In This Chapter

- Emerging into Adulthood
- Constructing an Identity
- Finding a Career
- Finding Love

Constructing an Adult Life

- **Emerging adulthood (Arnett)**
  - Phase of life defined by testing out different possibilities and developing self
  - Not a universal life stage; only exists for a minority of young people
  - Begins after high school and tapers off by late twenties

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Emerging Adulthood: Challenges and Changes

- **Typically considered the most challenging and change-inducing stage of life**
  - Need to re-center life roles
  - Focus on responsibility, supporting self, and making independent decisions about life
  - Change to an unstructured, unpredictable path

Setting the Context: Culture and History

- **Emerging adults are prolonging decisions on careers and marriage, therefore postponing adults' roles.**
- This is due to:
  - Life expectancy gains
  - Changes in education and workforce
  - Cultural norms focusing on self-expression

The Mediterranean Model: Living with Parents and Having Trouble Making the Leap to Adult Life

- Due to economic issues, priority is placed on hiring people with families; difficult for young people to find jobs
- Strong norms against cohabitating and beginning families before marriage
- Many young people continue to live with their parents

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Reaching full adulthood–and having the financial ability to leave home often may not happen until age thirty plus.

The Northern European Plan: Expect to Live Independently, Hopefully with Government Help

- **Independence is typically encouraged in emerging adulthood**
  - College financed by the government
  - Employer efforts to hire the young
  - Free health care for all ages
  - Cohabitation and having children before being married accepted (Sweden)
- **Nest-leaving** traditionally begins at the brink of the emerging-adult years

The United States: Alternating Between Independence and Dependence

- Similarities with U.S. young people and Mediterranean countries and northern European scenes
- Acceptance of cohabitation and children before marriage
- Leaving home after high school (age 18)
- Exception in U.S.: Less focus on helping young people emerge into the world of work which may hamper transition to adulthood
- Income inequalities and diversity of cultures have affected the financial independence of this group

Beginning and End Points

- **Entry point: Nest leaving**
  - Does leaving home produce better parent child relationships?
  - Does leaving home make people more adult?

End Point: The Ticking of the Social Clock

- **Social clock**: Shared age norms that act as guideposts denoting what behaviors are appropriate at particular ages; usually set by society
  - On-time: Matches normal timetable
  - Off-time: Is too early or too late of normal timetable

- Are we on-time (on schedule) or off-time (either too early or too late) for what we and society expect at our age?
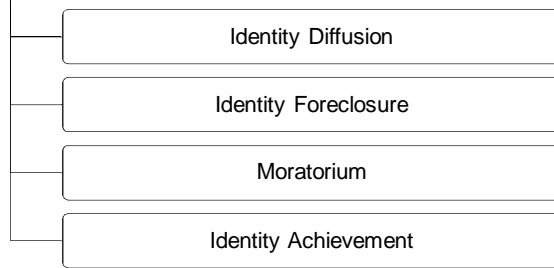
LEARN THE TERMS

- Emerging adulthood
- Role
- Cohabitation
- Nest-leaving
- Social clock
- Age norms
- On time
- Off time

Constructing an Identity: Erikson's Psychosocial Stage

- **Erikson highlighted challenge of transforming childhood self into adult person**
- Identity versus role confusion
  - Identity: Life task of deciding who to be as a person in making the transition to adulthood
  - Role confusion: Failure in identify formation, marked by the lack of sense of a future adult path
  - Moratorium: Taking time out to explore various paths; Erikson believed this moratorium was crucial to building a solid adult identity

Marcia's Identity Statuses

Marcia developed four different identity statuses that expanded on Erikson's theory

- Identity Diffusion
- Identity Foreclosure
- Moratorium
- Identity Achievement

The Identity Statuses in Action

- **Marcia**: Move from diffusion to moratorium to achievement

- **Real-life identity construction:** More erratic, moving back and forth in statuses throughout adulthood

- Search for identity is not a universal developmental task→ affected by life circumstances

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Ethnic identity: Sense of belonging to a specific ethnic category

Approaches	Challenges and advantages
• Developing dual minority identities • Rejecting one identity for another • Accepting personal heritage while being connected to universal human community	• Some may have difficulties connecting with one ethnicity vs. the other • Struggle to make a connection with more than one ethnicity helps people think creatively about life

LEARN THE TERMS

- Identity
- Role confusion
- Identity statuses
- Identity diffusion
- Identity foreclosure
- Moratorium
- Identity achievement
- Ruminative moratorium
- Ethnic identity

Finding a Career

- **Csikszentmihalyi and Schneider, 2000**
  - Indicates every teenager expects to go to college
  - Most expect to have professional careers, regardless of gender or social class

- **Ambition and high expectations**
  - + Can help teens avoid delinquent behaviors, depression, and dropping out of school
  - - Many will not reach their ambitions due to barriers such as poverty and/or economic factors

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The diverse ways depression changed in an economically diverse sample of over 1,000 young people traveling from age 18 to age 22.
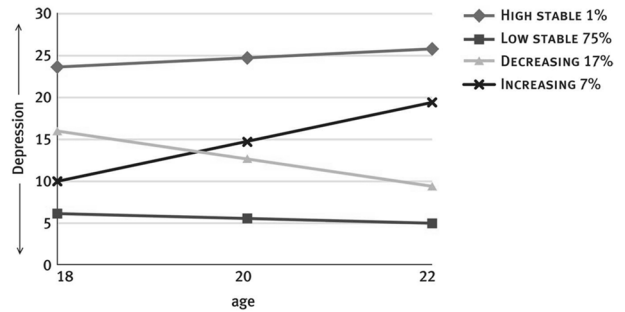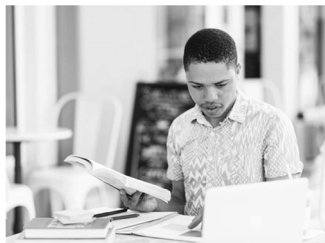

Figure 10.2
Belsky, *Experiencing The Lifespan*, 4e © 2016 Worth Publishers

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Self-Esteem and Emotional Growth During College and Beyond

- **Self-esteem dips dramatically during first semester of college and rises over the next few years**
  - Inflated academic abilities
  - Social reinforcement for additions to flourish
- **Key predictor to successful transition to a career**
  - Teen's interest in work (being productive) vs. those only interested in playing (avoiding work)
  - Personality

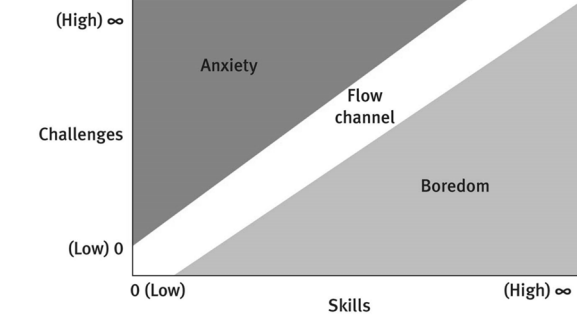JGI/Daniel Grill/Blend Images/Getty Images

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Self-Esteem and Emotional Growth During College and Beyond

- Personality changes the most when a person is in his or her twenties
- Significant maturity develops, with more focus on weighing options and healthy decision making
  - Failures seen as life lessons, not inconsequential events
- Conscientiousness develops with maturing of the frontal lobe which helps develop self-control

Finding Flow

- **Flow: Total absorption in an activity**
  - Is marked by extreme intrinsic motivation

  - Occurs when there is the appropriate person environment fit

  - Creates anxiety if activities beyond capabilities; creates boredom if activities are too simple

The Zone of Flow

Figure 10.3
Belsky, *Experiencing The Lifespan*, 4e © 2016 Worth Publishers

Answer: Vygostky

Emerging into Adulthood Without a College Degree

- **Statistics**
  - Two of every three U.S. high school graduates enroll in college
  - However, by mid-twenties, about 3 in 5 complete a four-year degree
  - Money matters
- **Consequences**
  - Many who do not complete college have difficulty constructing a middle-class life
  - But some of those not attending college can have fulfilling careers, and often have other types of intelligence (practical or creative intelligence)

So why do emerging adults drop out of school?

- Uninterested in academics, poorly prepared in high school

- Low-SES young adults are less likely to graduate from college than affluent peers

- Gates Foundation study found that the main reason for young adults dropping out of college was financial issues

Interventions: Making College an Inner-growth Flow Zone

Get the best professors and talk to them outside of class

Connect classes to potential careers

Immerse yourself in the college milieu

Capitalize on the diverse human connections college provides

LEARN THE TERMS

- Flow
- School-to-work transition

Finding Love

- **Erikson's first task of adult life: Intimacy versus Isolation**
  - In Western society: Intimacy is search for a soul mate or enduring love
  - In other countries: Finding a mate is primarily a family responsibility-may be changing

Setting the Context: Seismic Shifts in Searching for Love

- **Many more potential partners**
  - 1 in 3 U.S. couples met on-line; more likely to be happier
  - Higher willingness to date outside ethnic group
  - Religious faith less important
  - Higher acceptance of same-sex relationships

Growth of Interracial and Interethnic Dating

- **Dating outside "own kind" has been daring in U.S. history**
  - By the twenty-first century, one in three European Americans report being romantically involved with a person from a different ethnicity or race.
  - More than one-half of African Americans, Hispanic Americans, and Asian Americans reported the same.

Interracial and Interethnic Dating

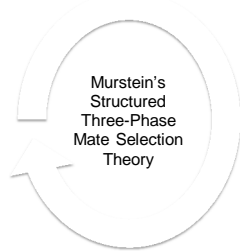| Interracial/interethnic dating	Same-sex relationships
• Strong identification with racial group and/or ethnicity is a strong predicator to choosing a same-race/ethnicity mate • Some ethnic differences in openness to interethnic dating	• Relationships are much more acceptable • Homophobia is less common, but still exists • May be more difficult for struggling or identity confused adolescents

But

- Homophobia still exists
- Most myths related to same-sex relationships have been disproved
- Although there is more acceptance among society and with peers, coming out to parents may be more challenging

Setting the Context: Seismic Shifts in Searching for Love

- **More erratic, extended dating phase**
  - Increase in average age of marriage
  - Delay in making serious love commitments

- **Consequences of delay in making love commitments**
  - One-night stands and friends-with-benefits related to risk of poorer mental health; some gender differences

Similarity and Structured Relationship Stages: A Classic Model of Love, and a Critique

Murstein's Structured Three-Phase Mate Selection Theory

- **Stimulus Phase**
  - We approach people who visually appear to fit us: "I think this person looks like we might mesh."

- **Value-Comparison Phase**
  - Then as we date, we try to figure out whether we match up according to values.

- **Role Phase**
  - Now we have decided that this is the one, and discuss our plans for our shared life.

What is important?

- **Similarities are important (Murstein)**
  - Opposites do NOT attract.
  - Matches are made based on homogany (similarity).
  - Choices are often based on "ideal-self."

- **What else?**
  - Similar personality
  - Dominant/submissive mix
  - Adult attachment styles

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And so

- People in more enduring, happy relationships see their loved ones through rose-colored glasses.

- Review of many research studies regarding the dating years indicates several predicators:
  - Strongest predicator: Being intensely committed to one's mate
  - Idealizing your partner
  - Support of family and friends

Facebook Romance

- **Facebook has advantages and disadvantages**
  - Widens field of romantic possibilities
  - Evokes jealousy and spying
- Young people report Facebook is a trap and can make love complicated

Love Through the Lens of Attachment Theory

- Based on Ainsworth's infant attachment styles, Hazan and Shaver (1987) examined adult attachment styles.
  - Preoccupied/ambivalent (insecure)
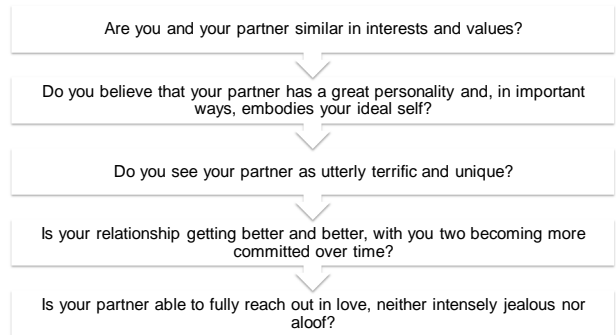 - Avoidant/dismissive (insecure)
  - Securely attached

Current Relationship Interview Attachment Styles

Secure attachment	Avoidant/dismissive insecure attachment	Preoccupied/ambivalent insecure attachment
• Definition: Capable of genuine intimacy in relationships. • Signs: Empathic, sensitive, able to reach out emotionally. • Balances own needs with those of partner. Has affectionate, caring interactions. Probably in a loving, long-term relationship.	• Definition: Unable to get close in relationships. • Signs: Uncaring, aloof, emotionally distant. Unresponsive to loving feelings. Abruptly disengages at signs of involvement. Unlikely to be in a long-term relationship.	• Definition: Needy and engulfing in relationships. • Signs: Excessively jealous, suffocating. Needs continual reassurance of being totally loved. Unlikely to be in a loving, long-term relationship.

Do Attachment Styles Shift? Sometimes

- Consider Ainsworth's work to conceptualize adult attachment styles.
  - **Securely attached type**: Fully open to love; give partners space yet feel firmly committed
  - **Avoidant/dismissive type**: Withholding, aloof, reluctant to engage
  - **Preoccupied/ambivalent type**: Fall quickly and deeply in love but become needy and often feel rejected or unfulfilled

Evaluating Your Own Relationship Checklist

Are you and your partner similar in interests and values?

Do you believe that your partner has a great personality and, in important ways, embodies your ideal self?

Do you see your partner as utterly terrific and unique?

Is your relationship getting better and better, with you two becoming more committed over time?

Is your partner able to fully reach out in love, neither intensely jealous nor aloof?

LEARN THE TERMS

- Intimacy
- Homophobia
- Stimulus-value-role theory
- Stimulus phase
- Value-comparison phase
- Role phase
- Homogamy
- Adult attachment styles
- Preoccupied/ambivalent insecure attachment
- Avoidant/dismissive insecure attachment
- Secure attachment