

Figure captions:

Figure 1. Descriptive statistics for the six latent class groups represent distinct pathways through the transition to adulthood.

¹ Means for hours of employment and earnings are based on all respondents in a group, whether employed or not. Mean prestige scores are limited to respondents who are employed.

² Our presentation of these results focuses on which differences among groups remain after controlling for other factors. When differences remain, their pattern across groups is essentially the same as reported for the bivariate relationships above. Therefore we do not report the rather overwhelming set of 80 regression coefficients that result from this analysis (five for each of the thirteen predictors). Due to missing data from these various time points, the analyses were conducted on a reduced sample of 605.

³ Though the data set includes many more measures taken at age 18, we limited the analysis to a subset that provide a good representation of major concepts in these domains, that were more related to group membership at the bivariate level, and that had the least missing data. This strategy enhances statistical power while reducing problems of collinearity.

Marriage expectations	2.1	5	0.830
Parenting expectations	4.4	5	0.492
Dating at age 18	5.5	5	0.358
Total Model	127.8	55	0.000
Model 4			
Gender	7.9	5	0.159
Race	4.1	5	0.540
Intact family	5.3	5	0.376
Mother's education	6.7	5	0.242
Father's education	5.0	5	0.411
Family income	3.9	5	0.565
Marriage expectations	3.3	5	0.654
Parenting expectations	4.7	5	0.455
Dating at age 18	3.6	5	0.603
Job at age 18	8.2	5	0.148
Future education likely	32.1	5	0.000
Positive occupation expectations	2.4	5	0.787
High school grade point average	47.9	5	0.000
Total Model	262.5	85	0.000

Note: Models 3 and 4 also include dummy variables reflecting missing value substitutions for a total of four predictors.

Appendix C

Multinomial Logit Analysis of Precursors: Likelihood Ratio Tests

Model 1	χ^2	df	Sig.
Gender	12.0	5	0.034
Race	4.8	5	0.444
Intact family	16.7	5	0.006
Total Model	35.2	15	0.002
Model 2			
Gender	11.2	5	0.048
Race	5.1	5	0.406
Intact family	8.9	5	0.114
Mother's education	15.6	5	0.008
Father's education	18.5	5	0.002
Family income	2.9	5	0.717
Total Model	101.0	30	0.000
Model 3			
Gender	8.4	5	0.137
Race	4.8	5	0.441
Intact family	7.1	5	0.216
Mother's education	12.6	5	0.027
Father's education	16.8	5	0.005
Family income	3.4	5	0.632

Relationship variables:		
Future marriage	When you think about your future, how likely do you think each of the following will be: You will get married; you will have a successful, happy marriage	Scale scored as mean across items, alpha = .73. '1' = 'very unlikely'; '7' = 'very likely'
Marry age	At what age would you like to marry?	Continuous measure of age in years
Future parent	When you think about your future, how likely do you think each of the following will be: You will have children; you will be a successful parent	Scale scored as mean across items, alpha = .85. '1' = very unlikely'; '7' = 'very likely'
Parent age	At what age would you like to start having children?	Age in years
Family importance	How important will each of the following be to you in your adult life?: Getting married; having children; having a successful /happy marriage; being a successful parent; spend a lot of time with our children; want to have children	Scale scored as mean across items; alpha = .86. '1' = 'not at all important'; '7' = 'very important'
H.S. date	Are you currently going out with only one person?	'0' = 'no'; '1' = 'yes'
Time use:	About how many hours do you usually spend each week doing _____."	The following time use variables recoded to hours per week.
Friends	Hanging out with friends	
Community service	Providing volunteer or community service	
Work	Working for pay	
Sports	Taking part in organized sports; doing other athletic or sports activities	
Family-based	Doing things with your family; taking care of younger brothers or sisters; fixing family meals; other indoor housework chores at home; yard work and other outdoor chores at home	
Skilled	Reading for fun; playing a musical instrument	

Responsibility		
Earning Rent Bills Household	How much responsibility do you take for: earning own living; paying rent; paying other bills; making sure your household runs smoothly	'1' = 'somebody else does this for me all of the time'; '5' = 'I am completely responsible for this all of the time'

Background Variables		
Variable	Questionnaire Item	Coding for Analysis
Demographic variables		
Gender		'0' = female; '1' = male
Race		'0' = non-white; '1' = white
Family of origin		
Structure	Are your biological parents: 'married & living together'; 'divorced'; 'separated'; 'never married & living together'; 'never married & not living together'; 'widowed'?	'0' = 'non-intact'; '1' = 'intact'
Income	About how much is your current family income each year?	'0' = low (\$0-\$40,000); '1' = high (>\$40,000)
Parent's education		'1' = high school or less; '2' = some post-secondary; '3' = bachelors or more

Age 18		
Variable	Questionnaire Item	Coding for Analysis
Employment		
Job	Do you have a regularly paying part-time job?	'0' = no; '1' = yes
Importance	How important will each of the following be to you in your adult life?: Able to find steady work; Being successful in work; Being financially independent. Before you get married, how important is it to you to ___?: Have a secure job; Save a lot of money.	Scale scored as mean across items, alpha = .75. '1' = 'not at all important'; '7' = 'extremely important'
Expectations	When you think about your future, how likely do you think each of the following will be in the next 10 to 15 years: You will have a job you enjoy doing; you will be a success in your line of work; you will have a job that pays well; (reversed) you will be laid off from your job; (reversed) you will have difficulty supporting your family financially.	Scale scored as mean across items, alpha = .76. '1' = 'very unlikely'; '7' = 'very likely'
Education		
GPA	Grade Point Average	Continuous measure of gpa
Interest	Items asked for specific subjects e.g., math, English I find working on ___ assignments: How much do you like doing ___?: For me, being good at ___ is:	Scale scored as mean across 14 items, alpha = .81. '1' = very boring/a little/not at all; '7' = very interesting/a lot/very useful/very important
Ability	Items asked for specific subjects e.g., math, English How good at ___ are you?: Compared to most of your other school subjects, How good are you at learning ___?:	Scale scored as mean across 11 items, alpha = .80. '1' = not at all/worse/not at all/much worse; '7' = very good/much better/very good/much better
Educational expectations	How likely do you think each of the following will be in the next 10 to 15 years: You will graduate from college (4 year); you will attend graduate or professional school	Scale scored as mean across items. alpha = .64. '1' = 'very unlikely'; '7' = 'very likely'

Appendix B

Measures included in analyses of concurrent correlates of latent class membership at age 24 and of precursors of latent class membership.

<i>Age 24</i>		
Variable	Questionnaire Item	Coding for Analysis
Employment		
Occupation	What is your main occupation or job?	Professional, Skilled, Sales, Administrative Support, Service, Other ¹
Salary	Approximately how much do you earn in this job?	Dollars earned per week
Hours	How many hours per week do you work at this job?	Hours worked per week
Prestige	What is your main occupation or job?	Socioeconomic status score from 0-100. ²
Education		
College	Are you currently taking any undergraduate or graduate college courses?	'0'=no; '1'=yes
Relationship variables		
Satisfaction	<i>Single</i> : How satisfied are you with your dating life? <i>Other</i> : How do you feel about being involved/living with/being married to your partner?	1-7 scale, '1' = 'not at all satisfied/very unhappy'; '7' = 'very satisfied/very happy'
Trouble	Have you ever thought your relationship might be in trouble?	'0'=no; '1'=yes
Ending	Have you or your partner ever seriously suggested the idea of ending your relationship?	'0'=no; '1'=yes
Abuse	How many times in the past 12 months did your partner or date throw something at you?	Recorded to number of times, 0-20
Length	<i>Cohabiting</i> : How long have you lived together? <i>Married</i> : How long have you been married?	Recorded to number of months
Length of Dating	<i>Cohabiting</i> : How long did you date your partner before you began living together? <i>Married</i> : How long did you date your spouse before you were married?	Recorded to number of months
Time use		
	"About how many hours do you usually spend each week doing [specified activity]"	'0-20 hours/week'=low '21+ hours/week'=high
Family		time with children; indoor & outdoor chores at home; family based leisure
Leisure		The sum of the following:
Physical		Athletic, sports, or fitness activities
Skill oriented		Reading; musical instrument; hobbies
Hedonistic		Hanging out with close friends
Passive		Watching tv; using a computer at home
Organizations		Clubs or organizations
Deviance		
Illegal	About how many times in the last 6 months did you: damage property; physical fight; drive when drunk; use marijuana; use other drugs; do something else illegal?	'0' = 'no illegal acts'; '1' = 'at least one act'

¹ Occupations classified using the 1980 U.S. Census Standard Occupational Classification.

² As derived by Nakao and Treas (1992) which determines socioeconomic status of occupations based on both educational attainment and income of occupational categories listed by the census.

All of these respondents would be assigned to Group A, over-representing their attributes for that group, while under-representing them in Group B.

We used a relatively simple approach for avoiding this type of bias in our comparisons among the paths through the transition to adulthood. We treated each respondent as a member of each path with a case weight equal to the probability membership in that group. Thus, respondents contributed to each group profile to the degree that they were representative of that path. This method of assignment bears some similarity to multiple imputation methods for missing data (Schafer 1997) as a way of avoiding bias. Unlike the most sophisticated multiple imputation methods, however, we do not attempt to assess the variability in results stemming from uncertainty about group membership. This may be compensated for by a tendency to underestimate group differences resulting from the negative dependence created by including treating the same individual as part of groups that are being compared. We are confident, however, that our approach is superior to normal standards and that its limits will not present problems for the largely descriptive purposes of our analyses.

Fit of latent class solutions for differing numbers of classes or clusters:

	Model χ^2	BIC	df	p-value
1 Clusters	1243.73	-679.15	276	1.2e-122
2 Clusters	611.13	-1249.05	267	5.1e-29
3 Clusters	477.82	-1319.66	258	2.5e-15
4 Clusters	382.58	-1352.19	249	1.1e-7
5 Clusters	292.88	-1379.20	240	0.011
6 Clusters	261.33	-1348.04	231	0.083
7 Clusters	241.69	-1304.98	222	0.17
8 Clusters	221.15	-1262.81	213	0.34

Comparing the Latent Classes

Latent class analysis does not directly assign each respondent to one and only one of the groups or clusters. Instead, this method yields a probability that any respondent is a member of each group. Some respondents have a very high probability of membership in one group and very low probability in all others, while other respondents have moderate probabilities of belonging in two or more groups. This presents a difficulty in comparing the groups on other dimensions, which is the major purpose of this chapter.

The most common approach for comparing groups is to assign respondents to the group for which they have the highest probability of membership. Though doing so will generally provide a reasonable approximation to the latent groups, there is a risk of distorting the portrayal of some groups. For instance, suppose that respondents with a certain profile of characteristics have a .55 probability of belonging to Group A and a .45 probability of belonging to Group B.

Appendix A

Latent Class Analysis

We conducted the latent class analysis using Vermunt and Magidson's (2000) Latent Gold program. This sophisticated program provides solutions to some of the most common difficulties of latent class analysis, such as a Bayesian approach to preventing boundary solutions and automatic generation of multiple starting values to avoid local maxima. Latent Gold also permits the use of cases with missing values on some variables, which allowed us to maintain a sample size of 1410 respondents for the analyses reported in this chapter. Because including cases with missing data reduces the power of tests for model fit, analyses to determine the number of latent classes and restrictions on the solution were limited to the 1061 cases with complete data. The latent classes were virtually identical for analyses with and without cases that had missing values.

Examination of preliminary results suggested that employment and education might well be treated as ordinal rather than categorical variables. Model comparisons indicated that doing so yielded the best balance of parsimony and model fit, so we included this restriction in our final analysis.

The following summary of model fit indicates that six latent classes or clusters are necessary to provide a summary that does not significantly differ from the data. Yet these results indicate that four or five clusters would be more parsimonious (i.e., yield lower values of BIC). Furthermore, comparison of log likelihood values indicates that seven and eight cluster solutions significantly improve upon six clusters. We chose six clusters as providing an optimal combination of model fit, parsimony, and most importantly, interpretable and interesting clusters.

Table 2. Precursors of Alternative Pathways through the Transition to Adulthood: Demographics and family of origin

	Fast Starters	Parents without Careers	Educated Partners	Educated Singles	Late-Leaving Workers	Slow Starters
Gender:						
Female	55%	71%	66%	53%	47%	56%
Race/Ethnicity:						
Non-white	4%	6%	2%	5%	3%	11%
Family of Origin Income						
>\$40,000/Year	54%	55%	68%	74%	62%	54%
Father's Education						
High School or Less	63%	64%	38%	28%	47%	55%
Some Post-Secondary	21%	21%	26%	24%	24%	23%
Bachelors or More	16%	15%	36%	48%	29%	22%
Mother's Education						
High School or Less	63%	67%	47%	41%	55%	60%
Some Post-Secondary	23%	19%	23%	21%	27%	20%
Bachelors or More	14%	14%	30%	38%	18%	21%
Parent's Marital Status						
Not Married	34%	40%	30%	24%	40%	37%

Table 1. Variables used to define clusters in the latent class analysis.

<u>Romantic Relationship</u>	
Single	28%
Steady Dating	33%
Cohabiting	15%
Married	24%
<u>Residence</u>	
With Parents or Other Relatives	38%
Renting or Temporary	44%
Home Owner	18%
<u>Parenthood</u>	
No	80%
Yes	20%
<u>Employment</u>	
Not Employed	15%
Short-Term Job	29%
Job is Step on Career Path	36%
Long-Term Job	21%
<u>Education</u>	
No More than High School Degree	21%
Some College	47%
Bachelor's Degree or More	33%

N = 1410

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linked to the social class characteristics of one's natal family. Our findings support the notion that individuals are "both constrained and enabled by socially structured opportunities and limitations" (Shanahan 2000 p.675). The six groups differ in quite predictable ways in the social class characteristics of their natal families. The educated singles and educated partners are more likely to have come from families of higher social class. With more education and higher incomes, these natal families have the resources necessary for young adults to pursue the kind of personal and professional advancements characteristic of these two groups. These two groups also had strong academic abilities, attitudes, and values during high school, which in turn have been shown to be related to the resources and the value placed on education in families of higher social class (Eccles, Wigfield, and Schiefele 1998). In contrast, having high expectations for marriage and family at an earlier age rather than for future education, as did the parents without careers group, is consistent with a pathway into adulthood characterized more by family roles of marriage and parenthood than by education and employment (Schneider and Coleman 1993; Sewell and Hauser 1980). The path that one takes, therefore, typically reflects the social class values and resources of one's natal family.

We close by noting that our findings also refute any implication that family background is destiny. Despite the strong link between parents' social class and the transition groups at age 24, the connection of future group membership to academic factors at age 18 is even stronger. When poor children whose parents have little education succeed in high school and expect to continue to succeed in college, they are just as likely as children of privileged backgrounds to reach age 24 on a promising pathway through the transition to adulthood.

that these groups are more concerned with improving themselves individually and professionally than with settling into traditional family-oriented adult roles. Although the fast starters and parents without careers may seem more “adult-like,” their lifestyles appear to lack the emphasis on growth and exploration seen in two of the other groups. For example, fast starters are quite settled in the domain of employment, yet their jobs tend to be skilled rather than professional and of low prestige. In contrast, personal exploration and advancement in all areas of life seems to be highly valued, particularly by the educated singles. Although this group places importance on committed relationships, a smaller proportion currently have them. Members of this group still seem to be “trying out” partnerships. They spend their free time in leisure activities with an emphasis on having fun and learning new things.

The lifestyles of the educated partners and educated singles contrast with the emphasis on home and family found in the groups that have settled into families. The educated partners and working singles are similar to the educated singles in that they are more likely than the other groups to engage in leisure activities. With their emphasis on personal and professional growth, as well as being settled romantically, the educated partners appear to combine the emerging adulthood stage with settled adult life. The slow starters, on the other hand, have made little to no progress in any domain. Thus, they certainly have not moved into the role of an adult, nor do they appear to be delaying adulthood in favor of personal advancement. As far as we can determine from our data, this group doesn't seem to be positively exploring or on a forward-looking path of any kind. This group demonstrates that a delay in entering traditional adult roles does not necessarily imply investments in other future prospects.

Our fourth conclusion concerns the precursors of these paths through the transition. Clearly there is more than one pathway into adulthood, but what leads individuals to take these different paths? Our analyses suggest that the nature of one's transition to adulthood is strongly

Second, although we identified six different pathways, our sample is overly represented in the path that most strongly reflects “emerging adulthood” (Arnett and Taber 1994; Arnett 2000). If being an adult means being settled in all of the five domains used in our classification, as was typically thought in previous generations, our sample falls short at age 24. Rather than viewing this as a failure, however, several researchers now suggest that these patterns reflect two secular trends (a) a delay in taking on the full responsibilities of marriage and family in favor of personal exploration and educational preparation and (b) acceptance of a wider range of valued adult life styles. For example, rather than marry, much of our sample has chosen to cohabit or steadily date. Jobs serve as steps in a career rather than long-term positions. Although the majority of the sample expressed a desire to have a family, childrearing has largely been postponed. Residences are temporary as opposed to permanent, as in home ownership. What clearly distinguishes the large portion of our sample who appear to be on this emerging adulthood path is the commitment to education. Whereas a more traditional route to adulthood might be through securing financial independence, much of our sample places importance not on settling in a job, but advancing their education. Thus, our latent class analysis shows clear evidence of both a diversification of pathways to adulthood and a tendency toward an emerging adulthood period.

Third, our analysis of other lifestyle variables showed that it is useful to go beyond the traditional markers of role transitions (i.e. marriage, employment, parenthood, etc.) to see how people taking particular paths are experiencing life in their mid-twenties. Again, such an examination shows a pattern consistent with Arnett’s concept of emerging adulthood. The educated singles, our largest group, and the educated partners, the next largest, appear to be more devoted to educational and professional advancements than the other four groups. This emphasis on investment in one’s education and emphasis on an upward trajectory of employment suggests

A final and especially important result emerges from this last step of the analysis: Once we took educational expectations and performance into account, the natal family social class profiles of the transition groups differed by no more than would be expected by chance. The implications are profound, for this result not only provides an explanation for the advantages of parents' social class, but it demonstrates that those advantages are not inevitable. Children whose parents are highly educated have a much greater chance of becoming educated partners and educated singles at age 24 precisely because they are more likely to have done well in high school and to expect to obtain a college degree. Furthermore, any students from poor families who do equally well in school and have the same high expectations are just as likely to arrive in those high trajectory groups at age 24.

Conclusions

Through the analyses presented here we have identified six groups based on transitions into adult roles at age 24. Four conclusions stand out. First, there were six quite distinct pathways into young adulthood. In a review of the life course literature on the transition to adulthood and its relation to historical events and economic circumstances, Shanahan (2000) documented the increasing variability in pathways to adulthood over the last fifty years. Clearly the young adults in the MSALT sample show substantial diversity in the sequences of adult roles they take on as they make their transition to adulthood. Rather than everyone moving toward adulthood by getting married, having children, and securing a stable job, we found a number of different possible trajectories, all of which seem quite viable and culturally appropriate for this generation. These include a delay in many traditional domains, such as marriage and parenthood, in favor of options such as extending educational paths and choosing non-marital partnerships. Furthermore these six paths at age 24 logically connect with the four paths that Sandefur and colleagues (this volume) found at age 20.

.002, respectively). Furthermore, controlling for the social class measures reduced to chance the predictive power of parents' marital status ($\chi^2 = 8.9$, 5 df, $p = .114$).

Next we considered whether the measures at age 18 were associated with transition group membership after the demographic variables and family background were taken into account.³ These same analyses are also informative about whether the respondents' adjustment at age 18 can help explain the connection between the background variables and respondents' courses through the transition to adulthood.

We first examined the contribution of those measures at 18 that are relevant to future family roles, including current dating and expectations for marriage and parenting. Earlier we saw that, when considered one at a time, these measures were only modestly related to the six latent classes. Accordingly, after controlling for the background characteristics, this group of predictors were related to transition group membership at only a chance level ($\chi^2 = 26.8$, 25 df, $p = .366$). Though gender was no longer a significant predictor after taking these measures into account, that resulted from redundancy due to gender differences in views about marriage and family rather than from any connection of those views to the transition to adulthood.

The earlier analysis showed that the transition groups had been more distinct in the domain of work and education at age 18, so we saved these measures for the last step of the analysis. We found that, indeed, the predictive contribution of these measures remained very clear, even after taking into account all other predictors ($\chi^2 = 134.7$, 30 df, $p = .000$). More specifically, the two measures concerning education--future educational expectations and high school grade point average--stood out as especially robust predictors of the latent class groups ($\chi^2 = 32.1$, 5 df, $p = .000$, $\chi^2 = 47.9$, 5 df, $p = .000$, respectively). The two measures concerning employment did not ($\chi^2 = 8.2$, 5 df, $p = .148$, $\chi^2 = 2.4$, 5 df, $p = .787$, respectively).

Simultaneously considering multiple predictors of transition group membership. It is also interesting to ascertain which of these precursors of groups membership are still predictive after taking into account other factors. For instance, is the high rate of intact marriages for parents of the educated partners and educated singles an indirect consequence of the high level of education for those parents, or is it perhaps the other way around? We addressed questions of this sort through multinomial logistic regression analyses in which the outcome measure was membership in the six latent class groups at age 24 and the predictor variables were background characteristics (demographic factors and characteristics of the natal family) and selected measures from the questionnaire at age 18. Appendix C presents the tests of statistical significance for the independent prediction provided by each variable, controlling for others.²

We first consider the contributions of gender, race, and whether the respondent's parents' marriage was intact when the respondent was age 24. As a set, these predictors were significantly, though not strongly, related to who fell into which of the transition groups at age 24 ($\chi^2 = 35.2$, 15 df, $p = .002$). Both gender ($\chi^2 = 12.0$, 5 df, $p = .034$) and whether the respondents parents were still married to one another ($\chi^2 = 16.7$, 5 df, $p = .006$) were independent predictors, controlling for the other variables.

Among the demographic and natal family variables, the factors most strongly related to transition group membership at the bivariate level had been the three measures reflecting social class: mother's education, father's education, and family income (see Table 2). Adding these measures to the other three background factors considerably enhanced our ability to predict into which transition groups respondents would fall at age 24 ($\chi^2 = 65.8$, 15 df, $p = .000$). Both mother's and father's education were significant predictors, controlling for the other demographic and family background variables ($\chi^2 = 15.6$, 5 df, $p = .008$, and $\chi^2 = 18.5$, 5 df, $p =$

paths had been the most inclined to devote their time and energy to pursuits that are highly valued by white middle-class society.

In contrast to these results for attitudes about education, attitudes about employment did not differ across the six groups. At age 18 future members of all groups placed very high importance on successful employment (averaging 6.4 on a 1 - 7 scale), and they held equally high expectations for future occupational success (averaging 5.9 on a 1 - 7 scale). There was, however, a non-significant trend ($p = .11$) for respondents who were to become fast starters and working singles to have worked more hours at age 18 than did the future members of other groups.

The questionnaire at age 18 also asked about attitudes concerning marriage and family. There was a trend ($p = .06$) for the future parents without careers to have the highest future expectations for marriage. They also wanted to get married at a younger age of any of the other five groups, with a mean desired age of marriage of 23 years compared to 25 for the full sample. Indeed, a high proportion of this group was married by age 24. Despite an equally high rate of marriage among fast starters by age 24, however, their future expectations for marriage at age 18 were no different from other groups.

Future expectations about parenting failed to differentiate the groups who were to have high and low rates of parenthood at age 24. All groups were highly and equally likely to have expected to become parents. When asked about the desired age for having a first child, however, respondents who would become the parents without career group expressed the youngest mean age: 24 versus 27 for the full sample. The six groups assigned very similar levels of importance to the family at age 18. On the whole then, attitudes about marriage and family were not very predictive of future differences among the groups. Nonetheless, the two differences that did emerge were consistent with future differences in marriage and parenthood.

however, they do not seem placing themselves in a strong position to succeed when the time comes to enter those roles. Most had reached their mid-twenties with little education, still living with their parents, unsatisfactory romantic relations, and either not working or holding jobs with poor pay and prospects.

Precursors of Alternative Pathways through the Transition to Adulthood

We have seen that these six groups represent dramatically different pathways through the transition to adulthood and that those differences were foreshadowed by social class differences in their natal families. Next we consider potential precursors of group membership in the information we obtained from our sample at age 18, and we ask how this information connects the earlier social class differences to those pathways.

Precursors at age 18. The MSALT study includes a wealth of information about the respondents at earlier ages. We chose age 18 as a point of comparison because it represents the culmination of their experiences as they arrive at the point when transitions to adult roles become acceptable under conventional standards. See Appendix B for a list of the measures included in this analysis.

We found that information gathered at age 18 strongly foreshadows the high educational achievement of the educated partners and educated singles. Compared to all other groups, these respondents had 1) higher self concepts of academic ability, 2) greater interest in academics, and 3) stronger expectations for their future education. The educated partners and educated singles were also distinct from the other groups in spending more time in three categories of activities known to be linked to educational outcomes and positive youth development: sports, skill-oriented activities, and community activities (Barber, Eccles and Stone 2001; Eccles and Barber 1999; Eccles and Gootman 2002). Perhaps this is a reflection that respondents on these two

except the educated partners and educated singles), and that should improve their future employment prospects.

It is notable that an especially large portion of the slow starters were single, without a steady dating relationship (49%), and in all groups respondents in this situation were those least satisfied with their romantic relationships. If slow starters did have a steady relationship, they were more likely than members of the other groups to report that their relationship was in trouble (78% versus 68% overall). Unlike the educated singles and working singles, many of the slow starters were already parents. Among non-parents, however, the slow starters were somewhat less likely than other groups to expect that they ever would become parents.

The slow starters' time use was comparable to that of the working singles, falling between the educated singles and the groups living with romantic partners. Over half of the slow starters spent more than 20 hours per week in household and family activities (54% versus 50% overall), and 68% spent more than 20 hours per week in leisure activities (compared to 70% overall). They devoted higher than average amounts of time to hedonistic activities (43% spending 20 hours per week or more compared to 39% in the full sample). Their rate of illegal behavior was the highest of all groups, with 63% reporting at least one of the acts.

The slow starters were about average for the amount of responsibility they reported taking for earning their own living, paying rent, and paying other bills. As with the educated singles and working singles, they were less likely than average to indicate that they took most of the responsibility for running their households.

As the label implies, the slow starters were the group least advanced in their progression into adult roles. They can be seen as representing another version of emergent adulthood (Arnett 2000), for they have not assumed most of the traditional roles of adulthood, and they are, perhaps, in an extended period of exploration. In contrast to the educated partners and singles,

to 50% overall), and 66% spent more than 20 hours per week in leisure activities (compared to 70% overall). The working singles spent higher than average amounts of time in physical activities and hedonistic activities, but lower than average in skill-oriented activities. Their rate of illegal behavior was comparable to the educated singles (56% committed at least one of the acts). As with the educated singles, the working singles were especially likely to indicate that they were responsible for earning their own living, paying rent, and paying other bills, but were less likely than groups living with partners to indicate that they were responsible for running their own households.

In sum, the working singles were similar to the fast starters in the world of work and education, and they were similar to the educated singles in their family involvements. They invested more heavily in work than in education, and at 24 they had good earnings from long term jobs that did not carry much prestige. They were less adult-like in their family relations in that they were neither spouses, cohabitators, or parents, and they were quite likely still to live with their parents.

Slow starters. Figure 1 showed that the slow starters were not well established in the realms of romantic relationships, residence, employment, and education, but a moderate portion had become parents. Additional analyses showed that the slow starters worked fewer hours and earned less than all groups other than the parents without careers (30 hours and \$370 per week). They were especially likely to hold low level service jobs (23% versus 17% overall) and office jobs (27% versus 22% overall); many had jobs in skilled or technical trades as well (28% versus 24% overall). The prestige ratings of their positions were as low as the parents without careers, with only 18% rising above the midpoint of the scale. In contrast, a sizable portion of the slow starters were then taking college level courses (21%, which was higher than all other groups

of the six (39%), there is clear evidence that the mid-twenties are a period of continuing exploration and delayed commitment to adult-roles. At the same time, the educated singles had gathered considerable personal capital through education and employment that should prove valuable resources for long-term economic success.

Working singles. The combination of living with parents and career-oriented employment distinguished the working singles from the other five groups. As Figure 1 showed, the working singles were similar to the educated singles in their pattern of romantic relationships and residence, and they were similar to the fast starters in their pattern of employment and education. Males were over-represented in this group (53% versus 43% overall)--the only group for which this was true.

A more detailed examination of employment illustrates the similarity of the working singles with the fast starters. The working singles earned relatively high incomes (\$593 per week, compared to an average of \$471), and worked many hours per week (42 compared to 35 overall). A large share of these respondents were employed in skilled and technical trades (33% versus 24% overall). The average prestige of their positions was somewhat higher than the fast starters, with 31% above the scale midpoint, compared to 26% for the latter. Both of these two groups held jobs with considerably lower prestige than the educated partners and educated singles (45% and 58% above the midpoint, respectively). Thus, the working singles were well established in the world of work, with stable positions and jobs that provide moderate incomes and prestige. Sixteen percent of the working singles were currently taking college level courses.

Our picture of the romantic relationships of the working singles is essentially the same as the educated singles and slow starters. The working singles' time use fell between that of the educated singles and the groups who lived with romantic partners. Forty-nine percent of the working singles spent more than 20 hours per week in family and household activities (compared

without steady relationships wanted one; 63% felt it was somewhat to very important to have a committed relationship. Respondents without a steady relationship typically went on dates no more than once per week (72%). On the whole, respondents without a steady romantic relationship were not satisfied with their dating situation (66% responded 1 - 3 on a 7 point scale).

All three groups of respondents who did not live with romantic partners spent relatively little time in family and household activities. This was especially true of the educated singles, only 33% of whom devoted over 20 hours per week to these endeavors, compared to 49% for the entire sample. Correspondingly, the educated singles spent the most time in leisure activities (80% over 20 hours per week), including high rates of physical activities, skill-oriented activities, and hedonistic activities. Fifty-six percent of the educated singles had engaged in at least one of the illegal behaviors, far more than any of the groups living with romantic partners (44% or less). Among the educated singles, those who lived on their own had even lower rates of family and household activities and higher rates of socializing than did the educated singles who lived with parents or relatives.

Despite their less settled lifestyle, the educated singles were just as likely as members of the other five groups to report bearing adult responsibilities in the areas of earning a living, paying their own bills, and paying rent. They were slightly less likely to report that they took the major responsibility for running their own households (60% versus 66% overall).

The overall picture for the educated singles is of slower entry into adult roles associated with emergent adulthood. They were neither parents nor living with romantic partners, and they devoted little time to activities with family or at home. They were in the early stages of their careers, holding jobs they saw as short-term or steps in careers. In accord with their high level of education, however, those jobs were more prestigious. For this group, which is by far the largest

many have not yet made strong progress in this domain. Yet their greater education and the higher prestige of their jobs suggest strong prospects for long-term success after their period of exploration.

Educated singles. With their long-term schooling and later entry into family roles, the educated singles also appear to fit the mold of emergent adulthood (Arnett 2000). As defined by the latent class analysis (see Figure 1), the primary difference between the educated singles and the educated partners was that the educated singles did not live with romantic partners, and they were more likely to live with their parents. The educated singles had the highest level of education, with 61% holding bachelors degrees.

Consistent with this high level of education, the educated singles were most likely to have high status employment. Fifty-eight percent held jobs with status rankings above the midpoint of the prestige scale, compared to 45% for the educated partners and 31% or less for all other groups. Employment in professional positions was highly concentrated among the educated singles (34% versus 24% for educated partners and no more than 13% for other groups). Surprisingly, their hours of employment (36 per week) and earnings (\$484 per week) were near the mean for entire sample (35 and \$471), which is attributable to the portion of the educated singles who were unemployed or in short-term jobs. The educated singles also tended to be on an upward trajectory that would increase their educational advantage: 30% were currently enrolled in college level courses, the highest among the six groups.

There were few differences in relationship satisfaction among the three groups who were not living with romantic partners. In all three of these groups, however, respondents with steady dating relationships felt very differently about romantic relationships than those without. Respondents who were steadily dating were quite satisfied with their relationships (mean of 6.2 on a 7 point scale), which had lasted an average of 29 months. Fifty-seven percent of those

in their level of satisfaction with cohabitation. Finally, the educated partners were less likely than all other groups except the fast starters to feel that their relationship was in trouble (66% compared to 72% of all groups except fast starters).

The educated partners spent less time in household maintenance and family activities than the fast starters and parents without careers (51% spending over 20 hours per week, compared to 72% and 88%, respectively), and they spent more time in leisure pursuits (69% spending over 20 hours per week, compared to 58% and 53%). Yet like the other groups living with romantic partners, the educated partners spent relatively little time in hedonistic activities (29% spending over 20 hours per week, compared to 39% in the full sample), and relatively few engaged in any of the illegal behaviors (44% engaging one or more acts).

Similar to respondents in most of the other groups, the educated partners felt that they took most of the responsibility for earning their own living and paying rent. Like the first two groups, they were especially likely to feel that they were responsible for running their own household (78% versus 66% overall), but they were somewhat less inclined to report that they bore most of the responsibility for paying their bills (78% versus 85% overall).

In summary, despite living with a romantic partner, the educated partners in many ways exemplify the notion of emergent adulthood (Arnett 2000), for they appear to have delayed some adult commitments in favor of an extended period of exploration. The educated partners were less deeply involved in adult family roles than the fast starters and parents without careers. Furthermore, they had entered those romantic relationships more recently, they did not have children, and they spent less time in activities at home and with family. In these respects they are somewhat more similar to the groups who did not live with romantic partners. The educated partners also differed greatly from the first two groups in their employment trajectory. Their current employment profile is less stable and lower-paying than the fast starters, indicating that

weaknesses. Educated partners held jobs with higher average prestige ratings (45% over the scale midpoint) than all other groups except the educated singles. Both of these groups also had the highest proportions of members employed in professional position (24% for educated partners versus 8% for all other groups except the educated singles). Other office work, including administrative support positions such as office supervisors, secretaries, typists, and clerks, was also especially common in this group. The employed partners worked a few more hours per week than the total sample on average (38 versus 35), and earned the same weekly wage (\$471). Though the educated partners earned much less than the fast starters at age 24, their future job prospects may have been brighter. Not only did the educated partners have much more previous education, they also were continuing to build their educations at a higher rate than the first two groups, with 27% currently enrolled in college level courses (compared to 9% and 12% respectively for the first two groups).

In contrast to the other groups who lived with romantic partners, the educated partners had lived with their partners for a shorter period and their life-styles were less distinct from respondents who did not live with romantic partners. Not only were the educated partners especially likely to cohabit rather than marry, but their cohabiting relationships were also newer, an average of 17 months versus 21 for the entire sample. Furthermore, the average length of the marriages was only 18 months, compared to 25 months for the entire sample. Nevertheless, they did date longer before marriage, an average of 41 months versus 35 overall. This pattern of relative delay for entering marriage and cohabitation is consistent with the higher education of this group (see chapters of this volume by Fussell and Furstenberg and by Sandefur and colleagues). Adding an interesting wrinkle to this pattern, those educated partners who were married expressed the greatest satisfaction with their marriages of all six groups. In contrast, the cohabiting educated partners did not differ from the cohabiting members of the other five groups

Oddly enough, this high investment in home and family was associated with reporting relatively low levels in the assuming some adult responsibilities. On average, parents without careers were the least likely to report that were responsible for earning their own living (54% versus 84% for the entire sample) and paying their own bills (64% versus 85% overall). It seems likely that this reflects a gender division in the household rather than a delayed transition to adulthood. Because many of these primarily female respondents either did not work or held poorly paying short-term jobs, they may have been indicating that their spouses or partners carried these responsibilities. Correspondingly, parents without careers were especially likely to report that they took most of the responsibility for seeing that their households ran smoothly (87% versus 66% overall).

It is simplest to summarize the situation of this picture of partners without careers at age 24 by comparing them to the fast starters. These were the two groups with the deepest involvement in adult family roles. With their high rate of parenthood and heavy time investments, family may have been even more prominent in the lives of the partners without careers than the fast starters. Yet these two groups are quite distinct when it comes to employment. Many parents without careers do not work, and those who do work few hours and earn little.

Educated partners. The profile that defines the educated partners in the latent class analysis was quite distinct from the first two groups. Though all three groups lived with romantic partners, the educated partners had much higher levels of education and none were parents by age 24. Like the parents without careers, females were over-represented among the educated partners (66% versus 58% for the sample as a whole).

Figure 1 showed that the employment situation of the educated partners was quite variable. A more detailed examination of their employment reveals both strengths and

education, at age 24 they were unlikely to be advancing their educations by taking college level courses (12% versus 23% for the entire sample).

The marriages and cohabiting relationships of the parents without careers had lasted longer, and thus had begun at an earlier age, than the other groups. The average length of their marriages was 33 months, versus 29 for the entire sample, and the average length of their cohabiting relationships was 34 months, versus 29 for the entire sample. Parents without careers had a shorter period of dating before marriage (a mean of 29 months versus 35 overall). Thus, the length of their relationships with their spouses was effectively the same as the other groups, but they had married earlier in this period. This pattern did not hold for cohabitation, however, so that the parents without careers had been involved in longer cohabiting relationships than respondents in the other five groups. Some differences appeared, however, with respect to the quality of partnerships, with 77% of this group feeling that their relationship was in trouble, compared to only 68% of the full sample. The parents without careers also reported the highest number of times that their partner had thrown something at them, indicating that their relationships may be more problematic than those in other groups.

The time use of the parents without careers also showed a greater emphasis on home and family: 82% spent over 20 hours per week on activities in this domain, compared to 50% for the entire sample. Though this figure may be partly due to the high concentration of females in this group, the pattern holds for both sexes: 91% for females versus 59% overall and 74% for males versus 35% overall. Correspondingly, the parents without careers spent less time than all other groups in leisure activities, with only 20% reporting over 20 hours per week, compared to 70% for the entire sample. They were also the group that spent the least time in the specific leisure domains of physical and hedonistic activities and the second lowest for time in skill-oriented activities. Relatively few committed any of the illegal acts assessed in this study.

To summarize, as our label implies, the fast starters had the most adult-like lives at age 24. They were heavily invested in work and family, working full-time at jobs they saw as long-term and living in romantic partnerships they saw as stable and which had already lasted for several years. These commitments also translated to devoting more time to home and family and less time to leisure pursuits. The trade-off for these early transitions was less education, which brought less prestigious employment and weaker prospects for long-term occupational advancement.

Parents without Careers. Virtually all of the respondents on this path through the transition to adulthood were parents who lived with romantic partners or spouses, and who either did not work or held a job they regarded as short-term. A high proportion of the parents without careers were female (71% versus 58% for the entire sample). Most members of this group were housewives or mothers who worked at jobs in which they were not heavily invested. Even so, over a quarter of the group were men, typically fathers who held short-term jobs.

The employment of the parents without careers was much more limited than those of the other groups. On average they worked only 23 hours per week and earned only an average of \$239 per week, both the lowest of the six groups. The men in the group worked many more hours per week than the women (42 versus 16), and accordingly had far higher incomes (\$476 per week versus \$154). Compared to other groups, the parents without careers were more likely to have jobs in sales, low level service, and skilled trades, and less likely to have jobs classified as professional or office work. Very few respondents on this pathway held positions with prestige rankings above the midpoint of the scale (18% versus 42% overall). Furthermore, it is likely that many of the parents without careers will be in a weak position to raise the quality of their employment in the future. Not only did this group have the lowest level of previous

married and cohabiting fast starters typically had been with the same partner since ages 19 and 20, respectively. Thus, the fast starters had entered long term romantic relationships quite early in the transition to adulthood.

There was considerable variation across these groups in patterns of time use, and this variation corresponded to differences among them in romantic relationships and patterns of residence. As was typical of the groups that lived with romantic partners and away from parents, the fast starters devoted a great deal of their time to household and family oriented activities, such as housework, yard work, and child care. Seventy-two percent of the fast starters spent over 20 hours per week in such activities, compared to only 50% for the sample as a whole. Conversely, while 70% of the entire sample spent over 20 hours per week in leisure pursuits, this was true for only 58% of the fast starters. This lower level of leisure time held across physical activities (e.g., fitness, sports), skill-oriented activities (e.g., hobbies, reading), and hedonistic activities (e.g., hanging out with friends, going to bars and nightclubs, playing games). The fast starters also had low rates of illegal behavior, with only 42% percent engaging in any of a set of activities including illicit drug use, assault, and vandalism in the past six months, compared to 51% of the entire sample.

We asked respondents how much of the responsibility they took for a set of four adult tasks: earning their own living, paying rent, paying their other bills, and making sure that their household ran smoothly. Interestingly, although the fast starters had made more transitions into adult roles than the other groups, they were no more inclined than the average respondent to indicate that they had taken each of these adult responsibilities. With a few notable exceptions, the members of all the six groups felt highly responsible in all of these areas. Only with regard to running the household did the fast starters feel somewhat more responsible than the average respondent (73% reporting they did so most of the time, compared to 66% for the total sample).

per week than most of the other groups (42 hours per week,¹ compared to an overall mean of 35), and their average earnings per week was the highest of the six (\$674 versus an overall mean of \$471). Yet their employment profile also showed the limits of their educations. Only 26% held jobs with prestige ratings above the midpoint of the scale, compared to 42% for the entire sample. Furthermore, few fast starters held professional positions (9% versus 22% overall), while jobs in skilled and technical trades were especially common (35% versus 24% overall). The low investment in education for this group was also continuing into the future. Only 9% were currently enrolled in college level courses, compared to 23% for the entire sample.

In the realm of romantic or family relationships, there were no reliable differences among the six groups on average levels of satisfaction with marital, cohabiting, or steady dating relationships. There were slight differences across groups, however, with respect to whether they thought the relationship was in trouble or thought about ending the relationship. Fast starters were less likely to view their romantic relationship negatively. When asked if they had ever felt that their relationship was in trouble, only 55% of this group said yes versus 68% for the full sample. Fast starters also were less likely ever to have suggested ending their relationship, at 23% compared to 34% in the full sample. Yet fast starters were significantly more likely to indicate being involved in physically abusive relationships, reporting the highest number of times their partners had thrown something at them.

The lengths of marriage and cohabitation did vary across these six groups, with the fast starters falling near the sample mean for both. At age 24, the average length of their marriages was 26 months (versus 25 for the entire sample) and the average length of their cohabitations was 24 months (versus 21). Before marrying, the fast starters had dated their future spouses an average of 35 months (also the overall sample mean), while their period of dating before cohabiting was on average 21 months (compared to 19 for the entire sample). This indicates that

three groups that included parents at age 24 (fast starters, parents without careers, and slow starters). Educated partners and educated singles were also more likely to have parents who were still married when respondents were age 24. These patterns suggest that the differences in social class resources of their parents are likely to be replicated in social class assets of the young people in this sample, both through greater educational attainment early in adulthood and through delayed entry into marriage and parenthood. This pattern was also evident in the analyses reported by Sandefur and colleagues in their chapter of this volume.

Six Versions of Life Midway Through the Transition to Adulthood

There were interesting differences between the six transition groups on the five variables included in the latent class analysis. It must be remembered, however, that these are not empirical relations in the usual sense. Those five measures are not simply related to group membership, but rather they define group membership in much the same way that answers to a series of attitude items define scores on the scale that they comprise. This next section of our chapter moves beyond the definition of the latent classes to obtain a richer picture of their lives at age 24. To do so we compare the six classes, which are based on traditional markers of adulthood, on a number of additional lifestyle variables measured at the same point in time. Appendix B lists the specific measures used in this analysis. We report only differences between groups that meet the conventional standards of statistical significance (two-tailed $p < .05$), except in a few cases when we note otherwise.

The fast starters. The fast starters are the respondents who had gone the farthest in entering adult roles. As noted above, they had the highest rates of marriage, home ownership, and employment in jobs they saw as long-term; most of the fast starters were parents as well.

More detailed information about the fast starters' employment supported the impression that they were the group most firmly established in the world of work. They worked more hours

working group who continued their trajectory without marrying or cohabiting by age 24 would fall into our smaller working singles category. Our final group, the slow starters, is not yet evident among the groups at age 20. They would be comprise a sizable fraction of Sandefur's "full-time working" group who were not, in fact, yet working full-time at age 20. We suspect that the slow starters did not emerge as a latent class at age 20 because full-time employment and living independently from parents are not yet so common that their absence is distinctive. In sum, these two sets of groups at different ages appear quite consistent with one another, and together they suggest likely patterns of transition. It would be interesting to analyze the two ages jointly, using a method such as latent transition analysis (Collins and Wugalter 1992) to identify the dominant patterns of stability and change.

Demographics and family of origin. Before turning to a more detailed characterization of life at age 24 for these six groups, it is useful to consider basic information about their backgrounds. Table 2 compares the six groups in terms of gender, race/ethnicity, and several characteristics of their families of origin. Females were over-represented in two of the groups of respondents who lived with romantic partners: parents without careers and educated partners. In contrast, males were over-represented among the working singles. It is interesting that non-white respondents were considerably more common among the slow starters than in any of the other groups, but the difference is not statistically reliable given the small number of minority respondents in this sample.

[Table 2 about here.]

Table 2 shows that membership in the transition groups is strongly related to the social class of one's natal family. The groups with the most education and job prestige, the educated partners and educated singles, came from families with considerably higher incomes and education. In contrast, these indicators of social class in one's natal family were lowest for all

graduated from college (7%), but many had obtained lower levels of post-secondary education (59%).

We labeled the final cluster the slow starters because this 14% of the sample had made the fewest transitions to adult roles by age 24. These respondents rarely lived with romantic partners (8%), two-thirds lived with their parents, and none own homes. The majority either were not employed (31%) or worked short-term jobs (43%). Almost none had jobs they considered long-term (3%). This group was also among the least educated, with 48% having no post-secondary schooling. The slow starters were more “advanced” in the area of parenthood, with 30% becoming parents by age 24.

These six transition groups at age 24 relate well to the four groups that resulted from Sandefur and colleagues latent analysis at age 20 (in this volume). Both analyses yield two groups distinguished by their college educations. At age 20 the college oriented groups (referred to as college, independently and college, at home) were attending college, while the educated partners and educated singles at age 24 contrast with other groups by their completed degrees. At each age the two college oriented groups differ from one another by living arrangements, but the nature of that distinction changes. At the earlier age the contrast is whether or not they live with parents, and at the later age it is whether or not they live with romantic partners. Sandefur and colleagues family group lived independently and they were the group most likely to be married and/or parents. The males in their group typically were employed full-time, while the employment of the females was quite mixed. This family group at age 20 foreshadows both our fast starters and our parents without careers at age 24, who are distinguished by whether their employment becomes more career oriented. If they married or began cohabitating after age 20, Sandefur and colleagues’ full-time working group (who were not married or parents) would also move into either our fast starters or parents without careers groups. The minority of the full-time

The parents without careers had the most limited educational achievement, with 57% having no education beyond a high school degree.

The respondents we call educated partners had also made the transition from their parents' homes to living with romantic partners, but in contrast, none had become parents. Cohabiting was especially common in this group, occurring as often as marriage (43% each). Their employment was quite variable, but the highest proportion viewed their current jobs as steps on a career track (46%). Respondents in this group had made considerably greater investment in education than the first two groups, with 94% obtaining at least some post-secondary education, and 37% earning bachelor's degrees. The educated partners comprised 19% of the sample.

The most common path by far was the 37% of the sample we designated the educated singles. They differed from the first three clusters in that they did not live with romantic partners. About half lived with their parents or other relatives (55%), and almost all of the remainder rented rather than owned their homes (44%). In other respects, the educated singles were very similar to the educated partners. None were parents, and the largest proportion viewed their jobs as career steps (45%). This was the most highly educated group of respondents, with 61% having bachelor's degrees. The large size of this group is consistent with Fussell and Furstenberg's (this volume) depiction of the increasing prominence of education over the past century combined with delays in marriage and parenthood in comparison to the mid-1900's.

The working singles, the smallest cluster in the sample (7%), were similar to the educated singles in that they did not live with romantic partners and they were not parents, but they differed in other respects. They were advanced in the world of work, with 63% in long-term jobs, the working singles were especially likely to live with their parents (72%). Few had

to .8, and 5% have a probability less than .5 for belonging to any single cluster. Appendix A describes our statistical approach to the problem of classifying respondents into these groups, which does not rely on correctly identifying to which latent class each individual belongs. Instead, we avoid that impossible task and more accurately represent the latent classes by treating individual group membership as probabilistic.

[Figure 1 about here.]

A brief summary of the paths. Figure 1 compares the six paths through the transition to adulthood on the variables used to define them. The first path or group we designated as the fast starters because these respondents occupied the greatest number of adult roles at age 24. All but 10% of this group were married (73%) or were cohabiting with a partner (17%). Accordingly, very few lived with parents or other relatives (12%), while over half already owned their own homes (55%). Indeed, the majority of these fast starters were parents by age 24 (57%). This group was also advanced in the world of work, with 70% in jobs they considered long-term and 28% in jobs they viewed as steps in a career path. Given the fast starters' early commitments in these realms, it was not surprising that their investments in education were more limited, with only 6% having earned bachelor's degrees. The majority had some college or post-secondary training (57%). Twelve percent of our sample fell into this fast starter cluster.

Our label for the second cluster is parents without careers. This 10% of the sample was distinct in their combination of extensive commitments in the realm of family and relationships, but limited involvement in employment. Most notably, virtually all were parents (94%). The individuals on this path into adulthood were either married (72%) or cohabiting (27%), and all but 6% resided in their own households (rather than with parents). Almost all members of this group either were not employed (55%) or regarded their jobs as short-term employment (36%).

By age 24, current students were more often engaged in part-time than full-time study, and their programs of study varied from the highest academic level (e.g., doctoral students and medical residents) to lowest (e.g., students in literacy and GED programs). Accordingly, current student status did not prove a useful basis for defining the transition groups, while the amount of schooling completed did. For our latent class analysis we categorized level of education as (1) no more than high school completion (21%), (2) some college or post-secondary training (47%), or (3) bachelor's degree or beyond (33%).

We used the latent class analysis to identify six classes or clusters to represent distinct paths through the transition to adulthood, and Appendix A provides technical information about that analysis. We present this set of six paths as a heuristic summary of common life situations midway through the period of transition to adulthood. It would be a mistake to view this grouping as “natural,” “true,” or somehow representing a deeper reality more fundamental than this set of measures. Also, the number of groups is rather subjective because statistical criteria did not give a clear-cut answer about the “correct” number of groups. We chose to present the results for six groups because, among the statistically plausible choices, that typology generated the most interesting and informative results. We have labeled the six groups fast starters (12% of the sample), parents without careers (10%), educated partners (19%), educated singles (37%), working singles (7%), and slow starters (14%).

The classes are latent in the sense that they are not directly observable. Instead they are inferred from the data as a set of ideal types that would most plausibly produce the set of cases we observed. Some individuals clearly exemplify a single class, while others plausibly fit two or more of the classes. For the latent class analysis we report, a large share of the respondents are relatively clear matches to one or another of the groups, but others are not: 57% have a probability of at least .8 of belonging to some cluster, while 38% have a highest probability of .5

(with whom they did not reside), or single (with no steady dating relationship). As Table 1 shows, the portion of respondents falling into these categories ranged from 15% who were cohabiting to 33% who were steadily dating.

Our measure of residence embodies two useful distinctions. First, we separated respondents who had left their parents' households to live on their own from the substantial portion of the sample who had not (38%). Second, among respondents who were not living with their parents (or other relatives), we distinguished the smaller group of respondents who had reached a level of independence and financial stability needed to purchase their own home (18%) from the plurality (44%) who either rented or lived in temporary arrangements (e.g., military housing, with friends). This data set did not allow us to make further distinctions about with whom respondents resided, such as identifying those who lived alone versus with friends.

Our last measure in the realm of family and relationships is whether respondents were serving in the role of parent. Twenty percent of our respondents indicated that they had children. Of the children, 93% were biological or adopted, and 7% were step-children. Only 12% of these parents reported having children who did not live with them, and only 1% of parents reported that they did not regularly interact with their children.

Because our focus is on paths through the transition to adulthood, we considering employment, we took into account respondents' views of their current employment in relation to their futures. All but a small portion of the sample (15%) was employed when we contacted them at age 24. At this point in their lives, relatively few of the respondents (21%) felt that their current jobs were ones that they would hold for the long-term, without moving on to some other position. Larger numbers reported that their current jobs were either earlier steps on a career path (36%) or short-term positions of less relevance to their futures (29%).

Many auto plants closed, never to reopen. Since that time, new jobs in the auto industry have almost always gone elsewhere. Long-term auto workers, such as many of these respondents' parents, were able to retain their jobs and continue their relative financial success. By comparison, the employment prospects for their children were bleak. There was far less chance that they would be able to obtain working class jobs with comparable pay and benefits. This is the world that our respondents faced as we found them on these several paths through the transition to adulthood.

Defining the paths. We used latent class analysis (Clogg 1995; Lazarsfeld and Henry 1968) to identify the clusters of respondents we use to illustrate alternative paths through the transition to adulthood as measured at age 24. The method defines these groups or clusters by the proportion of members that have each of the characteristics included in the analysis. For instance, most members of one cluster might be married parents with lots of education, while members of another might be predominantly cohabiting non-parents with a moderate amount of schooling. The statistical method derives a set of profiles of characteristics that best accounts for patterns of association in the data.

The groups resulting from a latent class analysis are, of course, dependent on the variables considered in the analysis, and Table 1 summarizes the measures we used for this purpose. The nature of this statistical method limits us to about five multiple-category variables for our sample of 1410. Accordingly, our latent class analysis used one measure for each of five primary domains of the transition to adulthood: romantic relationships, residence, parenthood, employment, and education.

[Table 1 about here.]

For the latent class analysis we distinguished four categories of romantic relationships, classifying respondents as either married, cohabiting with a partner, steadily dating someone

the potential to provide a rich picture of how these roles fall together across much of this transitional age span, and we will be especially attentive to how our groups compare to theirs.

After defining the groups that represent the distinct paths, we consider the relationship of group membership to other variables in order to address two types of questions. First, we seek to enrich our understanding of what it means to be on one path rather than another by comparing them on other measures collected at age 24. For this purpose we will examine patterns of time use, the degree to which respondents feel that they are carrying out various adult responsibilities, and more detailed information about each of the five role domains. Second, we investigate whether the path a youth will take at age 24 is foreshadowed by various factors, including demographic characteristics of the individuals and their families of origins as well as information gathered from the respondents at age 18, such as their attitudes about marriage and family, employment, and education. There is much more that would be useful to know about these groups, such as their stability over time and the relative outcomes for the different groups as they progress through the transition and on into adulthood. For now, those topics await future research.

Our data come from the Michigan Study of Adolescent Life Transitions (MSALT, Eccles et al. 1989). This project began in 1984, when the respondents were in the sixth grade and approximately age 12. They were then students in 143 math classes located in 12 school districts. The study continues today; a ninth wave of data was collected in 1999.

The sample came from white middle and working class suburbs in the Detroit metropolitan area. Only 5% of the respondents are minority group members, and the largest share of the respondents' parents worked in the auto industry. Through the 1970's, labor unions were strong in Michigan, allowing working class families to reach a comfortable standard of living. At the beginning of this study, Michigan was in the midst of its auto crisis of the 1980's.

The transition to adulthood is most obviously characterized by movement from the roles of childhood and adolescence to those of adulthood. Youth leave their parents' homes to live on their own, they marry or cohabit with romantic partners, and they become parents themselves. Youth finish their schooling and take full-time employment. The purpose of this volume is to move beyond available research that considers each of these transitions separately. The intention is to gain a more coherent understanding of this period of life by focussing on the simultaneous interplay of the transitions across all of these domains. The distinct contribution of the present chapter is to elaborate the meaning of patterns of transition by examining them in terms of a rich data set that tracks a sample through this period of life. In other words, we hope to put some more flesh on the bones of the basic facts about transitions into adult roles. More specifically, this chapter will examine whether individuals take different pathways into the transition to adulthood and, if so, how early life circumstances influence subsequent paths.

Our primary focus is on information gathered at age 24. This age is an approximate midpoint in the transition to adulthood, falling roughly halfway between the completion of high school and the end of the twenties. To consider the several role transitions jointly, we begin by classifying respondents into groups on the basis of simple facts about their transitions in five major role domains: romantic relationships, residence, parenthood, employment, and education. These groups represent distinct paths through the transition to adulthood, at least as viewed through one snapshot in time. These groups are comparable to those that Sandefur and colleagues distinguished in their chapter of this volume, using similar measures of adult role statuses. The primary difference between our analyses is that their groups reflect respondents' standing early in the transition to adulthood, at age 20. In combination, our pair of chapters has

Six Paths through the Transition to Adulthood, Their Predictors and Consequences

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