Theoretical Perspectives

In this chapter, you will see how the following theoretical perspectives can be applied:

- Arnett’s theory of emerging adulthood
- ecological systems theory
- Erikson’s theory of psychosocial development
- exchange theory
- family life-cycle framework
- functionalism
- Levinson’s theory of the seasons of life
- life-course approach
- Loevinger’s theory of ego development
- Pearlin’s theory of psychological distress
- Riegel’s dimensions of development theory
- symbolic interactionism
- systems theory

Chapter Expectations

While reading this chapter, you will study:

- individual development in emerging adulthood, drawing on a variety of developmental theories
- theories and research on gender similarities and differences and their impact on individual roles
- factors that influence individual decisions about independence in emerging adulthood
- factors that influence decisions about educational and occupational choices in emerging adulthood
- how to demonstrate academic honesty by documenting sources in correct APA referencing format

Key Terms

- age of majority
- anticipatory socialization
- autonomous self
- cohort effect
- dilemma
- distress
- Dream
- ego
- fidelity
- identity
- intimacy
- life structure
- mentor
- rating scale
- resocialization
- rites of passage
- self-regulation
- semi-autonomous
- socialization

Chapter 4

Becoming an Adult
CHAPTER INTRODUCTION

Becoming an adult is a complex personal process that no longer follows the timetable set by physical maturity. In this chapter, a psychological approach to contemporary life-course theories will be used to examine emerging adulthood. The psychological tasks of the transition to adulthood will be identified. The development of men and women will be compared. How an individual’s identity is influenced by family, school, and work will be investigated. The factors that influence the decisions individuals make as they prepare for an occupation will be explored. Finally, we will study the important relationships young people develop, which serve to provide support for them as they become adults.

FIGURE 4-1 In emerging adulthood, you will leave your adolescent life behind and begin to build a unique adult life. How do you think adult life will differ from adolescent life? What aspects of your current life will you leave behind? What will your adult life include? How will those changes occur?

RESEARCH SKILLS
• developing and conducting surveys
• using in-text citations
• selecting reliable academic sources
The Transition to Adulthood

Becoming an adult is a process that begins in adolescence and continues until you are an adult in your own eyes, and in the eyes of your parents, the law, and the society in which you live. It is difficult to predict when you will be considered an adult. When you reach the age of majority, you acquire the legal responsibilities and privileges of adulthood. You can vote and sign contracts. You can also get married. When the age of majority was reduced from age 21 to 18 or 19 by each province in the 1970s, young adults were leaving school, working, getting married, and having children in their early 20s. In the 21st century, the usual signs of adulthood—leaving home and becoming self-reliant—are occurring later. Most 18 year olds in Canada are still in school and will continue to be dependent on their parents for several years. Marriage and parenthood usually occur 10 years later. This inconsistency among legal, economic, and social statuses reflects the changes in becoming an adult in Canada.

All known human societies have identifiable stages of life that define the responsibilities and privileges of individuals in their families, their communities, and their societies. Maturing from one stage to the next is often distinguished by rituals called rites of passage. Now, many rites of passage have become optional celebrations. At one time, the secondary-school graduation ceremony, where students and faculty wore medieval gowns and caps, was a significant rite of passage in North America marking the transition to adulthood. Now, some individuals and their parents don’t attend the ceremony because it is no longer the threshold of adulthood. Anthropologists have determined that roles at each stage of the life course are defined by the circumstances of the society in which they live. The stages of life are not exactly alike in all societies, nor are the role expectations of these stages.

Four Stages of the Hindu Life Cycle

In traditional Hindu society, for example, four stages of life are described in the Vedic scriptures. These stages reflect the circumstances of pre-industrial
Hindu society hundreds of years ago, and the Hindu beliefs of duty and rebirth. These stages and the rites associated with them are respected traditions, but are not observed strictly by Hindus in the 21st century.

- The first stage is *brahmacharya*, preparation, which begins at about age 10 and lasts for about 10 years. Before then, they believe, a Hindu child is not fully formed. During this first stage, the primary expectations of the individual are to remain celibate and to become educated, particularly in religious matters.

- The second stage, called *grihastha*, production, is marked by marriage. During this stage, Hindu men and women raise and care for their family and do what is economically necessary to ensure that their children prosper.

- Once the children have become established, marked by reaching the second stage themselves, Hindu parents enter the third stage of life, *vanaprastha*, meaning service. In this stage, they focus more on religious beliefs and rituals and begin to separate themselves from their families. They might gradually give away their material wealth and worldly possessions to prepare for the next stage.

- During *sannyasa*, retirement, the fourth and final stage of life, some Hindus live as religious *sadhus* (holy men) and *sadhvi* (holy women), dependent on the charity of others in the community and without any personal attachment to family or friends (Turnbull, 1985).

Hindu belief describes a life cycle in which individuals mature, marry, and raise their children. The cycle repeats for their children generation after generation. This reflects Eastern beliefs in rebirth in the cycle of life. Western beliefs describe the importance of living one life well, with a beginning and an end. Therefore, the *life-course approach* that focuses on the growth and development of an individual from infancy to old age is useful in the investigation of the transition to adulthood in Canada.
The Pace of Transition

The transition from one stage to another in the life course is influenced by the interaction of several clocks, each ticking away at its own pace (Kotre & Hall, 1990). The age of majority reflects the chronological clock and defines adulthood precisely in terms of the number of years since birth. Physical changes that result in sexual maturity and the attainment of full adult size and strength are determined by the biological clock. The psychological clock reflects how the brain is developing as individuals acquire new mental processes and more mature ways of understanding the world. The social clock sets the timetable for society’s expectations concerning when certain events should occur in the lives of individuals. Adults are expected to control their sexual and reproductive behaviour within the framework of social constraints. Becoming an adult is probably determined more by the social clock than by any other.

In Canada in the 21st century, the chronological clock continues to tick at a steady pace so that all individuals acquire privileges and responsibilities at the same age. Yet chronological age is not an accurate indication of biological, psychological, or social maturity (Schlossberg, 1987). The biological clock has speeded up, as improved nutrition and health enable bodies to mature sooner. As a result, young Canadians achieve sexual maturity and fertility in the early teen years, although full adult size is not reached until the early 20s. The psychological clock is less evident. Mental processes can be observed only when

Let’s Discuss

How might your roles in your family and in your community be changed by graduating from high school?

These graduates are celebrating the completion of secondary school. What rites of passage will be experienced in your family and community?

Figure 4-4
they are applied. When the problems that require mental processing change, it is difficult to measure whether individuals are maturing at a faster rate. The social clock changes as social norms determine when events, such as leaving home or marriage, are “on-time” or “off-time” (Bee, 1987). However, the social clock has slowed significantly over the past two decades (Côté, 2000). The pace of the life course has changed to reflect the interaction of the four clocks.

**Life-Course Theories**

As you learned in Chapter 2, life-course theories describe changes in behaviour in age-graded patterns as individuals mature (Elder, Johnson, & Crosnoe, 2003). Life-course theories are often called “developmental theories,” a term that implies improvement as well as growth. They are created by analyzing the behaviour of large groups of individuals over a long time. Quantitative data is gathered by using questionnaires to determine overall patterns of behaviour. Qualitative interviews determine how individuals describe their motivation and feelings about their behaviour. Combining quantitative and qualitative data enables researchers to identify a pattern of behaviour and suggest a possible explanation for the pattern as a theory. In their study of the life course, Francesco Billari and Chris Wilson (2001) have concluded that there is a common pattern of transition to adulthood in developed countries today.

Life-course theories began to appear in the 1950s to explain the psychological development of individuals within the social context of family, community, and society. The theories reflect the historical and cultural context in which the researchers conducted their studies. Theories attempt to explain the facts that were observed at the time. The earliest theories are the foundation for our understanding of how individuals develop from stage to stage. Because each theory takes a different point of view, social scientists still find these early theories useful. By examining the research of the past and conducting extensive research under new circumstances, social scientists develop new theories to explain human development.

Some life-course theories, such as those of Erik Erikson, Jane Loevinger, and Jeffrey Arnett, suggest that maturation occurs as individuals progress from one stage to another. Other life-course theories, such as the family life-cycle framework and Daniel Levinson’s Seasons of Life, propose that there are stages in which people change.
to become different, but not necessarily better. Finally, a third group of theories, such as Klaus Riegel’s and Leonard Pearlin’s, advocate that there are no stages, but that development reflects constant change as individuals respond to environmental influences. Life-course theorists do agree on one basic premise, however: the behaviour of individuals results from inner psychological changes in response to life circumstances (Bee, 1987). To understand individual development in the transition to adulthood, the following research questions will be explored:

What are the predictable stages in the transition to adulthood?

How do individuals progress from stage to stage?

Does development occur in the same pattern for all individuals living at the same time and in the same place?

**Erik Erikson’s Eight Stages of Life**

Erik Erikson was the first psychologist to describe predictable stages of human development from childhood through adulthood. In *Erik Erikson’s Theory of Psychosocial Development*, he depicted a series of eight stages in which an individual’s identity emerges and matures. He defines identity as an individual’s stable awareness of who he or she is, and what he or she does and believes. Erikson suggested that each stage presents a dilemma, in which the person is challenged to develop by new situations and circumstances in life (Erikson, 1959). Erikson did not attach ages to his stages. Development

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**In Focus: Erik Erikson**

Erik Erikson was born near Frankfurt, Germany, in 1902 to Karla Abrahamsen, a Danish Jew. Karla was abandoned by her partner before Erik was born, and subsequently she married Dr. Theodor Homberger in 1905. The new family moved to Karlsruhe, Germany. After finishing high school, Erikson studied to become an artist and travelled around Europe. While teaching art in Vienna, he learned to become a Montessori teacher and earned a certificate from the Vienna Psychoanalytic Society. Around this time, he became interested in the psychology of child development. While he was in Vienna, Erikson married Joan Serson, a Canadian dance teacher (Boeree, 1997). Erikson’s early life experiences could have resulted in a need to establish his own identity. He had grown up in Germany as a Jewish boy who looked Nordic. He did not learn until he was a young man that Dr. Homberger was not his father. With the rise of Nazism, Erikson and his wife decided to leave Vienna. First they moved to Copenhagen, where Erikson’s mother came from, and then to the United States in 1933. When he became an American citizen, Erik Abrahamsen Homberger established who he was by changing his name (Boeree,
of identity reflects the progress of the psychological clock. People progress through the stages, pushed or constrained by the social clock of the society in which they live. By resolving each dilemma, the individual acquires the basic strength needed to meet the challenges of the next stage in life. Failure to resolve a dilemma suggests that the person might face some difficulties later in life.

Erikson defined the dilemma from adolescence through early adulthood as “identity versus role confusion” (1980). Every individual is challenged to define who he or she is and will be in the future. This dilemma is demanding because individuals face many decisions at this time in their lives. Adolescents and young adults choose what work to do, how to be a man or a woman, and what to believe in (Bee, 1987). Until they define who they are, they remain confused about what role they will play in adulthood. In resolving this dilemma, individuals acquire the basic strength of fidelity, the ability to live by society’s standards (Erikson & Erikson, 1997). It enables individuals to make choices that serve the needs, strengths, and interests of themselves, and later, of others. Since Canadian society provides a variety

1997). Adapting Nordic tradition, he named himself not after his father but after himself. He became Erik Erikson. Erikson taught at Harvard Medical School and had a practice in child psychoanalysis. He later taught at Yale and the University of California at Berkeley. He left teaching during the McCarthy era, but continued his research and his psychoanalysis practice. He eventually returned to teaching at Harvard (Boeree, 1997).

He wrote Childhood and Society in 1950, which summarized his studies of childhood and adolescence among Aboriginal peoples and described his version of Freudian theory. In 1959, he wrote Identity and the Life Cycle: Selected Papers, which introduced his theory of identity as the focus of human development. Erik Erikson retired from teaching in 1970, but continued to research and write with his wife about the stages of life until his death in 1994 at age 92. The final revision of his last book, The Life Cycle Completed, was finished and published as an extended version by Joan Erikson in 1997. Erikson stated in this book that his knowledge of the human life cycle was not complete. He suggested that there was, perhaps, a ninth stage of life in very old age yet to be examined (Erikson & Erikson, 1997).

1. Psychoanalysis is the study of human behaviour beginning in childhood. It is also used as a therapy approach. How did Erik Erikson qualify to become a child psychoanalyst?
2. How might Erikson’s own life have led him to a lifelong study of identity formation?
of appropriate adult roles, such as father, mechanic, teacher, spouse, making these important choices determines the paths that individuals will take in their adult lives.

The dilemma of early adulthood is “intimacy versus isolation.” Intimacy is being able to merge your identity with someone else’s without losing yourself in the process (Erikson, 1980). In the 1960s, intimate had not yet become a euphemism for sexual. Since true intimacy is based on the ability to trust a person enough to reveal your personal thoughts and feelings to him or her, it is necessary to have a clear sense of who you are. Intimate peer relationships replace parents as the primary supportive relationships in an individual’s life. Erikson suggested that without an identity, formed in the previous stage, relationships would be shallow. An individual would feel lonely if he or she could not connect with others. The basic strength that is acquired by resolving the dilemma of intimacy versus isolation is love, meaning an overall sense of caring and generosity toward others (Erikson & Erikson, 1997).

Erikson suggested that women might develop identity and intimacy at the same time because they might develop their identities through relationships with others (1980). Thus, they might acquire the enduring strengths of fidelity and love simultaneously. This idea has also been supported by feminist Carol Gilligan (1982) in her book In a Different Voice. Based on her studies of young women in the 1970s, Gilligan concluded that women determine who they are, how to be a woman, and what they believe in terms of relationships, whereas men usually cannot commit to others until they are sure of their own identities.

In Erikson’s theory, adults focus on their contribution to society in the next stage of life, “generativity versus stagnation.” This stage began in a person’s early 20s at the time of Erikson’s research. The challenge of the generativity stage is to make an individual contribution to society and, by doing so, acquire the basic strength of caring. Traditionally, most people accomplished this by raising children. Some people attained it through “great works.” Few people spoke of careers in the 1950s, when Erikson was developing his theory. Erikson suggests that this task follows the formation of identity and the development of intimate relationships on the social clock because it requires fidelity and love. In summary, in early adulthood you determine first who you want to be and what you want to do so that you are true to yourself, and then whom you want to be with so that you can share yourself with others.

Klaus Riegel’s Dimensions of Development

American psychologist Klaus Riegel’s Dimensions of Development Theory suggests that development in adulthood occurs not in predictable stages, but as individuals adjust in response to the interaction of both internal and external changes. His theory, developed in the 1960s,
accepts an internal biological clock and a changing external social clock. Riegel identified four interrelated internal and external dimensions of development:

1. The internal psychological dimension describes emotional maturity and independence, and the maturity of mental processes.

2. The internal biological dimension describes physical and sexual maturity.

3. The external cultural-sociological dimension describes the expectations and opportunities defined by each society.

4. The external environmental dimension describes the physical, economic, and political environment in which the individual lives (Kimmel, 1990).
According to Riegel, development occurs when a change in one dimension requires an adjustment in one or more of the other dimensions. For example, when individuals are physically mature and emotionally ready for marriage, they will marry, if they are old enough according to the culture and the society in which they live, and if they can afford to live independently within the economic environment. However, if individuals are unable to earn enough money to become financially independent, they might continue to live with parents, forego marriage, and have to adjust their sense of their own maturity. Riegel’s theory integrates internal physical and psychological dimensions with external social and environmental dimensions. Therefore, Riegel’s theory is an early application of analysis now called the ecological systems theory. It explains how the pace of adult development varies to reflect the influence of a changing social clock.

**Jane Loevinger’s Theory of Ego Development**

Jane Loevinger identified stages toward a higher level of development in her research in the 1970s. She identified 10 stages in the formation of the ego, a Latin word meaning “I myself,” and first used by Sigmund Freud to mean identity. Ego development begins in infancy with the understanding that you are an individual separate from your mother. Loevinger described full
ego development as having an autonomous self—that is, being a self-reliant
person who accepts oneself and others as multifaceted and unique (Bee,
1987). In Jane Loevinger’s Theory of Ego Development, three stages deal with
the adolescent and emerging adult:

1. The conformist stage, in which adolescents tend to view life in simple
   stereotypical ways in an attempt to classify human experience so they can
   see where they belong in society.

2. The self-aware stage, in which young adults begin to understand and
   accept individual differences and to distinguish the variations in feelings
   and opinions that make people unique.

3. The conscientious stage, in which individuals are able to appreciate others
   as individuals in reciprocal relationships.

According to Loevinger’s observations, the self-aware stage reflects progress
in the development of ego, the definition of self as a unique individual, which
Erikson called identity. Logically, the individual reasons, “If I am unique, then
you might also be unique.”

Loevinger saw the search for an understanding of ego, or identity,
as the centre of human development. Ego is essential for autonomy.
Loevinger had worked as an assistant to Erik Erikson. She shares Erikson’s
theory that individuals require a clear sense of themselves before they
can form truly intimate relationships with others. Loevinger concluded
from her research that few adults ever achieve full ego development, but
strive toward that goal through their lifetime. Within the same society,
the pattern of development is common for all, but the pace varies greatly.
According to Loevinger’s theory, the progress from one stage to the next
is determined by an individual’s psychological clock, not by chronological
age or the social environment.
The Family Life-Cycle Framework

The family life-cycle framework describes early adulthood in the context of family life as a stage in which individuals are launched from their families of origin. Parents and children must separate from one another so that young adults can accept emotional responsibility for themselves prior to forming a new family. In the language of the family life-cycle framework, they leave the family of origin, become independent, and then form a family of procreation (Carter & McGoldrick, 1989). The family life-cycle framework is criticized for its focus on early adulthood in the context of marriage and parenthood. In the mid-20th century, when the theory was developed, most Canadians married and had children. Although the perception is that this is not the trend today, recent research suggests that it is still the expectation for most Canadians. In 2004, Bibby found that 80 percent of Canadians consider marriage and children to be important today; in 2001, 90 percent of teenagers expected to marry (Bibby, 2001).

According to the family life-cycle framework, as they become independent, young adults master three tasks:

1. Forming an identity separate from that of their family of origin. In this process of individuation, young adults “sort out emotionally what they will take along from the family of origin, what they will leave behind, and what they will create for themselves” (Carter & McGoldrick, 1989, p. 13).

![Figure 4-10](image_url)

**Figure 4-10** As young adults separate from their parents and become independent adults, the parents must allow the young adults to make decisions for themselves. How do parents and young adults resolve conflicts when their opinions differ?
2. Making their first tentative commitment to a career or workplace role.
3. Developing intimate relationships with peers outside the family to acquire the social and emotional support they need.

These three tasks enable young adults to become self-sufficient adults in preparation for forming a new family by marrying and having children.

The family of origin plays an important role in the development of the young adult at this stage. The relationship between parent and child changes to become less hierarchical as a young adult accepts responsibility for making decisions. The family life-cycle framework emphasizes that development involves adjustment in the family in response to a change. The change enables the family to move on to a different, not necessarily better, stage in the life cycle. The family life-cycle framework, like the systems theory, focuses on the interaction of family members as their needs change. The family life-cycle framework is frequently used for family therapy. When parents can let go, they can begin the next stage of life, and adult children can become independent adults.

**Leonard Pearlin’s Theory of Psychological Distress**

American sociologist Leonard Pearlin attempted to rationalize how development can be unique to each individual yet appear to occur in a common pattern. He disagreed with stage theories, suggesting that adulthood is not a series of transitions from one period of stability to another. In the 1970s, Pearlin described a life course of continuous change required by **distress**. He defined distress as stimulus that requires a psychological response. Individuals might experience occasional periods of stability in their lives if there was no distress at that time. According to **Leonard Pearlin’s Theory of Psychological Distress**, the path that individual lives will take is determined by four elements:

1. Individual characteristics, such as gender, race, intelligence, family background, personality, and education.
2. The range of skills individuals have for coping with distress.
3. The availability of social support networks.
4. The nature and timing of stress that requires response (Bee, 1987).

He agreed that early adulthood might present distress as the individual acts to achieve the dreams formed in adolescence. He believed that people are able to change the life structure at any time (Smesler & Erikson, 1980).

Pearlin suggested that there are similarities in life courses because individuals change in response to similar external circumstances and stresses that affect their lives. Many stresses, such as leaving school, starting work, even getting married, are scheduled by the social clock of society.
and are predictable. Therefore, individuals can anticipate role changes. Societies support individuals in their development by socializing them for these scheduled events (Bee, 1987). In effect, Pearl is suggesting that the patterns that Erikson, Levinson, and other developmental theorists have observed are a cohort effect. Cohort effect means that changes in behaviour result from socialized responses to a common external social clock, rather than from age-linked inner changes. Leonard Pearl’s Theory of Psychological Distress has challenged social scientists to test his theory by comparing development in diverse sample groups in different cultures and times.

Daniel Levinson’s Theory of the Seasons of Life

Psychologist Daniel Levinson’s Theory of the Seasons of Life, first published in 1977 and released as a book in 1978, proposes that the life course evolves through seasons lasting about 25 years each. At the beginning of the adult season, from ages 17 to 33, an individual defines and begins adult life. During the early adult transition, from ages 17 to 22 years, an individual leaves behind adolescent life and begins to prepare an adult life structure. Like the family life-cycle framework, Levinson wrote of separation from the family of origin. However, he emphasized changes in the emotional attachment between adult child and parents—not necessarily physical separation—to allow the individual to participate in the adult world. The young adult will also modify or end relationships from their adolescent life to make way for new adult relationships. By completing education and starting work, individuals make some preliminary plans for adult life.

From age 22 to about 28 years, the individual enters the adult world. Early adulthood is a time for building one’s life structure. According to Levinson, “the life structure is the pattern or design of life, a meshing of self-in-world” (1978, p. 278). He discovered that young adults master four major tasks during this period (1978, p. 90):

1. Forming a Dream and giving it a place in the life structure.
2. Forming an occupation.
3. Forming mentor relationships.
4. Forming love relationships, marriage, and family.

The Dream is the individual’s sense of self in the adult world and is the core of the life structure (Levinson, 1978). The nature of the Dream will vary, but most describe some combination of occupational, family,
and community roles. Levinson’s theory initially suggested that men were found to be more likely to describe Dreams involving occupational accomplishments, but some men and many women described Dreams related to community and family (Levinson, 1996). A Dream might be as precise as “I want to have my own business as an electrician by the time I am 30 so that I can control the type of work I do,” or it may be more mythical, such as “I am going to be a leader.” Initial choices of occupation, love relationships, and peer relationships may support the Dream. Many individuals develop relationships with mentors who support their Dreams and facilitate their progress.

From age 22 to 28, young adults build and test a preliminary life structure that integrates work, love, and community to attain their Dreams. The challenge for young adults is to balance the creative exploration of various options for their life structure with a practical desire to make a commitment to a life structure that supports their Dream. The dilemma is that until individuals begin to live out the life structure, they do not know all of the possibilities. Yet without some commitment to the choices they have made, it is not possible to determine whether the life structure might be realistic or satisfying.

The age-30 transition occurs between the ages of 28 to 33 years. Individuals re-evaluate the life structures that they formed in their early 20s to determine whether they are living out their dreams. Levinson (1978, p. 58) described this re-evaluation as an inner voice that says, “If I am to change my life—if there are things in it that I want to modify or exclude, or things missing I want to add—I must now make a start, for soon it will be too late.” As they adjust their life structures, individuals might choose to marry or to get a divorce, to have children, or to change jobs at this time. Many of Levinson’s subjects described this as a time to “get real,” after testing their early choices for a few years before “settling down” in their 30s.

**Jeffrey Arnett’s Theory of Emerging Adulthood**

More recent research suggests that a modification to life-course theories is necessary to explain the behaviour of young adults today. **Jeffrey Arnett’s Theory of Emerging Adulthood** proposes that there is a distinct stage in the life course, following adolescence and before adulthood. Changes in the past 50 years have slowed the pace of the life course significantly. Leaving home,
Daniel Levinson, a Yale psychologist, led a major study of adult life to determine and describe developmental patterns in early adulthood. The results of his study were published as an academic paper in 1977 and as the book *The Seasons of a Man’s Life* in 1978. The initial study was limited to men. A follow-up study of women was conducted from 1979 to 1982 to determine whether the pattern of development for women was the same or different as that for men.

**Research Question**
What is the pattern of life for middle-aged men?

**Hypothesis**
- Diverse biological, psychological, and social changes occur in adult life.
- These changes occur between the ages of 35 and 45.

**Research Method**
Using interviews, a team of researchers surveyed 40 men between the ages of 35 and 45. Subjects included 10 workers paid hourly, 10 executives, 10 Ph.D. biologists, and 10 novelists. Each man was interviewed five to 10 times for a total of 10 to 20 hours by one researcher. A follow-up interview was conducted two years later. The interviews were based on key questions designed to cover certain topics, but subjects were encouraged to give open-ended and wide-ranging answers to tell their life histories. This method is called *biographical interview*. In preparing and analyzing the biographies, a pattern emerged that was formed into a life-course theory.

**Results**
- The life course evolves through a sequence of eras, each lasting approximately 25 years.
- The eras overlap in transitional periods lasting four to five years.
- In the early adulthood transition, a young man develops an identity and makes decisions concerning work and love as he develops a life structure.

**Conclusion**
He determined that men establish the life structure for their future in early adulthood, but they adjust their life structure in future transitions. The conclusion of the follow-up study of women is that the age-linked seasons are the same as those for men, but that gender differences exist because of the different roles of men and women in North America.

**FIGURE 4-13  Developmental Periods in the Eras of Early and Middle Adulthood**

Levinson’s study was conducted in the 1970s. Follow-up studies using the same method could determine whether the development he observed is universal.

1. **If you conduct a follow-up study, how would you define the sample group?**
2. **What factors might make it difficult for you to conduct a follow-up study?**
3. **How could you make the follow-up study more efficient?**
beginning work, marrying or cohabiting, and having children are occurring in the mid-to-late 20s now. A century ago, adolescence was introduced as a distinct stage of life in industrialized countries to describe those who were no longer children but not yet adults. Now, Arnett (2000) argues that individuals from about 18 to 25 years of age in industrialized countries are not yet entering adult roles, but are no longer adolescents. He describes emerging adulthood as a distinct stage:

Having left the dependency of childhood and adolescence, and having not yet entered the enduring responsibilities that are normative in adulthood, emerging adults often explore a variety of possible life directions in love, work, and worldviews. Emerging adulthood is a time of life when many different directions remain possible, when little about the future has been decided for certain, when the scope of independent exploration of life’s possibilities is greater for most people than it will be in any other period of the life course (p. 469).

Arnett gives several reasons for identifying emerging adulthood as a distinct stage in the life course. First, the ages 18 to 25 are marked by instability. Individuals are semi-autonomous as they move in and out of the parental home, but few have achieved the financial independence required to live independently. Second, he found that most young adults do not feel that they have reached adult status. The young adults in his studies identify accepting responsibility for one’s self, independent decision-making, and financial independence as the criteria for adulthood (Arnett, 2000). Third, emerging adulthood offers opportunities for identity exploration separate from and prior to making decisions for adulthood. He observed this exploration to be more extensive than that observed by Erikson in the 1950s and Levinson in the 1970s. Arnett cautions that emerging adulthood is not a universal stage but is a stage constructed by post-industrial society in the late 20th century.

In emerging adulthood, individuals focus their identity exploration in three areas: love, work, and worldviews through working in another society.

**FIGURE 4-14** Working abroad enables emerging adults to explore their identities and be semi-autonomous. How might they explore love, work, and worldviews through working in another society?
work, and worldviews (Arnett, 2000). As Erikson wrote in the 1950s, individuals aged 18 to 25 explore who they are and who they can be. Writing in the 1970s, Levinson expanded identity to a complex sense of self in the adult world. In the 21st century, it seems there is more time for exploration and the opportunity for more experimentation. Unlike Erikson’s observations, Arnett discovered that individuals are exploring relationships, work, and worldview at the same time. Individuals explore what type of person they would like to share their lives with. Romantic relationships may last longer and include sexual intercourse and, perhaps, cohabitation. Emerging adults want to know what work they can do, but also what work they find satisfying and how to qualify for that work. Emerging adults change educational programs (Church, 2008), pursue additional education, switch jobs, and may travel or volunteer for work before they settle into an occupation. Finally, emerging adults develop a worldview, a set of beliefs and values, by examining the beliefs and values learned in their families in light of the variety of worldviews they are exposed to as young adults. A 1997 survey of Americans aged 18 to 24, which found that 96 percent expected to “get to where I want to be in life” (Arnett, 2000, p. 474), suggests that emerging adults face these challenges with optimism.

Let’s Discuss
To what extent do global and local issues impact your worldview?

Research | Abstract
Conceptions of the Transitions to Adulthood: Perspectives from Adolescence Through Midlife

by Jeffrey Jensen Arnett, University of Maryland, U.S.A.

Conceptions of the transition to adulthood were examined among adolescents (age 13–19, N = 171), emerging adults (age 20–29, N = 179), and young-to-midlife adults (age 30–55, N = 165). The focus was on whether conceptions of the transition to adulthood would be different among young-to-midlife adults compared to the younger age groups. In all age groups, individualistic criteria were the most likely to be considered important markers of the transition to adulthood, specifically accepting responsibility for one’s actions, deciding on one’s beliefs and values, establishing an equal relationship with parents, and becoming financially independent. However, young-to-midlife adults were less likely than adolescents to consider biological transitions to be important, and more likely than adolescents or emerging adults to view norm compliance (such as avoiding drunk driving) as a necessary part of the transition to adulthood. In all three groups, role transitions (e.g., marriage) ranked lowest in importance.


1. “N” means the number of subjects in the sample group. Identify the sample group in this study.
2. What are the important markers of the transition to adulthood?
3. What markers are least important?
4. What do adults aged 30–55 view as a necessary part of the transition to adulthood?
Gail Sheehy’s book *Passages: Predictable Crises of Adult Life*, published in 1976, 1997, and 2006, was acclaimed as “one of the ten most influential books of our time” in a Library of Congress survey. Using case studies, Sheehy described the life transitions of adulthood. She outlined the stages of adulthood in several other books published in the 1980s and 1990s. Yet Sheehy’s name seldom appears on the reference lists of academic studies. She is often dismissed as a “pop psychologist.” How can people distinguish between reliable academic research and “pop” psychology?

“Pop” is short for popular, and Gail Sheehy was certainly popular. *Passages* remains on *The New York Times* bestseller list for years each time an edition is released, and is widely discussed in the media. She is credited with encouraging millions of people to re-examine their lives to see opportunities for growth in adulthood. She wrote for the general public, not an academic audience. Gail Sheehy is not a professional psychologist; she is a journalist. In writing her books, she uses the methodology of psychological research to serve a journalistic purpose.

When she started to write *Passages*, Sheehy set three objectives:

1. To locate the inner changes common to each stage of life.
2. To compare the developmental rhythms of men and women.
3. To examine the crises that couples can anticipate (Sheehy, 1976).

She conducted her secondary research by studying the research of psychologists Else Frenkel-Brunswik, Erik Erikson, Daniel Levinson, and Roger Gould. Extensive notes are included in her book. Her primary research consisted of 115 biographical interviews of men, women, and couples, aged 18 to 55. Her analysis of these interviews became the predictable crises she outlined in her book.

Gail Sheehy’s predictable crises match the periods that Daniel Levinson outlined, but the names are more creative. She describes early adult transition as Pulling Up Roots, entering the adult world as The Trying Twenties, and age-30 transition as Catch-30 (Sheehy, 1976). Like Levinson, Sheehy described early adulthood as a time for leaving home and testing a life structure based on an understanding of the self in the adult world. Unlike Levinson’s early work, she examined the lives of both men and women and their lives together. She also used the experiences of her case studies as a springboard for providing advice to her readers on managing the transitions in their own lives.

When researchers like Levinson and his team publish their results, they do so first in academic journals for peer review. Their methodology and results are examined by other professionals to determine whether they have been responsible in their research and whether the results can be replicated by further research. When journalists like Gail Sheehy publish their work in magazines or books, they are reviewed by critics and by the public, who base their judgments on a wide variety of subjective criteria. Gail Sheehy has been accused of changing the evidence from her interviews to suit her purpose as a journalist. However, critics who dismiss Sheehy reject her thesis by presenting their own view of adulthood, not by criticizing her methodology or the evidence.

Since Sheehy originally published *Passages* in 1976, interest in psychology and the social sciences has grown. Sheehy herself has updated *Passages* several times and written four more books about adult life. Now, many researchers publish two versions of their research—an academic version for peer review and research, and a popular version for the interested public, as Daniel Levinson did with *The Seasons of a Man’s Life* in 1978 and Reginald Bibby did with *Canada’s Teens: Today, Yesterday and Tomorrow* in 2001.

1. Using the criteria outlined in Chapter 2, page 50, explain whether Gail Sheehy’s *Passages* is a valid academic source.
2. How will your research resemble that of Gail Sheehy’s or Daniel Levinson’s?
3. How will your research be valid?
Socialization for Adulthood

Becoming an adult requires that individuals alter their behaviour as they take on new adult roles in life. Psychologist Nancy K. Schlossberg explains that individuals making a transition develop new assumptions, perform new tasks, and change their relationships (1987). **Socialization** is the process by which people learn appropriate social role behaviours in order to participate in society. It also includes learning values, attitudes, and expectations. When an individual makes a transition to a new role, **resocialization** enables the person to discard old behaviour and to change his or her behaviour. For example, new employees will learn appropriate attitudes toward the organization that has hired them as they assume their new roles in full-time career positions. In preparation for major role changes, **anticipatory socialization** allows people to learn and practise role behaviour before actually taking on a new role. For example, being a shift manager in a part-time job prepares a person for the management skills required in a future career. The social clock, which outlines when certain events should happen in society, enables young adults and those who support them to anticipate the changes in their lives and to be socialized for their new roles.

What happens when the social clock changes? The life-course theories differ in their details but agree that emerging adults seek to understand who they are and what they believe, what they can and are willing to do, and who they want to be with in their lives. Levinson’s definition of the tasks of early adulthood will be used in this section because they imply that the tasks are complex.
building processes. The norms concerning leaving home and becoming self-reliant, the traditional markers of adulthood, have changed in the past few decades, but the challenges for individuals becoming adults have not changed. Functionalism and the ecological systems theory would both suggest that the changes in the expectations of young adult behaviour reflect a new economic and social organization in Canada. Therefore, pace of development is changing to allow more time for socialization. How young men and women are socialized to accomplish the tasks to take on contemporary adult roles will be examined, focusing on these research questions:

- How do individuals form an identity?
- How do individuals prepare for an occupation?
- How do individuals develop supportive relationships?
- What factors influence the socialization of individuals for adult roles?

Identity Formation and the Dream

When Erikson first wrote about the importance of identity in 1959, he explained that it was the foundation on which individuals would build their lives. Identity appears to include three aspects: a consistent sense of self, a realistic perception of the world, and a sense of control over one’s own life (Erikson, 1968). This definition of identity is similar to the Dream, the sense of self in the adult world, described by the subjects in Levinson’s studies of men and of women (1978, 1996). Arnett expands identity to include an understanding of whom one will spend a life with, and what one believes (2001). If identity includes not only “who I am” but also “who I will be,” then it is necessary for an individual forming an identity to be able to foresee himself or herself playing realistic adult roles in the future (Côté & Allahar, 1994).

The development of a sense of self can be explained by the theory of symbolic interactionism. Individuals form a sense of themselves based on their interpretations of how others act toward them. In his looking-glass theory, Charles Cooley compared the significant people in one’s life to looking glasses or mirrors: when you present yourself to others by your words and actions, you interpret others’ reactions as reflections of their evaluation of you, and form your self-identity as a result of their interpretations (Schaefer et al., 1996). Just as the quality of a mirror affects the accuracy of one’s body image, so others can affect the accuracy of an individual’s identity.

Figure 4-17 The theory of symbolic interactionism suggests that we are more influenced by what we think people think about us than by what they say. How could this individual determine whether the co-worker is a reliable role model?
Using questionnaires as a survey method, you can ask a large sample group of people questions to gather information to test a hypothesis. Questionnaires are useful when you can predict the various responses and need to count the answers for statistical analysis. They are useful for follow-up studies to test whether behaviour is the same as in the first study. Therefore, the questions are usually closed, meaning that the subject must select from the answers provided. Information gathered by questionnaires can be analyzed using a functionalist perspective to determine norms. The results can be presented visually in charts.

Questionnaires are a convenient method for widespread research. They can be distributed and returned in many ways. Brief questionnaires can be conducted by stopping people in public places or calling by telephone. Questionnaires can be mailed, e-mailed, or posted on the Internet.

Survey research using questionnaires must be carefully planned to ensure a representative and unbiased sample, and efficient return of the responses.

**Emerging Adulthood Questionnaire**

Working with a group of classmates, design a questionnaire to answer the research question: What are the developmental priorities of emerging adults?

**Design the Research Study**

1. Define the terms by summarizing the life-course theories to determine the major developmental tasks of emerging adults.

2. Develop a hypothesis stating what you think might be the answer to the research question.

3. Identify the sample group. You might compare two or more groups, considering variables such as age, gender, or ethnic group. Determine the number (N) of subjects required.

4. Develop your research instrument:
   - Introduce and state the nature of your study.
   - Design questions that will elicit data that you can count or score. For this survey, a rating scale is most effective. See the sample question at the bottom of the page.
   - Assigning a score to each ranking will enable you to determine the overall priorities of your sample group.
   - Test the questionnaire by asking someone who did not design the questions to check that they work to elicit the information you need.

5. Plan your procedure:
   - Decide how and when to have the sample group answer the questionnaires.
   - Plan how you will tally and analyze the results.

6. Conduct the survey using the questionnaires.

7. Compile the results of your survey. Formulate conclusions concerning your hypothesis.

8. Prepare a brief report of your results. This can be done most effectively using a graph.

**Sample for Step 4**

On a scale where “3” means your highest priority and “1” means your lowest priority, how would you rank your priorities of the following challenges?

- Surviving until lunchtime ______
- Learning about rating scales ______
- Chatting with classmates ______
Erikson (1980) explained that forming a true identity required that one’s self-image match the image he or she thinks others have of him or her. Erikson (1968, p. 128) described the importance of choosing reliable significant others as role models:

If the earliest stage bequeathed to the identity crisis is an important need to trust in oneself and in others, then clearly the adolescent looks most fervently for men [or women] and ideas to have faith in, which also means men [or women] and ideas in whose service it would seem worthwhile to prove oneself trustworthy.

Anticipatory socialization provides opportunities for youth to learn and to practise the new behaviours, skills, and attitudes required for future roles from role models (Teevan & Hewitt, 1995). Identity is influenced by the individual’s personal and symbolic interpretation of their performance in these experiences based on the response of others (Anderson & Hayes, 1996).

Developing self-regulation, an individual’s ability to make choices about what they will do and what can happen to them, is an important aspect of identity formation. Self-regulation implies responsibility, recognition of societal norms, and less risk-taking behaviour (Arnett, 2000). For individuals to be self-regulating, they must be aware of their personal resources and be able to assess situations realistically. Family backgrounds, school experiences, and social networks influence how individuals develop the skills necessary for self-regulation. Socialization for self-regulation occurs when emerging adults have opportunities to make decisions for themselves about challenges that really matter (Owens, Mortimer, & Finch, 1996).

The Influence of the Family on Identity Formation
Families are the first environment in which people are socialized. Individuals acquire personal qualities from their family members that might affect their socialization. Family members are the primary role models for children and play a major role in identity formation. Adolescents whose families both support them and encourage them to explore challenging activities develop a sense of control and self-esteem (Csikszentmihalyi & Schneider, 2000). Family background also determines the extent to which children can benefit from the opportunities available to participate in society.

Family background is a significant factor in identity formation. Children acquire the status of their family of origin, so individuals usually identify with the race, religion, and ethnicity of their parents. Individuals often acquire the same expectations of life as their parents by participating in various activities with them, such as doing their own home repairs or volunteering on the weekend. Parents are role models for their children and they provide feedback concerning their behaviour. In Reginald Bibby’s study of adolescent attitudes
in Canada, the most common source of influence, mentioned by 91 percent of adolescents, was “the way you were brought up” (2001). Values and beliefs, which Arnett calls “worldview,” are clarified by reflecting on one’s actions and experiences. Bibby (2001) found that most adolescents prefer their parents to discipline them through discussion, a method that would encourage them to reflect on the reasons for their behaviour (Teevan & Hewitt, 1995). People acquire a sense of who they are, what they can do, and what they believe from their families.

Ecological systems theory can explain how families influence identity formation in emerging adulthood. The family is the mesosystem. How much independence families allow their children depends on how parents perceive their own autonomy. Parents who feel they have little control over their lives are more likely to raise their children to be obedient, not self-reliant (Erikson, 1968). The family also serves as a filter to determine, to some extent, which socio-economic and socio-cultural environmental factors will influence their children. Filtering explains why some individuals play the piano or speak three languages or eat sushi or have no interest in sports. In a diverse society such as Canada’s, families socialize individuals to have a clear cultural identity and to appreciate the need to behave appropriately in order to live and work cooperatively within that culture (Teevan & Hewitt, 1995).
The Influence of School on Identity Formation

According to Erik Erikson's Theory of Psychosocial Development, identity formation in emerging adulthood depends on developing competence, a sense of being capable of doing things that are worthwhile. Individuals accomplish this by working and learning, but also by evaluating one's own accomplishments against those of others (Erikson, 1980). Schools require students to participate in various tasks to acquire the knowledge and develop the skills that are deemed essential for taking on appropriate adult roles. In high school, adolescents have greater opportunity to explore their competence by choosing the subjects they will study. Using their experience from earlier schooling, college and university students focus their attention on areas where they have demonstrated competence. Students who are encouraged to take a variety of demanding courses are more likely to develop a sense of self-control and a more consistent sense of what they can do (Csikszentmihalyi & Schneider, 2000).

Going to school is the first step a child takes in separating from the family (Turnbull, 1985). When children enter the school system, they acquire two distinct sets of significant others outside the family who will give them feedback on their behaviour: teachers and peers. Teachers are expected to transmit the knowledge and skills required by the curriculum and to assess the students' performance so they can acquire a realistic perception of what they can do. During adolescence, the peer group begins to exert a stronger influence than teachers (Csikszentmihalyi & Schneider, 2000). Since the social behaviour and expectations within the peer group can be negotiated, or alternative peer groups can be chosen, adolescents have an opportunity to decide by whom they want to be influenced. The peer group at college or university may be more influential since members have been selected from a pool with more homogeneous academic experience and goals. Academic experiences challenge individuals to develop a consistent sense of who they are, what they believe, what they will do, and whom they want to be with. Symbolic interactionism suggests that interpreting feedback from a wider range of role models and peers is significant for identity formation.
Research | Skills

Do We Need a New Study?

The first question to ask when assessing the validity of a secondary source is when was the source published? It is important to look for an up-to-date analysis of behaviour and circumstances when studying individuals and families in Canada. However, you might find it more difficult to locate research papers written within the last five or even 10 years. Considering their purpose, are research studies over a decade old still valid or should they be replaced by new studies?

Research Studies Extend Knowledge

As you learned in Chapter 2, research studies extend the knowledge of a subject for future students, researchers, businesses, and policy makers to use in planning. Research studies build on the research that was done in the past, investigate gaps in knowledge, and consider the impact of new factors. The body of knowledge consists of all research published on a subject.

For example, there has been extensive research on development in emerging adulthood. Consider what you have learned so far:

- In 1959, Erikson identified Identity versus Role Confusion as the challenge for the transition to adulthood, based on his observations of behaviour in many cultures.
- Riegel, Loevinger, Pearlin, and many others added analysis or suggested alternative explanations for that same behaviour.
- The family life-cycle framework explained individuation as separation from the family of origin.
- In 1976, Levinson divided identity into several specific tasks of young men and, later, young women.
- In 2000, Jeffrey Arnett refined the idea of tasks and suggested that identity formation in young adults appears to be a separate stage.

Other disciplines beyond the scope of this course have contributed to the analysis of identity formation:

- Psychobiologists, who study the biological basis of behaviour, have found evidence linking identity formation to the development of the pre-frontal cortex of the brain in late adolescence.

Some new studies focus on specific factors:

- A study of emerging adulthood in Taiwan explaining the influence on identity formation of “cram schools,” a system not common in Canada, would not contribute to your understanding of emerging adulthood in Canada.

As you can see, Erikson’s research is not outdated, just as the Pythagorean Theorem is not outdated. However, the understanding of that behaviour has been expanded since 1959 by Erikson himself, and by thousands of others interested in identity formation in youth, or what we now call emerging adulthood. Older studies are the foundation for current research and are cited in new studies.

Newer social-science research studies extend, but do not replace, previous studies. Researchers submit proposals for their original investigations in which they demonstrate that the study will contribute new knowledge that will benefit society. The fierce competition for funding ensures that research proposals that duplicate earlier investigations will not be approved.

Using Research Papers for Your Investigations

Research papers present the results of an original investigation for peer review. Sometimes it is useful to see how the researcher arrived at the conclusions. In most cases, it is the conclusions that are useful.

- Authors and journalists can trust that the knowledge from the conclusions is supported by evidence and approved by other social scientists. They can include the conclusions in their discussion of a topic on paper, on air, or online.
- Students can use research papers as starting points for their own investigations.

When you read a research paper, carefully separate the evidence—that is, the observable behaviour or data—from the analysis reflecting the circumstances at the time of the study. New analysis of the evidence considering new factors will contribute to your knowledge of the topic.
Forming an Occupation

Some people live to work, while others work to live. Most young Canadians are expected to prepare for an adult life that includes a job as its major component. Work is an economic necessity for those who want to become independent, but it also enables individuals to pursue their dreams. It is common today to speak of choosing a career, but Daniel Levinson preferred the phrase “forming an occupation.” Becoming an individual who spends his or her time doing work that fits his or her identity and life structure is a lengthy process. For some people, performing a certain kind of work is their Dream. For others, work provides the income to pursue a Dream in other aspects of life (Avard, 1999; Levinson, 1978). In an American study on gender, identity, and self-esteem, 88 percent of women and 91 percent of men identified work as a major contributor to their self-esteem (Anderson & Hayes, 1996). Here is how American social commentator Studs Terkel explained the meaning of work (Anderson & Hayes, 1996, p. 245):

Work—it is about a search for daily meaning as well as daily bread, for they will at least feel recognition as well as cash, for astonishment rather than torpor; in short, for a sort of life rather than a Monday through Friday sort of dying.

Since work contributes to self-esteem, satisfying work is related to identity formation. Choosing an occupation determines how much individuals can earn, how they can use their time, how challenging their work will be, and with whom they will interact. It can also affect how much flexibility they will have for changing their life in the future. In an Angus Reid survey conducted...
in 1996, only 37 percent of young adults reported that they were very satisfied with their jobs (Chamberlain, 1996). How gratifying a job will be day to day depends on finding work that meets one's expectations. Satisfaction in the workplace is linked to better health, lower stress levels, and an ability to balance home and work. Forming an occupation is central to building a life structure.

Until the last century, people were not required to choose an occupation, usually because young people would follow in their parents' footsteps. The knowledge and skills required to work were learned throughout childhood. The transition from youth to adulthood would have required no change in attitudes or values. Now that work is separated from home and there are so many occupations to consider, parents no longer have the diversity of knowledge and skills, nor the time, to prepare their children for employment. The school has taken over a major role of socializing individuals for an occupation. The transition from home to work appears to depend on several factors. Families provide the inherited intellectual potential and the social and cultural attitudes and skills that enable young people to succeed. School and the community provide opportunities for anticipatory socialization. Society determines the job opportunities (Csikszentmihalyi & Schneider, 2000).

The Influence of Family on Forming an Occupation

Families seldom teach the skills and knowledge required for work, but they play a major role in transmitting a worldview, basic values, attitudes, and beliefs that determine the pattern of life in adulthood. There has been extensive evidence for many years that the parents' level of education, the family income, and the parents' employment history are linked to their children's level of education and to their income as adults (Lewis, Ross, & Mirowsky, 1999). Young adults from immigrant families are more likely to attend university (Church, 2008). The Sloan Study of Youth and Social Development stated that the parents' work experiences determine the values and attitudes toward work that they teach their children (Csikszentmihalyi & Schneider, 2000).

Finding work rewarding is an attitude related to identity and life structure. Work is rewarding when challenges match abilities and interests and when the job requires enough concentration for people to feel in
control of their time yet find it passes quickly (Csikszentmihalyi & Schneider, 2000). In an Angus Reid survey of 850 Canadians, 75 percent reported that they enjoyed the type of work they do, and 71 percent found their work challenging and interesting. Pay is not a factor for satisfaction for most working people (Chamberlain, 1996). Facing appropriate challenges, such as doing laundry, studying physics, or leading a youth group, allows young people to experience the intrinsic rewards of a job well done whether in the workplace, at home, or in the community (Csikszentmihalyi & Schneider, 2000). Emerging adults acquire the attitude that work is rewarding from a family that expects them to master challenging tasks.

The Influence of School on Forming an Occupation

Schools and post-secondary institutions have assumed the major responsibility for socializing young people for their occupations. The courses that students take enable them to explore real-world applications of their interests and skills and to investigate occupations in those fields. Completing the tasks and participating in lessons are role expectations that require students to develop the values and attitudes that are necessary for success in adult life. Students develop concentration by persevering at a task that is challenging. They develop self-control by working at a clearly defined task. They also learn to adjust their social behaviour and communication skills to suit the role expectations of students in the classroom. In addition, extracurricular involvement helps students develop teamwork and management skills. Unlike the workplace, schools provide explicit feedback about the individual’s performance and opportunities for remediation.

Anticipatory socialization for adult work roles at school affects whether students are successful, and prepares them for the transition to adult roles in the workplace (Csikszentmihalyi & Schnieder, 2000). Job-shadowing, work experience, co-operative education, and apprenticeship provide opportunities to combine academic learning and anticipatory socialization for the tasks and skills required at the job. Flexible career decisions, based on matching an individual’s identity to realistic preparation for an occupation, prepare young adults for work (Borgen & Amundson, 1995).
The Influence of Part-Time Work on Forming an Occupation

Part-time employment and volunteer work could provide opportunities for anticipatory socialization. If young people take on responsible roles in the community that provide experience of meaningful and satisfying work, they can explore what they can do and are willing to do. Since adolescents report that they work to earn money to spend on activities or to save for post-secondary education, they appear to be motivated by an extrinsic value: money. Studies have found that part-time work had very little effect on young people’s work values. Girls were more likely to value the intrinsic rewards than boys were, perhaps because they have been socialized to consider the nature of the job more than the pay when choosing to work. The influence of part-time work for emerging adults forming an occupation depends on whether the job requires values, attitudes, and skills found in adult jobs. Studies suggest that both males and females view the intrinsic rewards of work as more important when the job requires them to accept responsibility, work with others, and manage their time. They value their autonomy and the social culture of work more than the money (Mortimer et al., 1996).

Forming Supportive Relationships

Relationships with others provide support for emerging adults as they explore love, work, and worldview (Arnett, 2007). Parents and teachers are the major supportive relationships in childhood. These relationships are provided, not chosen. In adolescence, individuals have more freedom to form friendships with peers. To become independent, emerging adults form new relationships with a variety of people who can support the transition. Young adults also renegotiate their existing relationships with family and friends. Communicating effectively with others in personal, academic, and business relationships enables the individual to take on appropriate adult roles within reciprocal relationships.

Although working is the most important factor in becoming independent, personal relationships—those with family, friends, and lovers—are the priority for most young adults. People perceive their personal relationships as most important to their happiness (Bibby, 2001). Most research about relationships focuses on family and on “romantic” relationships. Less is known about the role of friendships in the lives of young adults, and even less about the functional relationships formed in the workplace. Young adults must develop a variety of appropriate behaviours and communication skills suited to their diverse roles in adulthood.

Adjusting Parent-Child Relationships

From the systems theory perspective, the family has to change strategies and adjust the boundaries to allow the emerging adult to form an independent identity. Some family systems do not adjust, and parents and adult children continue in the comfortable roles they established in early adolescence,
with emerging adults having very little responsibility until they leave home (Goldscheider & Goldscheider, 1993). The initiation rites of pre-industrial societies changed the boundaries within the family structure (Wall & Ferguson, 1998; Tanner, Arnett & Leis, 2009). For example, when BaMbuti youth return from their initiation rites, they no longer live with their parents but build their own hut near them, where they can begin to live an adult lifestyle. Today, a young person setting up a bedroom in the parents’ basement might serve the same purpose of changing boundaries. Carter and McGoldrick (1989) suggest that families today gradually withdraw financial support, establish residential boundaries, and encourage their emerging adult offspring to make decisions independently. Becoming less dependent is an important part of identity formation.

As you have seen, emerging adults are staying home longer, and many return home after leaving (Mitchell, 2006). Barbara Mitchell (2006) distinguishes between “home stayers,” those who expect to leave soon, and “mature co-residers” who share a home with their parents. When adult children remain in their parents’ homes, it may be difficult to become an adult in a more equal relationship with parents. From an exchange theory perspective, contributing time and money to the running of the home balances the power within the family (Goldscheider & Goldscheider, 1993; Wiener, 1998). However, the research so far indicates that fewer than 7 percent of young adults living at home contribute any money for their room and board (Allahar & Côté, 1998). The challenge for parents is to accept their adult children as responsible people making a contribution to the family. According to Valerie Wiener, families should negotiate new house rules but accept that “the nest is the parents’ home, and will still be their home after [the young adults] leave” (1997, p. 92).

The challenge for emerging adults as they leave home is to balance responsibility to the family with the need to establish personal priorities. Emerging adults establish new boundaries in their lives as they become self-reliant. They are less influenced by their parents. They may choose to accept advice from parents, but feeling controlled by...
parents is a common reason for moving away (Kerns, 1994). On the other hand, an American study discovered that emerging adults recognize that with increasing independence, they have a greater obligation towards their parents and siblings. As individuals develop their identity and begin to develop a life structure, an appreciation of the support of their family also develops. As an individual learns to balance autonomy and connectedness in life, a feeling of obligation to one’s family grows (Fuligni & Pederson, 2002).

**Adjusting Friendships**

Intimate relationships with peers outside the family enable emerging adults to acquire the social and emotional support they need (Carter & McGoldrick, 1989). Almost 90 percent of men and women state that friendships enhance their self-esteem. Friends offer emotional support and can provide an objective point of view to help solve problems. They can also lend a hand and provide tangible support when it is needed (Anderson & Hayes, 1996; Milan, 2006). Friends provide a social network that connects an individual to the community. Providing help and support for others in reciprocal, give-and-take relationships is most common in adolescence and emerging adulthood. A strong feeling of support within a network of close ties leads to feelings of attachment and involvement in the informal life of the community (Garcia & Herrero, 2004).

![Figure 4-24](image.png) Emerging adults become more selective when choosing to spend time with friends. How can friends support an emerging adult forming an identity and forming an occupation?
Friendships are formed through selective association—that is, by choosing people on the basis of shared interests, mutual liking, and respect. However, men and women differ in the development of their friendships. Men are more likely to participate in activities together and discuss events external to their lives, such as sports or politics. Women, on the other hand, spend more time talking with friends and discuss more personal topics (Tanner, Arnett & Leis, 2009). As the identity is formed, emerging adults develop clearer criteria for selecting friends and choosing to spend time together. It also allows greater intimacy, a measure of the trust, loyalty, and understanding within the relationship. The intimate friendships of emerging adulthood meet companionship and social needs, but are fewer in number. They are less important than they were during adolescence and have less influence for self-regulating individuals who have a strong identity (Arnett, 2007).

In emerging adulthood, individuals renegotiate their relationships with friends. Since they no longer spend all day in a peer culture, individuals make choices about when and where to see their friends. A study reported in 2005 found that emerging adults felt most like adults at home, at work, and with a romantic partner, but least like adults with their friends (Shanahan, Porfeli, Mortimer, & Erickson, 2005). The researchers suggest that friends reinforce the qualities in each other that brought them together. This behaviour can make it difficult for emerging adults to change within their friendships. For example, emerging adults in the study reported that they participated in more risk-taking behaviour with their friends. Because self-regulation and compliance with social conventions are part of being self-reliant, the participants in this study felt less adult with their friends. A consequence of having formed a clearer identity, occupation, and worldview, emerging adults form relationships that are of greater depth and complexity than those relationships formed in adolescence (Arnett, 2007).

Workplace Relationships

Although most young people have worked part-time before they seek their first full-time job, few have experienced the complex relationships of the workplace. Jobs in the “student work market” entail students working alongside other students in temporary positions with few prospects. However, when they enter their first adult jobs, young people enter into relationships in which they must balance the co-operative behaviour required to work as a team to get the job done, with the competitive behaviour necessary to achieve promotion up the career ladder (Gottman & Silver, 1999). They will meet people with a wide range of attitudes towards their work. Some will be very ambitious, but others will be content to do the minimum required. For emerging adults in some workplaces, determining who to align themselves with can be a challenge.

“If a man does not make new acquaintances as he advances through life, he will soon find himself alone. A man should keep his friendships in constant repair.”

—Samuel Johnson (1709-1784), English writer
Since most friendships in life are formed with people with whom individuals associate on a daily basis, individuals navigate through the confusion of workplace relationships to seek connections. As you have seen, most employment opportunities arise from family, friends, and previous employers. Networking by getting to know people who work in the field is an effective way for young adults to prepare for job changes and for promotion. Yet individuals, by nature, are social beings who seek out friendship, even love. It requires a big adjustment in outlook to recognize that the primary purposes of workplace relationships are to accomplish the goals of the organization and to further individual occupation formation (Yager, 1997).

**Mentor Relationships**

When young adults begin their careers, they usually start at the bottom and look forward to climbing the ladder of success. When Daniel Levinson interviewed young men about their early careers in the early 1970s, they described important relationships with people who helped them up that ladder. Levinson (1978) explained the role of the mentor, usually a man several years older than the young man, who assisted him in his transition into a career path. A mentor served several functions. Initially, a mentor...
helped a young man to understand the people, values, and behaviour in his new environment, and taught the young man to acquire the knowledge and skills he needed. He might also have provided advice and support when things went wrong. A mentor used his influence to help the young man advance and acted as a role model for him to emulate.

Young women are less likely to have mentors, Levinson found in a later study (1996). It could be that there were fewer older women available as mentors for the young women in Levinson’s sample group in the 1980s and 1990s. Perhaps young women and older men were reluctant to form mentor relationships out of fear that these relationships might be construed as sexual. Levinson also suggested that women had to compete more for opportunities and, therefore, were less able to assist younger women. Later research conducted by The National Center for Women and Retirement Research (NCWRR) in 1990 found that women who had graduate and post-graduate degrees and those who saw work as being the core of their lives often identified mentors who played key roles in supporting their dreams. The NCWRR study also found that many women had male mentors (Anderson & Hayes, 1996). Both studies reported that young women have a stronger sense of having achieved success by themselves in a highly competitive work environment.

The mentor relationships described by Levinson were informal and spontaneous ones, almost friendships. They were short-lived relationships, dissolving when the young man no longer required a mentor, although some later became friendships. Because mentors serve an important role in occupation formation for emerging adults, perhaps more men and women would benefit from mentoring. Formal mentorship programs have been established in many workplaces. Also, the idea has spread to schools and community organizations. Further evaluation is necessary to measure whether assigned mentor relationships are as effective as the spontaneous ones described by Levinson in the 1970s.
Adulthood at Last

Becoming an adult is a lengthy process. Individuals are often asked as children what they want to be “when they grow up.” According to Reginald Bibby, what someone does is an important measure of who he or she is, because occupation places an individual in a social status. However, “who you want to be” is a question of greater importance. Bibby’s research for The Future Families Project found that what people in Canada wanted most were autonomy, family life, and love (2004). The transition begins in adolescence, when individuals become aware of the expectations of their families, their schools, and the broader society, concerning when and how they should really grow up. Emerging adults determine the direction their transition

Case Study  Sean Enters the Adult World

Sean Johnson is a 31-year-old wildlife officer living in Georgetown, Ontario, with his girlfriend Susan, who is an elementary school teacher. Sean is presently working as an Outreach Program Educator for the Canadian Peregrine Foundation based in Woodbridge, Ontario. His job is to educate children about the importance of wildlife conservation. His “partner” in his presentations is a peregrine falcon who travels with Sean and who has been trained by him to be comfortable around groups of people and children. He travels all over the province doing this, recently working in Timmins, Cochrane, Kapuskasing, and North Bay.

Although Sean has always held a strong interest in the outdoors, he never expected that he would end up in what he now refers to as his “dream job.” By the end of high school, he thought that he might become a teacher like his mother, Lorraine. He went to Trent University to study geography, but he never felt comfortable in the academic environment and decided not to return for a second year. Instead, he worked for a while in a pizza restaurant and in other service-sector jobs in order to pay for what he calls his “expensive habits,” which include travelling and wildlife photography. He has been to the Galapagos Islands, game parks in South Africa, and the mountains and jungles of Borneo. His most recent trip was to Bolivia with his sister, Caitlin, along with his father and uncle.

**FIGURE 4-27**  Sean explored many possibilities in work before becoming a wildlife officer.
Sean eventually enrolled in a Landscape Design and Management Program at Seneca College. He had worked for a few months at a nursery. He liked the work and felt that this might be the career direction that he was seeking. He enjoyed the program and did well, but after finishing the diploma course, he decided that his real interest was wildlife, not garden and park design. He was strongly influenced by one of his instructors at Seneca, a passionate environmentalist who strengthened Sean’s commitment and interest in environmental issues and with whom he shared an interest in bird watching. Eventually he entered the Environmental and Natural Resources program at Fleming College in Lindsay. He successfully completed the three-year program, working the summers as a ranger at Algonquin Provincial Park. As a park ranger, Sean was a popular leader of bird-watching walks as he was exceptionally adept at locating and identifying the wide range of bird species that migrated through the park.

Sean and Susan dated briefly in high school but drifted apart when Susan went to the University of Western Ontario to study music. About 10 years ago, they reconnected and have been a couple ever since. Susan has been teaching elementary school for the Peel Board for several years and has been living in her own condo. She has wanted to “settle down” and have children, but while Sean knew that his future was with her, he didn’t feel that he was quite ready. Now that Sean has been working full-time, he and Susan have been talking more seriously about getting married.

1. What evidence can you see in Sean’s life for the following challenges:
   • forming an identity
   • forming an occupation
   • forming supportive relationships

2. How did the following significant other people influence Sean’s development?
   • his parents
   • Susan
   • his instructor at Seneca College

3. How does Sean’s life reflect what Jeffrey Arnett calls a time of “independent exploration”? What behaviour of an emerging adult might be independent exploration?

4. Is Sean an adult now? What criteria would you use for your answer?
Chapter 4 Review and Apply

Knowledge and Understanding/Thinking

1. Describe the four clocks that define the pace of life.
2. Analyze how each of the four clocks influences your life to determine which has the greatest influence at this time.
3. Compare the life-course theories of Erikson, Loevinger, Levinson, and Arnett.
   • Identify the criteria you will use for your comparison; for example, you could compare how each reflects the four clocks.
   • Create a chart to organize your point-form summaries
4. a) Compare the seven life-course theories described in this chapter and identify the common elements.
   b) Suggest why there are differences among the seven theories.
   c) Which of the life-course approaches, stage or no stage, best fits your perceptions of emerging adulthood?
5. Summarize the following influences on the development of identity and forming an occupation in emerging adulthood:
   • family
   • school
   • work
6. Explain how family, school, and part-time work influence emerging adults forming an identity and an occupation, according to the research. Choose examples from your experience and from the experience of your peers to support the explanation.
7. Describe the importance of the following types of relationships on identity and occupation formation:
   • parent-child
   • friendship
   • work-place
   • mentor
8. Analyze how four types of supportive relationships change with identity and occupation formation during the transition to adulthood.

Thinking/Communication

9. Erik Erikson said that emerging adults seek to answer the question “Who am I and who will I be in the future?”
   a) State the key ideas of each of the other six theories in this chapter as questions for the emerging adult.
   b) Present the seven questions in a visual presentation that show how they are related.
10. Jeffrey Arnett identifies three areas of exploration in emerging adulthood—love, work, and worldview.
   a) Write a brief analysis of one of these areas, using specific ideas from other theories in this chapter.
   b) Include a direct quotation.
   c) Include in-text citations for all references to the textbook.

Communication/Application

11. Identify the marker that signifies the development of adulthood. Write a description of an adult you know (real or fictional), explaining how he or she has achieved adulthood, using examples of behaviour as evidence.

   Example: Adults have developed a set of beliefs that they use to guide their actions. My cousin volunteers at the women’s shelter because she is opposed to violence of any kind.

12. Is the transition to adulthood the same for men and women in Canada today, or are there clear gender differences? Develop a hypothesis. Summarize the evidence in this chapter that supports or does not support your hypothesis. What further research would you need to form a conclusion?

Becoming a Social Scientist

In this chapter, you have learned to:

- use APA in-text citations to give credit to the original source of your research data.
- use abstracts for research and to assess the value of a research article for your research study.
- analyze a research study to identify the hypothesis, the method, and the conclusions.
- distinguish between academic sources for research and journalistic sources for entertainment.
- design a research survey using questionnaires.