (e.g., community and social involvement). Hunsberger was particularly interested in religion, so the data collection included a broad range of measures relevant to this topic. Pratt was particularly interested in the family, parenting, personal narratives, and moral development, so measures of these topics were more expansive. Pancer was most interested in community engagement, so this domain was explored more extensively in this early period as well.

One of the major objectives of the study was to follow the development of students who did not go on to college or university, by beginning with a sample from high school, since we were concerned that most research focused on only the 50% to 60% or so of students in North America who went on to universities and could be studied easily in the traditional context of first-year psychology classes. Our initial ambition was to continue to follow these students over a period of about five years, which we accomplished by studying them at ages 17, 19, and 23. After this research was completed, it seemed useful and important to continue to follow the sample, and we came to think of this later period as a focus on the transition from emerging to young adulthood, studied at ages 26 and then 32 in our sample. As we did these later follow-ups, the focus of the research came to emphasize the idea of the life story and narrative more fully, following the work of Dan McAdams discussed previously, because Pratt had become especially interested in this topic, and Matsuba (located in British Columbia, who had joined the project at this point) was also interested in narrative. We thus gathered much more extensive narrative data at these last two time periods (ages 26 and 32). Partly because of that more extensive interview process, we focused on smaller samples of the participants at these two later time periods, approximately 100 at each time point. There also was considerable attrition at these later time points due to mobility and reluctance to participate in some cases. In general, however, these dropouts were not selective (see Chapter 3 for more discussion).

The project was begun before Arnett's (2000) idea of "emerging adulthood" had been described. However, the focus on the transition to adulthood and how it was experienced fitted well into some of the important questions regarding this potential new framework. The suggestion that this period was becoming even more extended, which gradually appeared in this research literature (Arnett, 2011), led us to want to follow the sample into the early 30s as a way of describing this transition from emerging adulthood into young adulthood more adequately.

At the same time that we intensified our interview and life story procedures in the last two rounds, we also attempted to sample more widely from the key topics and domains that represented a part of the individual's life. At both ages 26 and 32, we included a discussion of people's views on their future selves, a key part of the life story according to McAdams (2011). At ages 26 and 32, we also added a focus on relationships with both peers and romantic partners, as well as with

parents, which had always been a part of the study. We also extended our interview and information gathering around work life. Also at age 32, we interviewed extensively regarding participants' ideas and experiences in relation to the environment because this was a feature of interest and research during this period of time for both Pratt and Matsuba (e.g., Matsuba et al., 2012).

A Composite Sketch of the Futures Study and Sample

Throughout the rest of the chapters in this book, we present considerable narrative and case study data on individuals selected from the sample as a way of helping to frame and interpret the pattern of results. Here we instead briefly sketch a *composite* portrait of this 15-year developmental period in the lives of our sample of Canadian emerging adults. We discuss the basic demographic features of the sample, and then also make a few general points regarding average developmental trends in their lives. We don't believe that there is such a thing as a "typical" participant in our sample, but this sketch provides a context for understanding the process of development, and also a kind of background for the individual case studies below.

Demographics

Participants in the Futures Study sample were studied at five time points, approximately at ages 17, 19, 23, 26, and 32. At each of these rounds, more women than men participated in the study, and this overrepresentation of women increased somewhat over time, from 59% at age 17 to 71% at age 32, as men became somewhat more difficult to contact and re-recruit (we are by no means the first study to find men a tougher sell on research!). Two-thirds of the original participants attended public schools; the rest attended separate schools (Roman Catholic based). At age 17, 88% of participants had been born in Canada. At age 32, we asked participants to indicate if they belonged to a "visible minority." Only about 10% said they did, so participants remained largely of European-Canadian origin. At age 17, about 21% of the sample reported that their parents were separated or divorced—this had increased only slightly by age 26 (to about 25%). This sample is probably somewhat more likely to come from an intact family than Canadian samples overall (Canadian national census rates for divorce have been in the 35% range for the

past few decades). Parental educational attainment was quite high in the sample, with the mean level being reported by the participants as "completed some college or university." Participants at age 17 reported that their family's income was above average (37%) or average (57%). Only 6% said it was "below average." Self-reports of high school grades averaged 74, or about a B in the Ontario marking system at the time. Overall, then, this was a sample that was somewhat skewed toward women, somewhat above average on family social class, and reasonably successful academically.

Patterns of Role Development From Ages 17 to 32

Development of adult role status in this transition is important to follow and sets a context for the various chapters that lie ahead. Here we focus on work and family formation data only (see Figure 1.1). For work, the number of participants employed full-time (35 or more hours per week) increased from only 4% at age 17, to 52% at 19, and then fairly steadily onward to 63% at age 23 to 74% at age 26 and 83% at age 32. Even at age 17, about 65% of the sample was employed at least part-time, however.

Participation in a "committed romantic relationship" was assessed from age 23 onward, and rose from 50% at age 23 to 73% at age 26 to 81% at age 32. Only 3% at age 19 described themselves as living with

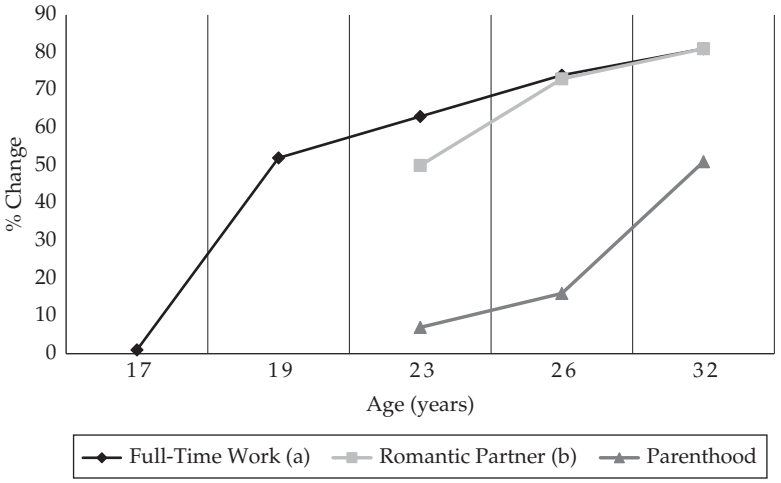

Figure 1.1. Changes in percentages of adult role participation over time in the Futures Study: (a) 35 hours or more/week; (b) "committed" romantic partner.

a partner, but unfortunately, no data were collected on simple involvement in a "committed" relationship before age 23. Another major role transition in family formation is marked by the presence of children. Overall, only 7% reported having one or more children at age 23, whereas 16% did so at age 26, and 51% did so at age 32 (we did not ask this before age 23). These parenthood data seem quite comparable to emerging adulthood data reported by Arnett (2013) in the United States, in that the transition to parenthood takes place on average around the age of 30, corresponding closely with the sharp increase from age 26 to age 32 in this sample.

Development in Specific Life Domains. Religion is a key element of personal *ideology development* according to Erikson. At age 17, students reported that they were Roman Catholic (33%), Protestant Christians (26%), members of non-Christian religions (5%), or Nones or Unsure (28%). The extent of this last category likely reflects the somewhat weaker religious orientation of Canadian society overall compared with the United States (Bibby, 1993), where the percentage of religious "Nones" (not the Roman Catholic version, but those who have no religious affiliation!) is growing, but still remains lower even now (Pew Research Center, 2014). Attendance at formal religious services showed a decline across this period of development (ages 17 to 26) in the sample (see Chapter 4), consistent with findings from the United States and Europe.

Civic engagement is another important aspect of the transition to adulthood and a sense of identity. Pancer et al. (2007) reported on a scale that we developed to assess various aspects of civic and organizational participation, including political, community, school, and donation activity. Only a modest number of the sample showed intensive engagement in political and community activity at age 17 (8%)—these individuals were labeled "activists" by Pancer et al. (2007); whereas the three other clusters in their analysis, "helpers, responders, uninvolved," each represented from 25% to 35% of the sample. Interestingly, given this level of individual variation, the average level of community engagement overall showed a modest decline from age 17 to age 26 in the present sample (Hardy et al., 2011). These findings are relatively compatible with data from US samples, which also showed such declines after high school into early adulthood (e.g., Hart et al., 2007).

One other aspect of civic engagement that we measured was self-reports on voting participation, though this was only assessed at ages 23 and 32. These, too, showed modest levels of participation among

these Canadian young people, although in this case, self-reported rates of consistent voting increased somewhat from age 23 (39%) to age 32 (57%). Findings in the United States also suggest a slow transition to more regular voting across the period of emerging adulthood (Finlay et al., 2011). Overall, then, civic participation seems moderate across these years in both the United States and Canada, with some smaller increases in societal behaviors like voting, but also some indication of less intensive involvement in community activity over this time.

One additional important topic that we collected data on in this study was the perceptions of our participants with regard to their own families of origin, and how these developed over time. We obtained a range of questionnaires on the family in the earliest round of the study at age 17, and used them to document an overall picture of how participants saw their families at this time (we also collected further questionnaire and narrative data at later rounds on family relations). This information on the family as a key socializing agent in early development is then used in later chapters to predict personality development across the three distinct levels of the McAdams model in the later rounds of the Futures Study.

Changes in Personal Adjustment

Finally, we collected a number of measures of adjustment on standard scales at the various time points of the Futures Study, including depression and dispositional optimism at ages 17 through 32. Comparisons across the study showed a steady, mainly linear decline in depression from late adolescence to young adulthood, though the range on these measures remained wide. The change in dispositional optimism, as might be expected, showed an inverse pattern, a modest upward trend from age 17 to age 32. These data are consistent with findings from other Canadian samples (e.g., Galambos et al., 2006), which suggested that adjustment improves overall across the period of emerging adulthood. Similar data have been obtained in US samples as well (Arnett, 2007). There is also evidence that more serious mental health conditions, such as schizophrenia and severe depression, often do manifest for the first time during this late adolescent/emerging adulthood period, so an increase in extreme variations in adjustment seems to be present as well (Arnett, 2007). The patterns in these and other adjustment data are examined in detail in Chapter 10.

In summary, the present sketch of broad trends in the lives of the Futures Study sample group presented here suggests that there is a steady movement toward greater maturity throughout this period of emerging adulthood, as would be expected (Cote, 2014). These young Canadians gradually adopted adult role responsibilities of work and family, but showed slower growth in wider, societally oriented activities like voting and civic engagement (see Chapter 9). Some aspects of involvement in formal religious institutions showed declines across this period (see Chapter 4). There was movement toward more positive patterns of adjustment across this period, though there was a great deal of variability in these findings. Indeed, the most interesting part of this book, we think, from the personality development perspective, will be the story of differences—the individual variations that describe how people come to vary in the kinds of behaviors, personal goals, values, and stories that they express about their own lives.

Outlining the Book's Chapters

In this chapter, we have covered the general purposes of the book, and more specifically, its focus on the Eriksonian approach to personality development, using Erikson's own life as a way of illustrating some of the issues of the transition to adulthood as framed by his own theory. Erikson's theory was then reviewed, and its role in the development of identity research streams, both traditional and narrative in nature, was outlined. The idea of emerging adulthood (Arnett, 2000) as a framework for thinking about historical changes in the patterning of the adolescent to adulthood transition was introduced, and some of its insights and controversies were discussed, as well as its relations to the Erikson stage model. Finally, we covered the history of the Futures Study of young Canadians making the transition to adulthood, and explained the general features of the sample and its broad patterns of development across this period.

Chapter 2 reviews research and theory on the life story, its development, and particularly its relations to other aspects of the personality. We discuss the integrative framework of McAdams and Pals (2006), who described three levels in a broad model of personality, including personality traits; personal goals, values, and projects; and the unique life story, which provides a degree of unity and purpose to the individual's life. The life story, which develops in late adolescence