

Adolescence and Emerging Adulthood: The Critical Passage Ways to Adulthood

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INTRODUCTION

In the previous chapters, the authors laid out a diverse set of assets needed for successful development during childhood. Some of the authors have included adolescence; others have not. In the subsequent chapters, the authors discuss a diverse set of assets linked to successful lives during adulthood. In this chapter, we focus on adolescence and emerging adulthood (Arnett, 2000) as the pivotal periods between childhood and adulthood; we refer to the people in these two periods as youth. The learning and development that takes place from birth to adolescence, of course, continues during adolescence and emerging adulthood. But more importantly, the need to be prepared for the transition into adulthood becomes increasingly salient during these years. It is during these periods of life

that individuals must acquire and consolidate the skills, attitudes, values, and social capital needed to move from dependence on one's family to both self-reliance and the adult forms of interdependence coupled with the kinds of strong social connections needed for both one's own well-being and the parenting of the next generation.

In this chapter, we outline what these skills, values, attitudes, and social capital might be. First, however, we summarize the critical developmental challenges facing youth in America. These challenges are numerous and quite complex. The psychological assets described in the previous chapters are essential for dealing with these challenges (Larson, 2000; Lerner, Fisher, & Weinberg, 2000; Scales & Leffert, 1999; Wheaton, 1990). It is important to have these issues in mind as one considers the assets needed both for well-being during adolescence and emerging adulthood and for a successful transition into and through adulthood.

It is also important to understand why this chapter focuses on the period from age 10 to age 25. There is general agreement that the adolescent years are critically important for the successful transition to adulthood. In the last 10 to 15 years, developmentalists have also begun to focus on ages from 18 to 25 as equally important transitional years. In the past, these years (18–25) were considered part of adulthood. But rapid demographic, sociocultural and labor market changes have made these years more transitional. As recently as the 1960s, the transition into adulthood in most western industrialized countries (particularly in the United States and Canada) was well defined for most social class groups. Adolescents finished high school and either went to college or into the labor market or the military. People generally married and began families in their early 20s. Thus people were usually launched into adulthood by their early 20s and there were only a limited number of fairly well defined pathways from adolescence into adulthood.

This is no longer the case (see Arnett, 2000, for details). The median age for marriage and childbearing has moved up to the late 20s. Both the length of time and proportion of youth in some form of tertiary education have increased dramatically. Finally, the heterogeneity of passage through this period of life has exploded. There is no longer a small easily understood set of patterns for the transition to adulthood—making the years between 18 and 25 as challenging a period of life as adolescence. In the USA, the level of challenge is especially high for noncollege youth and for members of several ethnic minority groups, particularly Blacks and Hispanics for the following reasons: (a) unlike many European and Asian industrialized countries, there is very little institutional support for the transition from secondary school to work in the United States creating what the William T. Grant Foundation (WTGF, 1988) labeled a “floundering” period in their important report, *The Forgotten Half*; and (b) stereotypes about the competence of Blacks and Hispanics, coupled with lower levels of “soft skills” (Murnane & Levy, 1996) and the loss of employment options in many inner city communities (Wilson, 1997) have made employment of Black and Hispanic

youth (particularly males) quite problematic. Given these changes and the increasing complexity and heterogeneity of acceptable lifestyles during the third decade of life, Arnett (2000) recently argued for the importance of looking at this period of life as a fundamental transitional period in its own right. He labeled this period *emerging adulthood*. We agree with his argument and have included this period as a central focus in this chapter.

CORNERSTONES OF DEVELOPMENT DURING ADOLESCENCE AND EMERGING ADULTHOOD

The years from age 10 to 25 are marked by major changes at all levels. Among the most dramatic are the biological changes associated with puberty. These include dramatic shifts in the shape of the body, major increases in gonadal hormones, and changes in brain architecture. These biological shifts are directly linked to increases in sexual interest and changes in both cognitive and physical capacities. But there are also major social changes associated with school and work and with the changing roles adolescents and young adults are expected to play by friends, parents, teachers, coaches, and so on. Finally, there are major psychological changes linked to increasing social and cognitive maturity. In fact, very few developmental periods are characterized by so many changes at so many different levels.

With rapid change comes a heightened potential for both positive and negative outcomes (Rutter & Garnezy, 1983; Wheaton, 1990). Although most individuals pass through these two developmental periods without excessively high levels of “storm and stress,” a substantial number of individuals experience difficulty that extends well into young adulthood (Eccles et al., 1993; Arnett, 1999). For example among adolescents, between 15% and 30% (depending on ethnic group) drop out of school before completing high school, 10% to 15% drink alcohol on a regular basis (weekly), and between 7% and 16% (depending on sex and ethnic group) have had suicidal thoughts or have tried to commit suicide in the last 12 months. In addition, the arrest rate is higher than any other age group (Office of Educational Research and Improvement, 1988). Similarly, there is great variation in the functioning of youth during emerging adulthood. Most White middle- and upper-class youth, for example, go to college right out of high school. Many of these graduate and then move into prestigious career-ladder jobs. The story is not so rosy for many other youth in the United States. In a report on non-college youth (*The Forgotten Half*), Sherrod and his colleagues outlined the problems faced by poor youth in this country. Recent studies suggest that these adolescents find it difficult to get jobs that take advantage of the vocational training they got in high school. Their occupational plans are often met with frustrated expectations as they encounter a floundering period of alternately low paid work and unemployment resulting from employers' reluctance to hire recent high school graduates for career-ladder positions

(WTGF, 1988). In turn, these repeated episodes of unemployment undermine general well-being during emerging adulthood.

Adolescence and emerging adulthood are particularly important for life course development because these are times when individuals make many choices and engage in a wide variety of behaviors that have the potential to influence the rest of their lives. For example, adolescents pick which high school courses to take, which after-school activities to participate in, and which peer groups to join. They begin to make future educational and occupational plans and to implement these plans through secondary school course work and out-of-school vocational and volunteer activity choices. Finally, some experiment with quite problematic behaviors linked to drug and alcohol consumption and unprotected sexual intercourse. Similarly, in the emerging adulthood years, individuals make choices related to education, vocational training, entry into the labor market, transitions within the labor market, moving out of one's natal family home, spouse selection, and parenthood. Given the power that these choices and behaviors can have over future options and opportunities, it is critical that we understand what influences whether youth stay on a healthy, productive pathway or move onto more problematic, and potentially destructive, pathways as they pass through this important developmental period.

In his theoretical model of life span development, Erik Erikson (1963, 1968) outlined a set of tasks that are particularly salient for individuals between the ages of 10 and 25: namely developing a sense of mastery, a sense of identity and a sense of intimacy. Others have expanded these tasks to include establishing autonomy, dealing with sexuality and intimacy, and finding a niche for oneself in the worlds of education and work (e.g., Havighurst, 1972; Levinson, 1978). In many cultural groups in Western industrialized countries, the challenges of adolescence translate into several more specific tasks: (a) the shift in one's relationship with one's parents from one of dependency and subordination to one that reflects the adolescents' increasing mature role in their community (in some cultures this shift involves greater independence from one's parents and greater decision-making power over one's own life; in other cultures this shift involves taking greater responsibility for supporting one's natal family and increased participation in community decision-making), (b) exploring new social and sexual roles, (c) the emergence of intimate partnerships, (d) social and personal identity formation, (e) planning one's future and taking the appropriate actions to further these plans, and (f) acquiring a range of skills and values necessary for the successful transition into work, partnering, parenting, and citizenship (Eccles & Gootman, 2002).

Similarly, emerging adulthood is characterized by specific tasks and challenges. As individuals make the transition into adulthood in this society, they become more and more independent from their natal families. As a consequence, they need to play a much more active role in their own development. This involves (a) managing and coordinating multiple demanding life roles, (b) refining the skills necessary to succeed in these roles, (c) finding meaning and purpose in the

roles one has selected, or has ended up in for any number of reasons, (d) developing a mature view of one's strengths and limitations, (e) coping with both foreseen and unforeseen events and life changes, (f) making changes in one's life course if necessary and (g) then coping with both the planning and implementation of these new choices.

As made clear by Erikson (1968), each of the tasks of adolescence and emerging adulthood is played out in a complex set of social contexts and in both cultural and historical settings (see also Bronfenbrenner, 1979; Eccles et al., 1993). For example, the array and severity of risks for adolescents has increased dramatically over the last 30 years as communities have become more transient and less homogeneous, drugs have become more widely available, and social norms have become less rigid and proscribed. Similarly, the passage from 18 to 25 has become increasingly complex during the last 40 years as the transition to adulthood has become more extended in time and less homogeneous in the array of transitional and end-state patterns (Arnett, 2000). These changes have created a situation in which the tasks of emerging adulthood must be carried out in a climate of extreme uncertainty about both one's current options and the implications of one's choices for future options and barriers.

Optimal progress on each of these tasks depends on the psychosocial, physical, and cognitive assets of the individual (Erikson, 1963; Wheaton, 1990). Because transition and change are primary characteristics of both of these life periods, personal and social assets that facilitate coping with change will be critical for successful functioning during these periods. Optimal progress also depends on the developmental appropriateness of the social contexts encountered by individuals as they pass through these periods of life. Repeated exposure to developmentally inappropriate and unsupportive social contexts during these years can undermine the coping skills of even the most resilient youth (Rutter & Garmezy 1983; Rutter, 1988; Werner & Smith, 1982, 1992). This complexity must be taken into account when one thinks about successful development during this period of life.

Equally important is the longer term consequences of well-being during these two periods for the successful transition into adulthood. Failure to deal with these tasks adequately will place restrictions on adult options that are very hard to overcome.

We now turn to a more detailed discussion of the specific changes and challenges of adolescence and emerging adulthood.

Puberty

During early adolescence, most individuals experience a growth spurt and increased sexual libido, develop primary and secondary sex characteristics, and become fertile as a result of the hormonal changes associated with puberty. These hormonal changes can also have a weak impact on such behaviors as aggression, sexuality, and mood

swings although these relations are weak and are often moderated by social experiences (Buchanan, Eccles, & Becker, 1992). Learning how to manage these feelings and to develop mature sexual relations with other youth is one of the major developmental tasks throughout adolescence and emerging adulthood.

In general, pubertal changes begin earlier for girls than for boys. There are also major individual differences in the timing, sequencing, and magnitude of pubertal development within each sex. Some children begin their pubertal changes earlier than others and the timing of pubertal development can have major implications for many aspects of life depending on the cultural beliefs and norms associated with pubertal changes. Do these individual differences in timing matter? In a study of the consequences of early maturation for Swedish women, Stattin and Magnusson (1990) found that early maturing girls obtain less education and marry at a younger age than the later maturing girls. These researchers suggested that this difference is due the fact that early maturing females tend to join older peer groups and date older males which, in turn, leads the girls to drop out of school in order to marry the men they date. In addition, school achievement is valued less than early entry into the job market and marriage by their peer social network. Once again, however, having the types of psychological assets outlined in previous chapters and reviewed later in this chapter reduce the likelihood of the early maturing girls being pulled onto an early marriage/lower education life trajectory.

Cognitive Maturation

Over the adolescent years, youth learn to think abstractly, to reflect on themselves and events in their lives, to process information more efficiently, to consider multiple dimensions of problems simultaneously, and to manage their learning and problem solving better (Keating, 1990; Perry, 1970; Wigfield, Eccles, & Pintrich, 1996). Most theorists agree that these types of cognitive skills are critical for a successful transition into adulthood. These kinds of cognitive skills also facilitate both identity development and maturation in moral reasoning; both of which can influence future life planning and engagement in both positive and problematic behaviors. Finally, these kinds of cognitive skills also affect adolescents' view of other people. With increasing cognitive maturity, adolescents become more interested in understanding others' internal psychological characteristics, and friendships come to be based more on perceived similarity in these characteristics (Selman, 1980). When coupled with prosocial values and the opportunity to think about tolerance and human interaction, these skills can lay the groundwork for developing better inter-group relationships and commitments to civic involvement.

Changes in Social Relationships

Changes in Natal Family Relations. Parent-child relations change in dramatic ways during both adolescence and young adulthood (Buchanan et al., 1992;

Collins, 1990; Eccles & Gootman, 2002; Grotevant, 1998; Youniss, 1980). As they mature, adolescents often want increasing independence and autonomy, particularly regarding family rules and roles. These desires can lead to family conflicts. Research suggests, however that these conflicts are more likely to focus on such issues as dress and appearance, chores, and dating than on more core issues such as education, politics, and spirituality (Collins, 1990). Nonetheless, maintaining strong ties to one's family is a very important asset for both the adolescent years and the transition into adulthood (Grotevant, 1998).

Relationships with one's natal family generally improve during late adolescence and emerging adulthood. Although most youth move out of their parents' home sometime during this period, many come back for periods of time and even more continue to rely on their parents for financial support (Goldscheider & DaVanzo, 1985. WTGF, 1988). The quality of these relationships is critical to well-being during emerging adulthood (Roberts & Bengton, 1996; Schultheiss & Blustein, 1994).

Changes in the Role of Non-Familial Adults. Equally important, however, is the creation of new relationships with non-familial adults. Increasing evidence suggests that adolescence is a time when youth seek out other adult relationships—often teachers, coaches, parents of one's friends, and/or spiritual leaders. Research on mentoring has repeatedly demonstrated the importance of these relationships in adolescents' lives in particular. Strong mentors can even overcome some of the negative effects of a poor relationship with one's parents as well as involvement in problematic peer groups (see Scales & Leffert, 1999).

Changes in the Role of Friendships and Peer Groups. The importance of peer groups and activities done with peers increases dramatically over the adolescent years. For some adolescents, peer acceptance and peer activities become more important than academic achievement, leading to declines in academic achievement that can compromise the successful transition to adulthood (Savin-Williams & Berndt, 1990; Youniss, 1980; Wigfield, Eccles, Mac Iver, Reuman, & Midgley, 1991). In addition, for some youth, confidence in one's physical appearance and social acceptance is a more important predictor of self-esteem than confidence in one's cognitive/academic competence (Harter, 1990).

In part because of the importance of social acceptance during adolescence, friendship networks during this period often are organized into relatively rigid cliques that differ in social status within school and community settings (see Brown, 1990). The existence of these cliques reflects, in part, adolescents' need to establish a sense of identity: Belonging to a group is one way to solve the problem of "who am I." The impact of these cliques on adolescent development depends on the nature of the peer culture within one's cliques. Participation in cliques involved in high levels of problem behaviors may expose adolescents to excessive peer pressure to engage in such behaviors—possibly compromising one's suc-

successful transition to adulthood (see Savin-Williams & Berndt, 1990). Having the social skills and personal confidence necessary to resist this pressure is a very important asset during this period of development.

The Emergence of Romantic Partnerships. As adolescents mature, the role of peers expands: Peers become romantic partners and spouses as well as friends. We know very little about this shift in the roles of peers. Most of the work has focused on the role of marriage in helping youth recover from a problematic adolescence (e.g., Bachman, Wadsworth, O'Malley, Johnston, & Schulenberg, 1997; Jessor, Donovan, & Costa, 1991; Rutter, 1988; Werner & Smith, 1992). These studies suggest that one primary role of marriage is to decrease the amount of time individuals spend with friends who engage in problematic behaviors (Horney, Osgood, & Marshall, 1995; Osgood, Wilson, O'Malley, Bachman, & Johnston, 1996; Sampson & Laub, 1993). There are also lower rates of alcohol abuse in young adults in committed partnerships, including but not limited to marriage (Meschke, Barber, & Eccles, 1998; Miller-Tutzauer, Leonard, & Windle, 1991; Sadava & Pak, 1994). Finally, there is strong evidence that involvement with an intimate partner is related to greater mental and physical well-being for both men and women (Dimitrovsky, Schapira-Beck, & Itskowitz, 1994; Elliot, 1996; Sadava & Pak, 1994; Werner & Smith, 1992).

We know much less about the characteristics that lead to involvement with various kinds of romantic partners. As noted earlier, early maturation is associated with early marriage and cohabitation. Working-class life trajectories are also associated with earlier commitments to romantic partners. In contrast, enrollment in tertiary education and more middle-class life trajectories are associated with later commitments to romantic partners. It is also true that adolescents with fewer of the assets discussed in early chapters and later in this chapter are also more likely to form unstable romantic partnerships with people who also have fewer psychological assets (e.g., Furstenberg, Brooks-Gunn, & Morgan, 1987; Werner & Smith, 1992).

The transition to romantic partnerships is also linked to identity constructs. For example, young women with a strong commitment to work and higher education express less interest in dating and are less likely to marry during their 20s than their peers with lower commitments to education and careers; interestingly, the opposite is true for men. (Thornton, Axinn, & Teachman, 1995; Matula, Huston, Grotevant, & Zamutt, 1992). This work shows the need to look at the interface between the various adult roles adolescents and emerging adults are moving towards in understanding the impact of each on well-being.

There is also a burgeoning literature on what predicts successful romantic partnerships, but reviewing this work is beyond the scope of this chapter.

Becoming a Parent. There is a large body of research focused on impact of the transition to parenthood on emotional well-being. Typically, the transition to

parenthood is associated with a decrease in maternal depression, particularly in comparison with the time prior to becoming a parent (Anderson, Fleming, & Steiner, 1994; Hock, Schirtzinger, Lutz, & Widaman, 1995). However, in one study, the self-esteem of childless women was both higher and showed greater improvement over time than the self-esteem of mothers (Elliot, 1996).

As with research on all transitions, associations between the transition to parenthood and socioemotional well-being are moderated by other factors, such as spousal behavior and previous levels of marital satisfaction. Specifically, young women who report high levels of marital satisfaction are less depressed following the transition to parenthood than women who report lower levels of marital satisfaction (Hock et al., 1995). Likewise, young women whose husbands are less involved in child care report greater decreases in marital satisfaction than women whose husbands are more involved (Levy-Shiff, 1994). Finally, levels of maternal depression pre- and postpartum are associated with such factors as body image, pain tolerance, self-confidence, and maternal involvement with child (Anderson et al., 1994).

Finally, there is also a large literature on the negative consequences of becoming a parent too young (Furstenberg et al., 1987). Teenage parenting is linked to lower educational and occupational attainment, lower lifetime earnings, and more difficulties in all types of adult transitions including forming stable romantic partnerships and coping with life events of all kinds. As was the case for timing of marriage and cohabitation, early maturation in females, working-class life trajectories, limited educational and occupational involvements and family-focused personal identities predict early transition into parenthood (Furstenberg, et al., 1987; Stattin & Magnusson, 1990; Werner & Smith, 1992).

Educational Transitions

Secondary School Transitions. For some individuals, the adolescent years are marked by a downward spiral in academic performance leading to academic failure and school dropout (Simmons & Blyth, 1987). Similar declines have been documented for interest in school, intrinsic motivation, self-concepts/self-perceptions, and confidence in one's intellectual abilities (Eccles, Wigfield, & Schiefele, 1999; Wigfield et al., 1996). A variety of explanations have been offered to explain these "negative" school achievement-related changes: Some have suggested that declines such as these result from the intrapsychic upheaval assumed to be associated with adolescent development (see Arnett, 1999). Others have suggested that it is the coincidence of the timing of multiple life changes (e.g., Simmons & Blyth, 1987). Still others have suggested that it is the nature of junior and senior high school environments themselves, rather than the transition per se, that is important (see Eccles et al., 1993; Entwisle, 1990; Wigfield et al., 1996). According to Person-Environment Fit Theory, behavior, motivation, and mental health are influenced by the fit between the characteristics individuals bring to their

social environments and the characteristics of these social environments. Individuals are not likely to do very well, or be very motivated, if they are in social environments that do not fit their psychological needs. If the social environments in the typical secondary schools do not fit very well with the psychological needs of adolescents, then Person-Environment Fit Theory predicts a decline in the adolescents' motivation, interest, performance, and behavior as they move into this environment. Evidence suggests that this is the case (Eccles, et al., 1993). Personal assets such as confidence in one's ability to succeed, good coping skills, high self-esteem, and good social skills help adolescents deal with these school-related stressors (Lord, Eccles, & McCarthy, 1994).

Transition to College. At the completion of secondary school, about half of America's youth go to college; the other half move into a variety of work and non-work settings. In thinking about the differences in these two trajectories, one needs to consider the multiple roles college plays in young adult development. In addition to greatly increased occupational prospects, going to college provides youth with many opportunities and challenges. The college years afford a safe milieu in which to explore ideas, opportunities, and lifestyles, while delaying the assumption of adult responsibilities (Sherrod et al., 1993; Wigfield et al., 1996). Living in a college residence greatly increases opportunities for self-governance, but provides a protected environment in which to adjust to new-found independence. Individuation from parents and freedom to direct one's own lifestyle increases (Flanagan et al., 1993). These characteristics of college life should provide the young adult with the opportunity to explore their own identities in a somewhat protected context.

The demands and norms of college life, however, can also be challenging and stressful: Individuals often face unfamiliar academic expectations, changes in sources of social support, and social norms that encourage high levels of risk behaviors, particularly alcohol use (Compas, Wagner, Slavin, & Vannatta, 1986; Prentice & Miller, 1993; Schulenberg & Maggs, 2000). Binge drinking, for example, peaks during the college years particularly for those students (like non-athletes) who were not heavy drinkers in high school (Barber, Eccles & Stone, 2001). Similarly, many youth drop out of college. In fact, only 52% of those enrolling in college receive their initial degree objective within 5 years. The high attrition rates during college (near 50%) have stimulated social scientists and educators to consider the relation of a wide range of predictors and college success (e.g., Rice, Cole, & Lapsley, 1990). However, this work is still in its infancy. Certainly the kinds of personal assets discussed later are likely to be key.

Only half of American youth attend postsecondary education (WTGF, 1988). The other half not only misses out on the many educational benefits provided by college, they may also miss out on the developmental moratorium of exploration and experimentation enjoyed by those who attend college full-time (Sherrod et al., 1993). Except for individuals who join the military, non-college

youth do not have the option of living semi-independently in a supervised group living situation such as a college dormitory. They also tend to marry and have children earlier, dramatically increasing their responsibilities and decreasing opportunities for exploration. Earlier entry into the adult roles of worker, spouse, and parent are associated with lower educational and occupational attainment (Marini, 1985, 1987), and, for less resilient youth, with more problematic social and psychological development as well (Hogan & Astone, 1986; Sherrod et al., 1993). In addition, non-college youth face difficult challenges in the world of work without adequate social supports. In an economy characterized by high unemployment and deflated academic credentials, even high school graduates experience great difficulty finding full-time, stable, adequately paid, and satisfying work.

College and non-college youth differ in another interesting way: The non-college roles of individuals in their 20s, particularly that of employee, are generally associated with greater responsibilities and fewer freedoms than the role of college student. Non-college young adults are likely to have designated daily start and end hours of employment, that, when not met, could result in job loss. Non-college youth are also likely to marry earlier, which potentially increases their responsibilities to others as well. Interestingly these are exactly the contextual characteristics linked to declines in problem behaviors and alcohol consumption (Bachman et al., 1997). Thus, while non-college bound youth are more likely to be involved in risky and problematic behavior than college-bound youth during adolescence, the desistance rates for these behaviors are higher in those non-college youth who take on these adult role responsibilities than for college youth.

Transition From School to Work in the Labor Market

In our society, individuals are expected to move from school into the labor market. However, at this point in our history the transition from school to the labor market is less clear cut than even 30 years ago. Youth leave school at such varying times as before completing high school, after high school, after some college, after completing a community college degree, after completing a 4-year college degree, or after a postgraduate degree. These different groups can move back and forth between unemployment, one or more part-time jobs, a series of "dead-end" jobs, or a stable long-term job. Some individuals initially drop out of high school and college, but then return (Weidman & Friedmann, 1984). Additionally, schooling and employment may take place concurrently; many youth take on part-time work while still attending high school (Greenberger & Steinberg, 1986) and college.

Controversy has arisen about the advisability of work during the high school years. The critical issue is how much and what kind of work. Some evidence sug-

gests that taking on too much work (more than 20 hours per week), particularly in low-quality jobs, can have detrimental effects on school achievement, alcohol use, and involvement in problem behaviors (Mortimer, Finch, Shanahan, & Rye, 1992; Steinberg & Dornbusch, 1991).

Although this transition is not the same for all youth, many researchers have focused on what factors are associated with a successful transition. Compared to those adolescents who drop out of high school, those with a high school degree are better prepared for low-skill, low-wage jobs (Klerman & Karoly, 1994); the accumulation of both academic and vocational credits in high school increases the chances of employment, reduces the duration of unemployment, and increases earnings (Rumberger & Daymont, 1984). Many researchers have examined the value of vocational education courses taken during the high school on later employment and earnings (Arum & Shavit 1995; Hotchkiss & Dornsten, 1987). The results are mixed. For example, some have found that vocational courses during high school have little or no positive effects on subsequent employment (Hamilton & Hurrelmann, 1994; Hamilton & Powers, 1990; Kantor, 1994). Others have found that the positive effects of vocational courses depend on the gender of the adolescent or young adult. One research group found an increase in employment for both men and women, but an increase in wages only for men (Kang & Bishop, 1989); another group found consistently positive effects on the employment and wages of women, but less consistent effects for men (Lewis, Hearn, & Zilbert, 1993).

Data on the relation of a college degree to future employment outcomes are less ambiguous: Obtaining a college predicts higher income and job status (Fournier & Payne, 1994; Kandel, Mossell, & Kaestner, 1987; Krau, 1989). For example, according to the U.S. Bureau of the Census, in 1995 the average income of high school graduates was \$21,431; the average income for those with some college or an associate's degree was \$23,862; the average income jumped to \$36,980 for individuals with a college degree. In addition, longitudinal data from the National Longitudinal Study of Youth (NLSY) indicates that non-college youth face greater unemployment problems as adults than youth who go on to college, and that unemployment and unsatisfactory employment are related to lower self-esteem (Dooley, 1995).

The process of transitioning from school to employment is likely to be influenced by experiences in multiple life domains, including family relationships, leisure activities, peer relationships, identity, and mental health (Krau, 1989). For example, Way and Rossmann (1995) found that parenting practices influence the transition from school to work through their impact on adolescents' readiness for this transition. They defined readiness as a composite of vocational identity, work effectiveness skills, a career indecision scale, and post-high school plans. As predicted, they found a proactive parenting style (similar to authoritative parenting) was positively related to readiness while a dominating parenting style (similar to authoritarian parenting) was negatively related to

readiness. Other researchers have found that the kinds of psychological assets discussed in this and earlier chapters also facilitate the transition to employment (e.g., Barling & Kelloway, 1999; Furstenberg et al. 1987; Sampson & Laub, 1993; Werner & Smith, 1992).

The complexity of the influences on this transition, however, is well illustrated by the work on the relation of adolescent drinking and drug use to young adult employment outcomes. One research group found that high school drug use (including alcohol, marijuana use, cigarettes, hard drugs) significantly predicted lower college involvement, more work force involvement, and drug use in young adulthood; additionally, low high school GPA predicted earlier entry into future full-time employment (Newcomb & Bentler, 1986). On the other hand, Kandel and colleagues (Kandel et al., 1987) found no significant effect of high school drug use on the individual's first job or income, after controlling for a variety of variables during high school (including parents' years of schooling, fathers' occupational prestige, number of siblings, race, delinquency index, frequency of attending religious services, peer activity index, GPA, frequent talks about education and occupation with fathers) and concurrently at the time of first job (including educational attainment and marital status). Clearly, this second study provides a much better picture of the potential processes through which alcohol use might be associated with adult occupational trajectories. For most youth, alcohol use takes place as part of a larger system of behaviors and social networks. Consequently, its association with adult outcomes likely depends on its larger significance. For example, in our work, we have identified two groups of heavy high school drinkers: a popular, well-adjusted group and a multiple-problem group. Because alcohol use means something very different in these two groups, it is likely to have very different long-term consequences for young adult and adult occupational outcomes (Barber et al., 2001; see also Bachman et al., 1997).

Work-related experiences also have implications for both mental health and adult social and psychology development. The impact of both unstable employment and unemployment more generally during the 20s has received considerable research attention. A number of studies have documented the impact of employment per se on socioemotional well-being, with unemployed individuals and young adults who have been laid off reporting much higher levels of distress and psychiatric problems than employed individuals (e.g., Feehan, McGee, Williams, & Nada-Raja, 1995; Timms, 1996; Winefield & Tiggemann, 1989). In addition, the financial strain associated with unemployment during the 20s was related to greater depression in both marital partners, which in turn was related to lower levels of support and increased undermining behavior in the marital relationship (Vinokur, Price, & Caplan, 1996). Other studies have documented the bi-directional relations between young adult work experiences and such psychological characteristics as personality and values (Van der Velde, Feij, & Taris, 1995).

Summary

In this section, we have outlined the major developmental challenges likely to affect well-being during adolescence and emerging adulthood. We have also pointed out how particular skills, attitudes, values, and social capital might help adolescents and young adults cope with these challenges and prepare for the transition into adulthood. In the next section, we summarize the evidence for the protective role of these skills, attitudes, values, and social assets.

PERSONAL AND SOCIAL ASSETS

Having laid out the major developmental challenges associated with adolescence and emerging adulthood, we now turn to a discussion of the personal and social assets likely to facilitate both optimal passage through these periods of life and optimal transition into adulthood. In this section, we review what we know about the personal and social assets that predict both concurrent well-being and optimal future life transitions.

Developmental scientists have repeatedly debated whether there are core human needs and how their fulfillment might relate to positive development. For example, Freud argued that well-being depends on the "successful" fulfillment of one's needs for mastery and love. Erikson proposed the following set of characteristics as key to healthy psychological development: trust (which he linked to positive emotional relationships with caring adults), a strong sense of self-sufficiency, initiative, a strong sense of industry (confidence in one's ability to master the demands of one's world), identity, and intimacy. Many contemporary theorists have suggested a similar set of needs (e.g., Bandura, 1994; Connell & Wellborn, 1991; Deci & Ryan, 1985; Elder, 1998; Levinson, 1978; Rutter & Garnezy, 1983). These include a sense of personal efficacy, intrinsic motivation, a desire for mastery, social connectedness, good emotional coping skills, planfulness, a sense of optimism, and attachment to conventional prosocial institutions.

Over the last 10 or so years, many lists of assets have been proposed. Three recent reviews include one by Lerner and his colleagues (Lerner, Fisher, & Weinberg, 2000), one by the Search Institute (Scales & Leffert, 1999), and one by the National Research Council (Eccles & Gootman, 2002). Of these, the review by Scales and Leffert is the most comprehensive. They listed the following assets as critical for successful passage through adolescence and into adulthood:

- Commitment to learning (achievement motivation, school engagement, doing school work, and other intellectual activities).
- Positive values (caring, equality and social justice, integrity, honesty, responsibility, and restraint).
- Social competencies (Planning and decision-making, interpersonal and cultural competence, resistance skills, and peaceful conflict resolution skills).

- Positive identity (personal power, self-esteem, sense of purpose, optimism about one's future).
- Positive use of time.
- Autonomy and the opportunity to make a meaningful difference.

By and large, research supports these suggestions. Longitudinal studies have shown strong relations of these personal assets to a variety of indicators of a successful transition into adulthood. For example, in her pioneering longitudinal study of poor children and their families on Kauai, Emmy Werner and her colleagues concluded that high levels of the following personal characteristics predict successful passage through adolescence and adulthood: health, good cognitive skills, positive social skills, well-developed self-regulatory and coping/adaptation skills, an engaging personality, high levels of self-confidence, positive self-esteem, and either spirituality or a strong sense of meaningfulness in one's life. They concluded that the following social assets are also very important: strong and positive social connections to both one's family and other positive organizations and networks. Clausen (1993) and Elder (1974) reached similar conclusions based on their work with the Berkeley and Oakland Growth Studies and Clausen added planfulness to the list (see also work by Block, 1971; Cairns & Cairns, 1994; Compas et al., 1986; Elder & Conger, 2000; Furstenberg, Brooks-Gunn, & Morgan, 1987; Furstenberg et al., 1999; Jessor et al., 1991; Sampson & Laub, 1993).

In reviewing this work and related studies of resilience and adolescent development, Eccles and Gootman (2002) organized the key psychological and social assets around three general categories: intellectual, psychological, and social assets. Those assets with the strongest longitudinal evidence are summarized in Table 29.1 (adapted from Eccles and Gootman, 2002). Many of these assets overlap with the assets reviewed in earlier chapters. Consequently, the reader has already been exposed to massive amounts of empirical support for the importance of most of these assets. In this chapter, we focus on the predictive role of these assets for well-being during adolescence and for the successful transition into adulthood. But it is important to note that we know much less about the strength of these associations for the transition to adulthood than we know about their strength for younger children. In particular, we know very little about the relative importance of each of these assets for the wide variety of positive adult outcomes that would signify a successful transition to adulthood. On the one hand, it is likely that having more assets and assets across all three categories is better than having only a few. On the other hand, it is also clear that some individuals do quite well on some aspects of adult development with only a limited number of assets in each category.

For this review, we focused on two types of empirical studies: studies that link various psychological and social characteristics to concurrent indicators of positive development during adolescence and young adulthood and studies that link these types of characteristics longitudinally to subsequent indicators of positive

development during young adulthood and adulthood. Studies of the first type (those using concurrent indicators of well-being) have documented positive associations among such indicators of adolescent and young adult well-being as good mental health, average or better school performance, positive peer relations, good problem-solving skills, and little to no involvement in such problematic behaviors as gang membership, excessive drug and alcohol use, school failure, school dropout, delinquency, and early pregnancy. Longitudinal studies have linked these kinds of adolescent characteristics to such indicators of adult well-being as completing high school, completing tertiary education, successful transition into the labor market (i.e., obtaining and keeping a job that pays at least a living wage), staying out of prison, avoiding drug and alcohol abuse and addiction, turning around a problematic adolescent trajectory, entering a stable and supportive intimate relationship (usually assessed in terms of one's marital partner), and involvement in civic and community activities. Together these two broad types of studies provide a growing body of consistent evidence supporting the importance of the set of characteristics summarized in Table 29.1. In this chapter we focus on the findings from the longitudinal studies.

Intellectual Assets

The evidence is quite good regarding the positive link of life skills, school academic success, planfulness and good decision-making skills for positive outcomes during both adolescence and young adulthood on such indicators as mental health, school completion, adult levels of educational and occupational attainment, positive moral values and prosocial behaviors, good parent child relations, attachment to prosocial friends and romantic partners, participation in volunteer activities, and avoidance of problematic behavior patterns (see Cairns & Cairns, 1994; Clausen, 1993; Eccles & Gootman, 2002; Elder & Conger, 2000; Entwisle, 1990; Furstenberg et al., 1987; Jessor et al., 1991; Sampson & Laub, 1993; Scales & Leffert, 1999; Warner & Smith, 1992). However, although several studies have documented the importance of life skills training for positive development during adolescence, we know little about which particular life skills and competencies are most important for youth in different cultural, ethnic, gender, and social class contexts. More generally, we also know little about the extent to which these life skills actually facilitate the successful transition into adulthood. Logic suggests that they should but more empirical work is needed to substantiate these hypothesized relations.

Psychological Assets

Longitudinal evidence is also strong for the predictive importance of good mental health, self-regulation skills, mastery motivation, confidence in one's competence in those domains valued most by the individual, optimism, and planfulness

Table 29.1
Personal and Social Assets Linked to Adolescent and Adult Well-Being
(Adapted from Eccles and Gootman, 2002)

Intellectual Assets

Knowledge of essential life and vocational skills
Good decision-making and problem-solving skills
School success
Planfulness

Psychological Assets

Good mental health
Positive self-esteem
Emotional self-regulation skills
Coping and conflict resolution skills
Positive achievement motivation
Confidence in one's ability to accomplish one's goals
Optimism coupled with realism
Coherent and positive personal and social identity
Spirituality and/or a sense of purpose in life
Strong moral character
A sense that one is making a meaningful contribution to one's community

Social Assets

Good relationships with parents, peers, and other adults
Strong sense of being connected to, and valued by, larger social networks and social institutions such as schools, churches, out of school youth development centers

for a wide variety of indicators of subsequent well-being during both adolescence and emerging adulthood (e.g., Aseltine & Gore, 1993; Bandura, 1994; Block, 1971; Clausen, 1993; Compas et al., 1986; Connell, Halpern-Felsher, Clifford, Crichlow, & Usinger, 1995; Connell & Wellborn, 1991; Deci & Ryan, 1985; Eccles et al., 1998; Elder & Conger, 1999; Jessor et al., 1991; Lord et al., 1994; Luthar & Zigler, 1992; Scales & Leffert, 1999; Werner & Smith, 1992).

Far fewer studies have investigated the relation of such moral and value-based characteristics as prosocial values, spirituality, moral character, personal responsibility, a sense that one is making a meaningful contribution to one's community, and personal identity with other indicators of adolescent and adult well being (Eccles & Gootman, 2002). Nonetheless, the few available studies support their importance (e.g., see Benson, Masters & Larson, 1997; DuRant, R. H., Getts, A., Cadenhead, C., Emans, S. J., & Woods, E., 1995; Eisenberg, Carlo, Murphy, & Van Court, 1995; Elder & Conger, 2000; Erikson, 1968; Marcia, 1980; Markus & Wurf, 1987; Scales & Leffert, 1999; Waterman, 1982; Wentzel, 1991; Werner & Smith, 1992). Recent work on the important re-

lations of service learning with both well-being during adolescence and civic involvement in adulthood is providing some of the strongest evidence for these types of assets (Youniss, McLellan, & Yates, 1996).

Finally, some very recent work has focused on role of psychological assets linked to ethnic identity formation and culturally sensitive values. These studies are beginning to provide support for the importance of a coherent and positive ethnic identity for such indicators of adolescent well-being as high self-esteem, confidence in one's ability to accomplish one's goals, commitment to doing well in school, a sense of purpose in life, and academic success (e.g., Beauvis, 2000; Castro, Boyer, & Balcazar, 2000; Cross, 1991; Ford & Harris, 1997; Leong, Chao & Hardin, 2000; Phelan & Davidson, 1993; Phinney, 1990; Spencer, 1995). A few of these studies have now also shown that a strong and positive ethnic identity can help adolescents of color to resist the negative impact of experiences with racial and ethnic discrimination (see also Wong, Eccles, & Sameroff, 1998). Whether these psychological assets also facilitate a successful transition to adulthood remains to be determined. In addition, we know very little about how these types of assets are related to either the well-being of White Americans or to the nature of intergroup interactions and racial tolerance. Knowing such information is very important given our increasingly multicultural society.

Social Assets

Finally, there is strong longitudinal evidence of the predictive power of connectedness, integration, feelings of belonging, and institutional attachments for such objective indicators of well-being during adolescence and young adulthood as secondary school success, mastery of a wide variety of life skills, adult educational and occupational attainment (Eccles & Goodman, 2002; Scales & Leffert, 1999). These social assets also predict such subjective indicators of adult well-being as positive mental health, confidence in one's ability to accomplish one's goals, optimism, and good self-regulation skills. Finally, these social assets predict smoother transitions into such key adult roles as partner, spouse, parent, worker and active community member (e.g., Cairns & Cairns, 1994; Elder & Conger, 2000; Furstenberg et al., 1999; Goodenow, 1992; Rice et al., 1990; Wentzel, 1991; Werner & Smith, 1992).

CONCLUSIONS

We had two goals in this chapter: (a) to provide an overview of the tasks that face individuals as they pass through adolescence and the early years of adulthood, and (b) to summarize what we know from longitudinal studies about the assets that facilitate successful coping with and adaptation to these tasks and the de-

mands inherent in passage into adulthood in the United States. We argued that adolescence and emerging adulthood are two of the most challenging periods of human development. Adolescence, in particular, is a time of massive changes in all dimensions of life, ranging from the dramatic physical changes associated with puberty to the social changes associated with increasing independence from one's natal family and the beginnings of intimate relationships that can lead to long term partnering and new family formation.

In the second half of the chapter, we outlined the evidence regarding the assets likely to help youth through these two periods of life. We organized these assets under three broad categories: intellectual, psychological, and social. Within each of these general areas, we summarized the evidence from longitudinal studies regarding the specific assets that predict successful transitions into adulthood. These assets are listed in Table 29.1. We also concluded that we know relatively little about how these assets combine to facilitate healthy development. Few studies have included more than a couple of these assets at one time. Consequently, we just do not know which assets are the most important for which aspects of a successful transition into adulthood. It is unlikely that one needs all of these assets. Instead, youth are likely to do quite well with several different profiles of assets. Evidence also suggests that having more assets is better than having only a few (i.e., the effects of the assets in studies that measure more than one asset are additive). Finally, it is important to note that exposure to repeated negative life events can undermine the healthy development and successful passage to adulthood of even those adolescents who have multiple assets (Cui & Vallant, 1996). Consequently, it is critical that supportive environments be made available for all young people (Eccles & Gootman, 2002).

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Physical Health and Adult Well-Being

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INTRODUCTION

Health is a state of complete physical, mental and social well-being, and not merely the absence of disease or infirmity.

—World Health Organization (1948, p. 2)

In its constitution, the World Health Organization addressed the interdependence of physical health and social-emotional well-being along with the appreciation of health as more than freedom from impairment. Although components of health and well-being are mutually interrelated, what role does physical health play in this totality of well-being? The colloquial maxim is, "When you've got your health, you've got everything." But, do you? Most people would not say that positive physical health inevitably produces positive social and emotional well-being. But how essential is physical health as a foundation for other dimensions of well-being? And how dependent is subjective well-being on objective measures of physical health?

An extensive literature relates adult physical health to aspects of overall well-being. These studies are largely point in time snapshots examining quality of life in

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