

# ON THE FRONTIER OF ADULTHOOD

*Theory, Research, and Public Policy*

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## CHAPTER 10

# SIX PATHS TO ADULTHOOD

*Fast Starters, Parents without Careers,  
Educated Partners, Educated Singles,  
Working Singles, and Slow Starters*

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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. They finish their schooling and take full-time employment. Completing most, if not all, of these role transitions is often considered to be the standard for reaching adulthood. As the other chapters in this volume demonstrate, however, this set of changes does not come as an organized "package" or standard sequence. Rather, young people today take many varied paths through these transitions.

The purpose of this volume is to move beyond existing research in order to gain a more coherent understanding of this period of life. Most research on transitions to these adult roles has concentrated on only one at a time, such as research on the predictors and consequences of marriage or of college completion. Research of that sort is of limited value for learning how these different aspects of the transition to adulthood weave together in people's lives.

We attempt to move beyond prior research by taking a largely descriptive person-oriented approach (Magnusson 1988). Our work is person-oriented in that it attempts to identify the different ways that these roles do and

do not combine for different people. We seek to elaborate the meaning of these distinct patterns of transition by comparing several groups on a wide variety of information that was gathered from them during the transition to adulthood. We also examine how factors earlier in life predict these divergent paths during the transition. In these ways we attempt to put flesh on the bones of the basic facts about transitions into adult roles.

Our primary focus is on information gathered at age twenty-four, 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 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, and they are comparable to those that Sandefur and colleagues distinguish in their chapter of this volume (chap. 9), using similar measures of adult role statuses. Together, our chapters provide a rich picture of how these roles intersect during this transitional period, 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 members of different groups on other measures collected at age twenty-four. We 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 twenty-four is foreshadowed by various factors, including demographic characteristics of the individuals and their families of origin, as well as information gathered from the respondents at age eighteen, including their attitudes toward marriage and family, employment, and education. There are other things that it 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.

### SAMPLE

Our data come from the Michigan Study of Adolescent Life Transitions (MSALT [Eccles et al. 1989]). This project began in 1984, when the respon-

dents were in the sixth grade and approximately age twelve. They were then students in 143 math classes located in twelve 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 1970s, 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 1980s. 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, but the employment prospects for their children were bleak, and they were unlikely 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.

#### METHOD

We used latent class analysis (Clogg 1995; Lazarsfeld and Henry 1968) to identify clusters of respondents that we use to illustrate alternative paths through the transition to adulthood. 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 high levels of education, while members of another might be predominantly cohabiting nonparents with a moderate amount of schooling. Latent class analysis derives a set of profiles of characteristics that best account 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 10.1 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 1,410. Accordingly, our latent class analysis used one measure for each of the five primary domains of the transition to adulthood: romantic relationships, residence, parenthood, employment, and education.

We distinguished four categories of romantic relationships, classifying respondents as either married, cohabiting with a partner, steadily dating someone (with whom they did not reside), or single (with no steady dating relationship). As table 10.1 shows, the portion of respondents falling into

TABLE 10.1  
VARIABLES DEFINING CLUSTERS IN LATENT CLASS ANALYSIS

	PERCENTAGE
Romantic relationship:	
Single	28
Steady dating	33
Cohabiting	15
Married	24
Residence:	
With parents or other relatives	38
Renting or temporary	44
Home owner	18
Parenthood:	
No	80
Yes	20
Employment:	
Not employed	15
Short-term job	29
Job is step on career path	36
Long-term job	21
Education:	
No more than high school degree	21
Some college	47
Bachelor's degree or more	33

Note.  $n = 1,410$ .

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 were independent and financially stable enough to purchase their own homes (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 household composition, 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 stepchildren. 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, when considering employment we took into account how respondents thought their current work related to their future plans. All but a small portion of the sample (15%) was employed when we contacted them at age twenty-four. At this point in their lives, relatively few of the respondents (21%) felt that they would hold their current jobs for the long term, without moving on to some other position. Many reported that their current jobs were either steps on a career path (36%) or short-term positions of little relevance to their futures (29%).

By age twenty-four, respondents who were enrolled in school were more often engaged in part-time than full-time study. Their programs varied from the highest academic level (e.g., doctoral students and medical residents) to the lowest (e.g., students in literacy and GED programs). Accordingly, current student status did not prove a useful basis for defining the transition groups, but 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 postsecondary training (47%), or (3) bachelor's degree or beyond (33%).

We used the latent class analysis to identify six classes or clusters representing distinct paths through the transition to adulthood. 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 these groupings as "natural," "true," or somehow representing a deeper reality more fundamental than this set of measures. The number of groups is also 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 ex-

emplify a single class, while others plausibly fit two or more of the classes. A large share of our 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 probability of .5-.8, and 5% have a probability less than .5 of belonging to any single cluster. As it is impossible to "correctly identify" to which latent class each individual belongs, we more accurately represent the latent classes by treating individual group membership as probabilistic. Appendix A describes our statistical approach to the problem of classifying respondents into these groups.

## RESULTS

Figure 10.1 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 twenty-four. 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 more than half already owned their own homes (55%). Indeed, the majority of these fast starters were parents by age twenty-four (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 on 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 postsecondary 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%). They 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 were either not employed (55%) or regarded their jobs as short-term employment (36%). 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). Employment was quite variable, but the highest proportion viewed their current jobs as steps on a

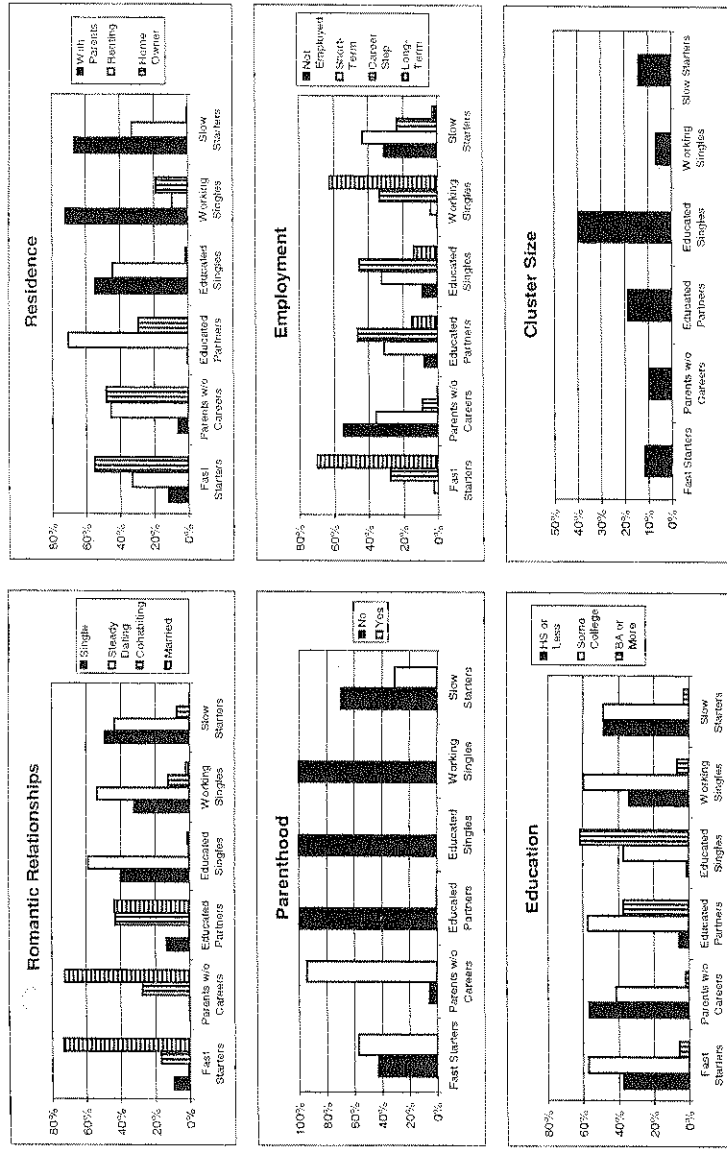


Figure 10.1. Life-course patterns by transition group. Descriptive statistics for the six latent class groups representing distinct pathways through the transition to adulthood.

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 postsecondary 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 the rest 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 vol., chap. 2) depiction of the increasing prominence of education over the past century combined with delays in marriage and parenthood.

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. The working singles were especially likely to live with their parents (72%). They were advanced in the world of work, with 63% in long-term jobs. Few had graduated from college (7%), but many had obtained lower levels of postsecondary 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 twenty-four. These respondents rarely lived with romantic partners (8%), two-thirds lived with their parents, and none owned homes. The majority were either not employed (31%) or worked in 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 postsecondary schooling. The slow starters were more "advanced" in the area of parenthood, with 30% becoming parents by age twenty-four.

These six transition groups at age twenty-four relate well to the four groups that resulted from the latent class analysis conducted by Sandefur and colleagues (this vol., chap. 9) using the National Educational Longitudinal Study (NELS) of individuals at age twenty-six and the High School and Beyond survey (HSB) of individuals at age twenty-eight. Both our and Sandefur's analyses yield two groups distinguished by college education. At age twenty-four, it is a completed degree that distinguishes the educated partners and educated singles from other groups. Similarly, higher levels of education also distinguish two of Sandefur's groups at ages twenty-six or twenty-eight

(BA/no family and BA/family) from the other two groups identified (limited postsecondary education/family and limited postsecondary education/no family).

Starting a family early is also important in both analyses. Members of Sandefur's limited postsecondary education/family group lived independently, and they were the most likely to be married and parents. The males in this group were typically employed full-time, while the employment of the females was quite mixed. This group is similar to both the fast starters and our parents without careers at age twenty-four, who are distinguished by whether their employment becomes more career-oriented. Sandefur also found a highly educated group that is married by ages twenty-six or twenty-eight, some of whom are also parents (BA/family). We did not find a group of individuals, by age twenty-four, who have achieved high levels of education and have both married and begun to have children. The closest group is the educated partners, who have high levels of education and who are partnered, although many are not yet married and none have had children. This group may foreshadow the BA/family group.

Our final group, the slow starters, was not found among Sandefur and colleagues' analysis of twenty-six- and twenty-eight-year-olds. However, their limited postsecondary education/children group, which was found for women only, may be the most closely linked to our slow starters. The former group was largely not highly educated, not married, and mixed in its employment status and were parents. Similarly, at age twenty-four, our slow starters had limited education, most had not married, many were unemployed, and almost one-third had become parents.

#### *Demographics and Family of Origin*

Before turning to a more detailed characterization of life at age twenty-four for these six groups, it is useful to consider basic information about their backgrounds. Table 10.2 compares the six groups in terms of gender, race/ethnicity, and several characteristics of their families of origin. Females were overrepresented in two of the groups of respondents who lived with romantic partners: parents without careers and educated partners. In contrast, males were overrepresented among the working singles. It is interesting that nonwhite 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 10.2 shows that membership in a transition group 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

TABLE 10.2  
PRECURSORS OF ALTERNATIVE PATHWAYS THROUGH THE TRANSITION TO ADULTHOOD:  
DEMOGRAPHICS AND FAMILY OF ORIGIN (%)

	FAST STARTERS	PARENTS WITHOUT CAREERS	EDUCATED PARTNERS	EDUCATED SINGLES	WORKING SINGLES	SLOW STARTERS
Gender:						
Female	55	71	66	53	47	56
Race/ethnicity:						
Nonwhite	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 postsecondary	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 postsecondary	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

from families with considerably higher incomes and education. In contrast, these indicators of social class in the natal family were lowest for all three groups that included parents at age twenty-four (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 twenty-four. These patterns suggest that differences in the social-class resources of parents are likely to be replicated in the 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 his colleagues in their chapter in this volume.

#### *Six Versions of Life Midway through the Transition to Adulthood*

As expected, we found that there is not one path into adulthood, but rather, there were interesting differences between the six transition groups on the five variables included in the latent class analysis. This statistical technique

allowed us to model and describe how the traditional markers of adulthood can be experienced differently across individuals. It must be remembered, however, that these are not empirical relations in the usual sense. The five measures are not simply related to group membership but, rather, define groups 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 draw a richer picture of their lives at age twenty-four. In other words, we seek to better understand what it means for individuals to take each of the six paths by describing other aspects of their lives that extend beyond their basic status on these five traditional role domains. To do so we compare the six classes on a number of additional lifestyle variables measured at the same point in time. Table 10.B1 (app. 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 supports the impression that they were the group most firmly established in the world of work. They worked more hours per week than most of the other groups (forty-two hours per week compared to an overall mean of thirty-five), and their average earnings per week were the highest of the six (\$674 compared with an overall mean of \$471).<sup>1</sup> Yet their employment profile also showed the limits of their education. 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% vs. 22% overall), while jobs in skilled and technical trades were especially common (35% vs. 24% overall). Few of the fast starters were taking steps to gain the post-secondary education they had lacked so far. 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 had thought about ending the relationship. Fast starters were less likely to view their romantic relationships negatively. When asked if they had ever felt that their relationship was in trouble, only 55% of this group agreed versus 68% for the full sample. Fast starters were also 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 length of time respondents had been married and cohabiting did vary across these six groups, with the fast starters falling near the sample mean for both. At age twenty-four, the average length of their marriages was twenty-six months (vs. twenty-five for the entire sample) and the average length of their cohabitations was twenty-four months (vs. twenty-one). Before marrying, the fast starters had dated their future spouses an average of thirty-five months (also the overall sample mean), while their period of dating before cohabiting was on average twenty-one months (compared to nineteen for the entire sample). This indicates that married and cohabiting fast starters had typically been with the same partner since ages nineteen and twenty, respectively. Thus, the fast starters had entered long-term romantic relationships quite early in the transition to adulthood.

There was considerable variation across the groups in patterns of time use, and this variation corresponded to differences 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 more than twenty hours per week in such activities, compared to only 50% for the sample as a whole. Conversely, while 70% of the entire sample spent more than twenty hours per week in leisure pursuits, this was true for only 58% of the fast starters. The lower level of leisure time for fast starters 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% 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, 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% reported they did so most of the time, compared to 66% for the total sample).

To summarize, as our label implies, the fast starters had the most adult-like lives at age twenty-four. They were heavily invested in work and family, working full-time at jobs they saw as long term and living in romantic partnerships that they saw as stable and that 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 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% vs. 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, more than 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 twenty-three hours per week and earned an average of only \$239 per week, both figures the lowest of the six groups. The men in the group averaged many more hours of work per week than the women (forty-two vs. sixteen) and, accordingly, had far higher incomes (\$476 per week vs. \$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% vs. 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 education, at age twenty-four they were unlikely to be building on it by taking college-level courses (12% vs. 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 those of the other groups. The average length of their marriages was thirty-three months, versus twenty-nine for the entire sample, and the average length of their cohabiting relationships was thirty-four months, versus twenty-nine for the entire sample. Parents without careers had a shorter period of dating before marriage (a mean of twenty-nine months vs. thirty-five overall). Thus,

the length of their relationships with their spouses was effectively the same as the other groups, but they had married earlier. 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 a high number of times that their partner had thrown something at them compared to other groups (with the exception of fast starters, who had a slightly higher rate of abuse), 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 more than twenty 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 more than twenty 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.

Oddly enough, this high investment in home and family was associated with reporting relatively low levels in the assumption of some adult responsibilities. On average, parents without careers were the least likely to report that were responsible for earning their own living (54% vs. 84% for the entire sample) and paying their own bills (64% vs. 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% vs. 66% overall).

It is simplest to summarize the situation of parents without careers at age twenty-four 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 in the lives



of 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 have jobs work few hours and earn little.

**EDUCATED PARTNERS.** The profile of educated partners is quite distinct from those of fast starters and parents without careers. Although all three groups lived with romantic partners, the educated partners had much higher levels of education and none were parents by age twenty-four. Like the parents without careers, females were overrepresented among the educated partners (66% vs. 58% for the sample as a whole).

Figure 10.1 showed that the employment situation of the educated partners was quite variable. A more detailed examination of their employment reveals both strengths and 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 positions (24% for educated partners vs. 8% for all other groups except the educated singles). But other office work, including administrative support positions such as office supervisors, secretaries, typists, and clerks, was also especially common in this group. The educated partners worked a few more hours per week than the total sample on average (thirty-eight vs. thirty-five) and earned the same weekly wage (\$471). Though the educated partners earned much less than the fast starters at age twenty-four, 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 lifestyles were less distinct from those of 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 seventeen months versus twenty-one for the entire sample. Furthermore, the average length of the marriages was only eighteen months, compared to twenty-five months for the entire sample. Nevertheless, they did date longer before marriage, an average of forty-one months versus thirty-five overall. This pattern of relative delay for entering marriage and cohabitation is consistent with the higher education of this group (see Fussell and Furstenberg, this vol., chap. 2; and Sandefur et al., this vol.; chap. 9). Adding an interesting wrinkle to this pattern, those educated part-

ners 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 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 did (51% spending more than twenty hours per week, compared to 72% and 88%, respectively), and they spent more time in leisure pursuits (69% spending more than twenty 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 more than twenty hours per week, compared to 39% in the full sample), and relatively few engaged in any of the illegal behaviors (44% engaging in 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% vs. 66% overall), but they were somewhat less inclined to report that they bore most of the responsibility for paying their bills (78% vs. 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 their 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 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 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.

**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 fig. 10.1), the primary difference between educated singles and 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 bachelor's 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% vs. 24% for educated partners and no more than 13% for other groups). Surprisingly, their hours of employment (thirty-six per week) and earnings (\$484 per week) were near the mean for the entire sample (thirty-five and \$471, respectively), but this 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 seven-point scale), which had lasted an average of twenty-nine months. Fifty-seven percent of those without steady relationships wanted one; and 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 seven-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 more than twenty 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%, more than twenty 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% vs. 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 of the six (39%), there is clear evidence that the midtwenties 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 10.1 shows, 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 overrepresented in this group (53% vs. 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 (forty-two compared to thirty-five overall). Many of these respondents were employed in skilled and technical trades (33% vs. 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 twenty hours per week in family and household activities (compared to 50% overall), and 66% spent more than twenty 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 similar to the educated singles in their family involvements. They invested more heavily in work than in education, and at twenty-four 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 married or cohabiting nor serving as parents, and they were quite likely still to live with their parents.

**SLOW STARTERS.** Figure 10.1 shows 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 analysis showed that the slow starters worked fewer hours and earned less than all groups other than the parents without careers (thirty hours and \$370 per week, respectively). They were especially likely to hold low-level service jobs (23% vs. 17% overall) and office jobs (27% vs. 22% overall); many had jobs in skilled or technical trades as well (28% vs. 24% overall). The prestige ratings of their positions were as low as those of the parents without careers, with only 18% rising above the midpoint of the scale. In contrast, a sizable portion of the slow starters was then taking college-level courses (21%, which was higher than all other groups except the educated partners and educated singles), and that should improve their future employment prospects.

It is notable that a particularly large portion of the slow starters was 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% vs. 68% overall). Unlike the educated singles and working singles, many of the slow starters were already parents. Among nonparents,

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. More than half of the slow starters spent more than twenty hours per week in household and family activities (54% vs. 50% overall), and 68% spent more than twenty hours per week in leisure activities (compared to 70% overall). They devoted higher than average amounts of time to hedonistic activities (43% spending twenty 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, however, they do not seem to be placing themselves in a strong position to succeed when the time comes to enter those roles. Most had reached their midtwenties with little education, they were still living with their parents, had unsatisfactory romantic relations, and were 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 examine information obtained from our sample at age eighteen about activities, attitudes, and expectations relating to education, employment, and family. We consider both what this information tells us about the potential precursors of group membership and how it connects earlier social-class differences to respondents' subsequent pathways to adulthood.

The MSALT study includes a wealth of information about the respondents at earlier ages. We chose age eighteen as a point of comparison because it represents the point when transitions to adult roles become accept-

able under conventional standards. See table 10.B1 (app. B) for a list of the measures included in this analysis.

We found that information gathered at age eighteen strongly foreshadows the high educational achievement of the educated partners and educated singles. Compared to all other groups, these respondents had higher self-concepts of academic ability, greater interest in academics, and 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 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 eighteen, future members of all groups placed very high importance on successful employment (averaging 6.4 on a seven-point scale), and they held equally high expectations for future occupational success (averaging 5.9 on a seven-point scale). There was, however, a nonsignificant trend ( $p = .11$ ) for respondents who were to become fast starters and working singles to have worked more hours at age eighteen than did the future members of other groups.

The questionnaire at age eighteen 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 than any of the other five groups, with a mean desired age at marriage of twenty-three years compared to twenty-five for the full sample. Indeed, a high proportion of this group was married by age twenty-four. Despite an equally high rate of marriage among fast starters by age twenty-four, however, their future expectations for marriage at age eighteen 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 twenty-four. 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 parents without careers expressed the youngest mean age: twenty-four versus twenty-seven for the full sample. The six groups assigned very similar levels of importance to family at age eighteen. On the whole then, attitudes about marriage and family were not very pre-

dictive of future differences among the groups. Nonetheless, the two differences that did emerge were consistent with future differences in marriage and parenthood.

### *Simultaneously Considering Multiple Predictors of Transition Group Membership*

It is also interesting to ascertain which of these precursors of group 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 twenty-four and the predictor variables were background characteristics (demographic factors and characteristics of the natal family) and selected measures from the questionnaire at age eighteen. Table 10.C1 (app. C) presents the tests of statistical significance for the independent prediction provided by each variable, controlling for others.<sup>2</sup>

We first consider the contributions of gender, race, and whether the respondent's parents' marriage was intact when the respondent was age twenty-four. As a set, these predictors were significantly, though not strongly, related to who fell into which of the transition groups at age twenty-four ( $\chi^2 = 35.2$ , 15 df,  $p = .002$ ). Both gender ( $\chi^2 = 12.0$ , 5 df,  $p = .034$ ) and parents' marital status (having parents who 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 10.2). Adding these measures to the other three background factors considerably enhanced our ability to predict into which transition groups respondents would fall at age twenty-four ( $\chi^2 = 65.8$ , 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,  $p = .002$ , 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 eighteen were associated with transition group membership after the demographic variables and family background were taken into account.<sup>3</sup> These same analyses are also informative about whether the respondents' adjustment at age eighteen can help explain the connection between the background variables and the paths respondents took through the transition to adulthood.

We first examined the contribution of those measures at eighteen 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 was related to transition group membership at only a chance level ( $\chi^2 = 26.8$ , 25 df,  $p = .366$ ). Gender was no longer a significant predictor once these characteristics were taken into account, but this 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 eighteen, 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,  $p = .000$  and  $\chi^2 = 47.9$ , 5 df,  $p = .000$ , respectively). The two measures concerning employment did not ( $\chi^2 = 8.2$ , 5 df,  $p = .148$  and  $\chi^2 = 2.4$ , 5 df,  $p = .787$ , respectively).

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 also 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 twenty-four precisely because they are more likely to have done well in high school and to expect to obtain a college degree. However, 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 twenty-four.

## DISCUSSION

Our analysis has produced four main conclusions. First, we identified 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 past 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 nonmarital partnerships. Furthermore, these six paths at age twenty-four connect logically with the four paths that Sandefur and colleagues (this vol., chap. 9) found at ages twenty-six and twenty-eight.

Second, of these six pathways, our sample is overrepresented in the one that most strongly reflects "emerging adulthood" (Arnett 2000; Arnett and Taber 1994). 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 twenty-four. Rather than viewing this as a failure, however, several researchers now suggest that these patterns reflect two secular trends: (1) a delay in taking on the full responsibilities of marriage and family in favor of personal exploration and educational preparation and (2) acceptance of a wider range of valued adult lifestyles. 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, child rearing has largely been postponed. Residences are temporary as opposed to permanent, as, for example, with 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 on advancing their education. Thus, our latent class analysis shows clear evidence both of a diversification of pathways to adulthood and of a tendency toward a period of emerging adulthood.

Third, our analysis of other lifestyle variables shows 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 midtwenties. 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 education and on an upward trajectory of employment suggests 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 seem more "adult," their lifestyles seem to lack the emphasis on growth and exploration present 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 are 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 of individuals in this group are currently in committed relationships. 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, by way of contrast, 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 does not seem to be engaged in positive exploration or on a forward-looking path of any kind. They demonstrate that a delay in entering traditional adult roles does not necessarily imply investment in 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 linked to the so-

cial-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, 675). The social-class characteristics of the groups' natal families differ in quite predictable ways. 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 advancement 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, 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 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 twenty-four, the connection of future group membership to academic factors at age eighteen 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 twenty-four on a promising pathway through the transition to adulthood.

## 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 1,410 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

TABLE 10.A1  
FIT OF LATENT CLASS SOLUTIONS FOR DIFFERING  
NUMBERS OF CLASSES OR CLUSTERS

	MODEL $\chi^2$	BIC	df	p VALUE
1 cluster	1,243.73	-679.15	276	1.2E - 122
2 clusters	611.13	-1,249.05	267	5.1E - 29
3 clusters	477.82	-1,319.66	258	2.5E - 15
4 clusters	382.58	-1,352.19	249	1.1E - 7
5 clusters	292.88	-1,379.20	240	.011
6 clusters	261.33	-1,348.04	231	.083
7 clusters	241.69	-1,304.98	222	.17
8 clusters	221.15	-1,262.81	213	.34

Note. BIC = Bayesian information criteria.

and restrictions on the solution were limited to the 1,061 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 summary of model fit in table 10.A.1 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 Bayesian information criteria). 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 important, interpretable and interesting clusters.

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. All of these respondents would be assigned to group A, overrepresenting their attributes for that group, while underrepresenting 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 the same individual as part of both groups 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.

APPENDIX B

TABLE 10-B1  
MEASURES INCLUDED IN ANALYSES OF CONCURRENT CORRELATES OF LATENT CLASS MEMBERSHIP  
AT AGE 24 AND OF PRECURSORS OF LATENT CLASS MEMBERSHIP

VARIABLE	QUESTIONNAIRE ITEM	CODING FOR ANALYSIS
Age 24:		
Employment:		
Occupation	What is your main occupation or job?	Professional, skilled, sales, administrative support, service, other <sup>a</sup>
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 <sup>b</sup>
Education:		
College	Are you currently taking any undergraduate or graduate college courses?	0 = no; 1 = yes
Relationship variables:		
Satisfaction	Single: How satisfied are you with your dating life?  Other: How do you feel about being involved/living with/being married to your partner?  Have you ever thought your relationship might be in trouble?  Have you or your partner ever seriously suggested the idea of ending your relationship?  How many times in the past 12 months did your partner or date throw something at you?	1-7 scale, 1 = not at all satisfied/very unhappy; 7 = very satisfied/very happy  0 = no; 1 = yes  0 = no; 1 = yes  Recoded to number of times, 0-20
Trouble		
Ending		
Abuse		
Length	Cohabiting: How long have you lived together? Married: How long have you been married?	Recoded to number of months
Length of dating	Cohabiting: How long did you date your partner before you began living together? Married: How long did you date your spouse before you were married?	Recoded 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 and outdoor chores at home; family based leisure
Leisure		The sum of the following: Athletic, sports, or fitness activities Reading; musical instrument; hobbies Hanging out with close friends Watching TV; using a computer at home Clubs or organizations
Physical		
Skill oriented		
Hedonistic		
Passive		
Organizations		
Deviance:		
Illegal	About how many times in the last 6 months did you: damage property; have a physical fight; drive when drunk; use marijuana; use other drugs; do something else illegal?	0 = no illegal acts; 1 = at least one act
Responsibility:		
Earning	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
Rent		
Bills		
Household		

(continued)



TABLE 10. B1.  
(CONTINUED)

VARIABLE	QUESTIONNAIRE ITEM	CODING FOR ANALYSIS
Background variables:		
Demographic variables:		
Gender	...	0 = female; 1 = male
Race	...	0 = nonwhite; 1 = white
Family of origin		
Structure	Are your biological parents: married and living together; divorced; separated; never married and living together; never married and not living together; widowed?	0 = nonintact; 1 = intact
Income	About how much is your current family income each year?	0 = low (\$0-\$40,000); 1 = high (>\$40,000)
Parents' education		
Age 18:		
Employment:	Do you have a regularly paying part-time job?	0 = no; 1 = yes
Job	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.	Scale scored as mean across items, alpha = .75. 1 = not at all important; 7 = extremely important
Importance	Before you get married, how important is it to you to _____. Have a secure job? Save a lot of money?	
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	Scale scored as mean across items, alpha = .76. 1 = very unlikely; 7 = very likely
Education:		
GPA	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.	Continuous measure of GPA 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
Interest	Grade point average 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 11 items, alpha = .80. 1 = not at all/worse/not at all/much worse; 7 = very good/much better/very good/much better
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 items, alpha = .64. 1 = very unlikely; 7 = very likely
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	
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 At what age would you like to marry? 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 = .73. 1 = very unlikely; 7 = very likely  Continuous measure of age in years Scale scored as mean across items, alpha = .85. 1 = very unlikely; 7 = very likely
Marry age		
Future parent		

(continued)

TABLE 10.B1  
(CONTINUED)

VARIABLE	QUESTIONNAIRE ITEM	CODING FOR ANALYSIS
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 your children; want to have children	Scale scored as mean across items; alpha = .86. 1 = not at all important; 7 = very important
High school 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	

<sup>a</sup> Occupations classified using the 1980 U.S. Census Standard Occupational Classification.

<sup>b</sup> As derived by Nakao and Treas (1992), who determine socioeconomic status of occupations based on both educational attainment and income of occupational categories listed by the census.

APPENDIX C

TABLE 10.C1

MULTINOMIAL LOGIT ANALYSIS OF PRECURSORS: LIKELIHOOD RATIO TESTS			
	$\chi^2$	df	SIGNIFICANCE
Model 1:			
Gender	12.0	5	.034
Race	4.8	5	.444
Intact family	16.7	5	.006
Total model	35.2	15	.002
Model 2:			
Gender	11.2	5	.048
Race	5.1	5	.406
Intact family	8.9	5	.114
Mother's education	15.6	5	.008
Father's education	18.5	5	.002
Family income	2.9	5	.717
Total model	101.0	30	.000
Model 3:			
Gender	8.4	5	.137
Race	4.8	5	.441
Intact family	7.1	5	.216
Mother's education	12.6	5	.027
Father's education	16.8	5	.005
Family income	3.4	5	.632
Marriage expectations	2.1	5	.830
Parenting expectations	4.4	5	.492
Dating at age 18	5.5	5	.358
Total model	127.8	55	.000
Model 4:			
Gender	7.9	5	.159
Race	4.1	5	.540
Intact family	5.3	5	.376
Mother's education	6.7	5	.242
Father's education	5.0	5	.411
Family income	3.9	5	.565
Marriage expectations	3.3	5	.654
Parenting expectations	4.7	5	.455
Dating at age 18	3.6	5	.603
Job at age 18	8.2	5	.148
Future education likely	32.1	5	.000
Positive occupation expectations	2.4	5	.787
High school grade point average	47.9	5	.000
Total model	262.5	85	.000

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

## NOTES

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 eighty 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 eighteen, 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.

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