This college student, a volunteer for a nonprofit organization called FoodCorps, helps children in economically disadvantaged communities plant a school garden, teaching them about healthy foods and how they grow. For many young people in industrialized nations, the transition to early adulthood is a time of prolonged exploration of attitudes, values, and life possibilities.

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After completing her master’s degree at age 26, Sharese returned to her hometown, where she and Ernie would soon be married. During their year-long engagement, Sharese had vacillated about whether to follow through. At times, she looked with envy at Heather, still unattached and free to choose from an array of options before her. After graduating from college, Heather accepted a Peace Corps assignment in a remote region of Ghana, forged a romance with another Peace Corps volunteer that she ended at the conclusion of her tour of duty, and then traveled for eight months before returning to the United States to contemplate next steps.

Sharese also pondered the life circumstances of Christy and her husband, Gary—married and first-time parents by their mid-twenties. Despite his good teaching performance, Gary’s relationship with the high school principal deteriorated, and he quit his job at the end of his first year. A tight job market impeded Gary’s efforts to find another teaching position, and financial pressures and parenthood put Christy’s education and career plans on hold. Sharese wondered whether it was really possible to combine family and career.

As her wedding approached, Sharese’s ambivalence intensified, and she admitted to Ernie that she didn’t feel ready to marry. But Ernie reassured her of his love. His career had been under way for two years, and at age 28, he looked forward to marriage and starting a family. Uncertain and conflicted, Sharese felt swept toward the altar as relatives and friends arrived. On the appointed day, she walked down the aisle.

In this chapter, we take up the emotional and social sides of early adulthood. Notice that Sharese, Ernie, and Heather moved toward adult roles slowly, at times vacillating along the way. Not until their mid- to late twenties did they make lasting career and romantic choices and attain full economic independence—markers of adulthood that young people of previous generations reached considerably earlier. Each received financial and other forms of support from parents and other family members, which enabled them to postpone taking on adult roles. We consider whether prolonged exploration of life options has become so widespread that it merits a new developmental period—emerging adulthood—to describe and understand it.

Recall from Chapter 12 that identity development continues to be a central focus from the late teens into the mid-twenties (see page 319). As they achieve a secure identity and independence from parents, young adults seek close, affectionate ties. Yet the decade of the twenties is accompanied by a rise in feelings of personal control over events in their lives—in fact, a stronger sense of control than they will ever experience again (Grob, Krings, & Bangerter, 2001). Perhaps for this reason, like Sharese, young people often fear losing their freedom. Once this struggle is resolved, early adulthood leads to new family units and parenthood, accomplished in the context of diverse lifestyles. At the same time, young adults must master the tasks of their chosen career.

Our discussion will reveal that identity, love, and work are intertwined. In negotiating these arenas, young adults do more choosing, planning, and changing course than any other age group. When their decisions are in tune with themselves and their social and cultural worlds, they acquire many new competencies, and life is full and rewarding.

Unprecedented Exploration

Psychologist Jeffrey Arnett is the leader of a movement that regards emerging adulthood as a distinct period of life. As Arnett explains, emerging adults have left adolescence but are still a considerable distance from taking on adult responsibilities. Their parents agree: In a survey of parents of a large sample of ethnically and religiously diverse U.S. undergraduate and graduate students, most viewed their children as not yet fully adult (Nelson et al., 2007). Rather, young people who have the economic resources to do so explore alternatives in education, work, and personal values and behavior more intensely than they did as teenagers.

Not yet immersed in adult roles, many emerging adults can engage in activities of the widest possible scope. Because so little is normative, or socially expected, routes to adult responsibilities are highly diverse in timing and order across individuals (Côté, 2006). For example, more college students than in past
generations pursue their education in a drawn-out, nonlinear way—changing majors as they explore career options, taking courses while working part-time, or interrupting school to work, travel, or participate in national or international service programs. About one-third of U.S. college graduates enter graduate school, taking still more years to settle into their desired career track (U.S. Department of Education, 2012b).

As a result of these experiences, young people's interests, attitudes, and values broaden (see page 361 in Chapter 13). Exposure to multiple viewpoints also encourages development of a more complex self-concept that includes awareness of their own changing traits and values over time, along with enhanced self-esteem (Labouvie-Vief, 2006; Orth, Robins, & Widaman, 2012). Together, these changes contribute to advances in identity.

**Identity Development.** During the college years, young people refine their approach to constructing an identity. Besides exploring in breadth (weighing multiple possibilities), they also explore in depth—evaluating existing commitments (Luyckx et al., 2006). For example, if you have not yet selected your major, you may be taking classes in a broad array of disciplines. Once you choose a major, you are likely to embark on an in-depth evaluation of your choice—reflecting on your interest, motivation, and performance and on your career prospects as you take additional classes in that field. Depending on the outcome of your evaluation, either your commitment to your major strengthens, or you return to a broad exploration of options.

In a longitudinal study extending over the first two years of college, most students cycled between making commitments and evaluating commitments in various identity domains. Fluctuations in students' certainty about their commitments sparked movement between these two states (Luyckx, Goossens, & Soens, 2006). **TAKE A MOMENT...** Consider your own identity progress. Does it fit this dual-cycle model, in which identity formation is a lengthy process of feedback loops? Notice how the model helps explain the movement between identity statuses displayed by many young people, described in Chapter 12. College students who move toward exploration in depth and certainty of commitment are higher in self-esteem, psychological well-being, and academic, emotional, and social adjustment. Those who spend much time exploring in breadth without making commitments, or who are identity diffused (engaging in no exploration), tend to be poorly adjusted—anxious, depressed, and higher in alcohol and drug use, casual and unprotected sex, and other health-compromising behaviors (Kunnen et al., 2008; Schwartz et al., 2011).

Many aspects of the life course that were once socially structured—marriage, parenthood, religious beliefs, and career paths—are increasingly left to individual decision. As a result, emerging adults are required to "individualize" their identities—a process that requires a sense of self-efficacy, purpose, determination to overcome obstacles, and responsibility for outcomes. Among young people of diverse ethnicities and SES levels, this set of qualities, termed personal agency, is positively related to an information-gathering cognitive style and identity exploration followed by commitment (Schwartz, Côté, & Arnett, 2005; Stringer & Kerpelman, 2010).

**Religion and Worldview.** Most emerging adults say that constructing a worldview, or a set of beliefs and values to live by, is essential for attaining adult status—even more important than finishing their education and settling into a career and marriage (Arnett, 2006, 2007b). During the late teens and twenties, attendance at religious services drops to its lowest level throughout the lifespan as young people continue to question the beliefs they acquired in their families (Kunnen et al., 2008; Schwartz et al., 2011). About one-fourth of U.S. 18- to 29-year-olds are unaffiliated with a particular faith—considerably more than in their parents' generation at the same age (see Figure 14.1).

Nevertheless, religion is more important in the lives of U.S. young people than it is for their agemates in other developed countries. More than one-third of those who are religiously affiliated say they are "strong" members of their faith—equivalent to same-age individuals who said so a decade earlier (Pew Forum on Religion and Public Life, 2010). Women are more religious than men, a difference evident in other Western nations and throughout the lifespan. Also among the more religious are immigrants and certain ethnic minorities, including African Americans and Hispanics (Barry et al., 2010). And whether or not they are involved in organized religion, many young people begin to construct their own individualized faith and, if attending college, frequently discuss religious beliefs and experiences with friends (Montgomery-Goodnough & Gallagher, 2007; Stoppa & Lefkowitz, 2010). Often they weave together beliefs and practices from diverse sources, including Eastern and Western religious traditions, science, and popular culture.

As with adolescents, U.S. emerging adults who are religious or spiritual tend to be better-adjusted. They are higher in self-esteem, less likely to commit antisocial acts, and more likely to engage in community service (Barry & Nelson, 2008; Knox, Langehough, & Walters, 1998; White et al., 2006).
Perhaps because emerging adults are so focused on exploring and "finding themselves," a widespread opinion is that they forge self-centered worldviews, as the descriptor "generation me" suggests (Arnett, 2010). This issue has generated heated controversy. Analyses of large, nationally representative samples of U.S. young people, collected repeatedly over several decades, suggest that compared to past generations, the Millennial generation reports greater narcissism (egotistical self-admiration) and materialism—valuing of money and leisure and reduced empathy for the less fortunate (Gentile, Twenge, & Campbell, 2010; O’Brien, Hsing, & Konrath, 2010; Twenge, Campbell, & Freeman, 2012).

But other researchers claim that generational changes in egotism and other traits are too small to be meaningful (Trzesniewski & Donnellan, 2009, 2010). And gradual, age-related gains in self-esteem extending from adolescence through emerging adulthood and into mid-life are similar across generations, with average self-esteem of today’s young people no higher than that of past cohorts (Orth, Robins, & Widaman, 2012; Orth, Trzesniewski, & Robins, 2010). Over these years, adults derive a greater sense of competence from making identity commitments, entering and succeeding at their careers, and becoming involved in their communities.

Additional evidence supports the view that many emerging adults are committed to improving their communities, nation, and world. In a survey of several hundred thousand first-year students enrolled in nearly 300 U.S. colleges and universities, a record number—nearly 30 percent—said that there is "a very good chance" they will participate in community service—nearly double the number two decades earlier (Pryor et al., 2009). An additional 41 percent expressed "some chance" of participating, and only 6 percent said they would not volunteer. Among college students who expect to volunteer, the overwhelming majority actually do so within their first year (DeAngelo, Hurtado, & Pryor, 2010).

Finally, compared to previous generations, contemporary 18- to 29-year-olds have been labeled “apathetic no shows” when it comes to voting. But in the 2012 U.S. presidential election, they made up more of the total electorate (19 percent) than did citizens over age 65 (16 percent), who traditionally have been the highest participants. In this respect, emerging adults’ civic involvement appears to have strengthened.

Cultural Change, Cultural Variation, and Emerging Adulthood

Rapid cultural change explains the recent appearance of emerging adulthood. First, entry-level positions in many fields require more education than in the past, prompting young adults to seek higher education in record numbers and thus delaying financial independence and career commitment. Second, wealthy nations with longer-lived populations have no pressing need for young people’s labor, freeing those who are financially able for extended exploration.

Indeed, emerging adulthood is limited to cultures that postpone entry into adult roles until the twenties. In developing nations such as Brazil, China, India, and Mexico, only a privileged few—usually those from wealthier families who are admitted to universities—experience it, often for a shorter time than their Western counterparts (Arnett, 2011; Nelson & Chen, 2007). Furthermore, the overwhelming majority of young people in traditional non-Western countries—those who have few economic resources or who remain in the rural regions where they grew up—have no emerging adulthood (UNICEF, 2010c). With limited education, they typically enter marriage, parenthood, and lifelong work early.

In industrialized countries, many young people experience these transitional years. Typically, their families are sufficiently well-off to provide them with financial support, without which few could advance their education, explore career possibilities, and travel to—as one emerging adult put it—“experience as much as possible.” And although most emerging adults are pursuing higher education or have earned an advanced degree, some non-college-bound young people also benefit from this extended transition (Tanner, Arnett, & Leis, 2009). But they may do so by trying out different types of work rather than college majors or travel.
Is Emerging Adulthood Really a Distinct Period of Development?

Although broad consensus exists that cultural change has prolonged the transition to adult roles for many young people, disagreement persists over whether these years of “emergence” merit the creation of a new developmental period (Hendry & Kloep, 2007, 2010). Critics of the concept of emerging adulthood offer the following arguments.

First, burgeoning higher education enrollment, delayed career entry, and later marriage and parenthood are cultural trends that began as early as the 1970s in industrialized nations, only gradually becoming more conspicuous. At no time has adulthood in complex societies been attained at a distinct moment (Côté & Bynner, 2008). Rather, young people in the past reached adult status earlier in some domains and later in others, just as they do today. They also may reverse direction—for example, move back to the parental home to get their bearings after finishing college or being laid off from a job. In accord with the lifespan perspective, development is multidimensional and multidirectional, for 18- to 29-year-olds as it is for adults of all ages. Transitions occur during all periods of adult life, with societal conditions heavily influencing their timing, length, and complexity.

Second, the term emerging adulthood fails to describe the experiences of the majority of the world’s youths (Galambos & Martinez, 2007). In most developing countries, young people—particularly women—are limited in education and marry and have children early. According to one estimate, over 1 billion individuals—nearly 70 percent of young people—follow this traditional route to adulthood (World Health Organization, 2011).

Third, research on emerging adulthood largely emphasizes its personal and societal benefits. But the extended exploration that defines this period can be risky for those who have not developed the personal agency to make good choices and acquire adult skills. These young people may remain uncommitted for too long—an outcome that impedes the focused learning required for a successful work life. A favorable emerging adulthood, then, depends on whether it is used to acquire competencies essential for contemporary living.

Finally, the financial upheaval of the late 2000s has left large numbers of bachelor’s degree holders under age 25 with restricted options. In 2011, over 9 percent were unemployed and 20 percent underemployed—in low-paid jobs not requiring a college degree and, thus, without experiences necessary for advancing their skills (Shierholz, Sabadish, & Wething, 2012). Rather than a period of unparalleled opportunities, these graduates’ delayed leap into adult roles is filled with anxiety and frustration. One young person, who might have been high in personal agency in a stable economy, remarked, “It has been tough finding a job that keeps me wanting to stick with something” (Kotkin, 2012).

Proponents of emerging adulthood as a distinct developmental period respond that, though not universal, it applies to most young people in industrialized societies and is spreading in developing nations that play major roles in our global economy (Tanner & Arnett, 2011). But skeptics counter that emerging adulthood is unlikely to become a prominent period of life in developing countries with high concentrations of poverty or, in industrialized countries, among low-income youths or those not involved in higher education (Côté & Bynner, 2008; Kloep & Hendry, 2011). And for college graduates, societal conditions can readily restrict the prospects and rewards of this period.

Critics also emphasize that in developed nations, age-graded influences have declined in favor of nonnormative influences throughout contemporary adulthood (see page 9 in Chapter 1 to review) (Hendry & Kloep, 2010). In their view, rather than being unique, emerging adults are part of a general trend toward blurring of age-related expectations, yielding multiple transitions and increased diversity in development across the adult years.

Nevertheless, for the large numbers of U.S. low-SES young people who are burdened by early parenthood, do not finish high school, are otherwise academically unprepared for college, or do not have access to vocational training, emerging adulthood is limited or nonexistent (see Chapters 11 and 13). Because of its strong association with SES and higher education, some researchers reject the notion of emerging adulthood as a distinct period of development (see the Cultural Influences box above). Others disagree, predicting that emerging adulthood will become increasingly common as globalization—the exchange of ideas, information, trade, and immigration among nations—accelerates. As globalization proceeds, gains in higher education and the formation of a common “global identity” among young people may lead to the spread of emerging adulthood (Arnett, 2007a; Nelson & Chen, 2007). But, as the Cultural Influences box above points out, the recession’s weak labor market has also left many college graduates with limited options. In sum, societal conditions enabling an emerging adulthood abundant in opportunity have recently contracted.
In grappling with momentous choices and acquiring the skills to succeed in demanding life roles, emerging adults often encounter disappointments in love and work that require them to adjust, and sometimes radically change, their life path. Their vigorous explorations also extend earlier risks, including unprotected sexual activity, substance use, and hazardous driving behavior (see Chapter 13). And feelings of loneliness are higher at this time than at any other time of life (Rokach, 2003). As emerging adults move through school and employment settings, they must constantly separate from friends and forge new relationships.

Longitudinal research shows that the personal attributes and social supports listed in Applying What We Know above foster successful passage through these years, as indicated by completing a college education, forging a warm, stable intimate relationship, finding and keeping a well-paying job, and volunteering in one’s community (Benson et al., 2006; Eccles & Gootman, 2002). Notice how the resources in the table overlap with ones discussed in previous chapters that promote development through resilience, the capacity to overcome challenge and adversity.

Relationships with parents have an especially wide-ranging influence. A secure, affectionate parent–emerging adult bond that extends the balance of connection and separation established in adolescence—an empathic approach in which parents recognize the weighty challenges the young person faces and encourage personally valued choices—predicts many aspects of adaptive functioning; favorable self-esteem, identity progress, successful transition to college life, higher academic achievement, more rewarding friendships and romantic ties, and positive psychological well-being (Aquilino, 2006, p. 201).

In contrast, excessive parental rule-setting and regulation of the young person’s daily life (including taking over when the young person encounters challenges) and psychological control (invalidating the young person’s thoughts and feelings) are linked to poor adjustment, including low self-esteem, inability to make commitments in identity formation, and increased anxiety, depression, and alcohol use (Luyckx et al., 2007; Nelson et al., 2011; Patock-Peckham & Morgan-Lopez, 2009). In another form of parenting—called helicopter parenting in popular culture—warm, well-intentioned parents “hover” over the emerging adult out of excessive concern for his or her well-being. They might, for example, take the child to college but refuse to leave and contact professors to discuss the child’s grades. Perhaps because helicopter parenting is motivated by strong parental affection and involvement, it is not associated with the negative outcomes just noted. But it is related to reduced school engagement (going to class, completing assignments) (Padilla-Walker & Nelson, 2012). And it likely interferes with emerging adults’ ability to acquire the skills they need to act on their own.

### Applying What We Know

#### Resources That Foster Resilience in Emerging Adulthood

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type of Resource</th>
<th>Description</th>
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| **Cognitive attributes** | Effective planning and decision making  
Information-gathering cognitive style and mature epistemic cognition  
Good school performance  
Knowledge of vocational options and necessary skills |
| **Emotional and social attributes** | Positive self-esteem  
Good emotional self-regulation and flexible coping strategies  
Good conflict-resolution skills  
Confidence in one’s ability to reach one’s goals  
Sense of personal responsibility for outcomes  
Persistence and effective use of time  
Healthy identity development—movement toward exploration in depth and commitment certainty  
Strong moral character  
Sense of meaning and purpose in life, engendered by religion, spirituality, or other sources  
Desire to contribute meaningfully to one’s community |
| **Social supports**     | Positive relationships with parents, peers, teachers, and mentors  
Financial assistance from parents or others  
Sense of connection to social institutions, such as school, church, workplace, and community center |

Sources: Benson et al., 2006; Eccles and Gootman, 2002.
REVIEW What cultural changes have led to the appearance of emerging adulthood?

APPLY List supports that your college environment offers emerging adults in its health and counseling services, academic advising, residential living, and extracurricular activities. How does each help young people transition to adult roles?

REFLECT Should emerging adulthood be considered a distinct developmental period? Why or why not?

As Sharese discovered, establishing a mutually gratifying close relationship is challenging. Intimacy requires that young people redefine their identity to include both partners’ values and interests. Those in their late teens and early twenties frequently say they don’t feel ready for a lasting tie (Carroll et al., 2009). During their first year of marriage, Sharese separated from Ernie twice as she tried to reconcile her desire for self-determination with her desire for intimacy. Maturity involves balancing these forces. Without intimacy, young adults face the negative outcome of Erikson’s early adulthood stage: loneliness and self-absorption. Ernie’s patience and stability helped Sharese realize that committed love requires generosity and compromise but not total surrender of the self.

Research confirms that—as Erikson emphasized—a secure identity fosters attainment of intimacy. Commitment to personally meaningful values and goals prepares young adults for interpersonal commitments, which increase as early adulthood progresses. Among large samples of college students, identity achievement was positively correlated with fidelity (loyalty in relationships) and love, for both men and women. In contrast, identity moratorium—a state of searching prior to commitment—was negatively associated with fidelity and love (Markstrom et al., 1997; Markstrom & Kalmanir, 2001). Other studies show that advanced identity development strongly predicts involvement in a deep, committed love partnership or readiness to establish such a partnership (Beyers & Seiffge-Krenke, 2010; Montgomery, 2005). Still, the coordination of identity and intimacy is more complex for women, who are more likely than men to consider the impact of their personal goals on important relationships (Archer, 2002).

Erikson believed that successful resolution of intimacy versus isolation prepares the individual for the middle adulthood stage, which focuses on generativity—caring for the next generation and helping to improve society. But childbearing and child rearing, as well as contributions to society through work and community service, are underway in the twenties and thirties. Still, in line with Erikson’s ideas, high friendship or romantic intimacy in early adulthood does predict a stronger generative orientation (Mackinnon et al., 2011).

In sum, identity, intimacy, and generativity are concerns of early adulthood, with shifts in emphasis that differ among individuals. Recognizing that Erikson’s theory provides only a broad sketch of adult personality development, other theorists have expanded his stage approach, adding detail.

Other Theories of Adult Psychosocial Development

In the 1970s, growing interest in adult development led to several widely read books on the topic. Daniel Levinson’s The Seasons of a Man’s Life (1978) and The Seasons of a Woman’s Life (1996), and George Vaillant’s Adaptation to Life (1977) and Aging Well (2002), present psychosocial theories in the tradition of Erikson.

Ersko’s Theory: Intimacy versus Isolation

Erikson’s vision has influenced all contemporary theories of adult personality development. His psychological conflict of early adulthood is intimacy versus isolation, reflected in the young person’s thoughts and feelings about making a permanent commitment to an intimate partner.

Although well-intentioned, these hovering “helicopter” parents make it harder for their daughter to acquire the skills she needs to manage the challenges of college life on her own.

Finally, exposure to multiple negative life events—family conflict, abusive intimate relationships, repeated romantic breakups, academic or employment difficulties, and financial strain—undermines development, even in emerging adults whose childhood and adolescence prepared them well for this transition (Masten et al., 2004). In sum, supportive family, school, and community environments are crucial, just as they were at earlier ages. The overwhelming majority of young people with access to these resources are optimistic about their future and likely to transition successfully to adult roles (Arnett, 2006). Now let’s turn to theories of psychosocial development in early adulthood.
Levinson’s Seasons of Life

On the basis of in-depth biographical interviews with 35- to 45-year-old men—and, later, similar interviews with women in the same age range—Levinson (1978, 1996) depicted adult development as a sequence of qualitatively distinct eras (or “seasons”) coinciding with Erikson’s stages and separated by transitions. The life structure, a key concept in Levinson’s theory, is the underlying design of a person’s life, consisting of relationships with significant others—individuals, groups, and institutions. Of its many components, usually only a few, relating to family, close friends, and occupation, are central. But wide individual differences exist in the weights of central and peripheral components.

Levinson found that during the transition to early adulthood, most young people constructed a dream—an image of themselves in the adult world that guides their decision making. For men, the dream usually emphasized achievement in a career, whereas most career-oriented women had “split dreams” involving both marriage and career. Young adults also formed a relationship with a mentor who facilitated realization of their dream—often a senior colleague at work but occasionally a more experienced friend, neighbor, or relative.

Around age 30, a second transition occurred: Young people who had been preoccupied with career and were single usually focused on finding a life partner, while women who had emphasized marriage and family often developed more individualistic goals. For example, Christy, who had dreamed of becoming a professor, finally earned her doctoral degree in her mid-thirties and secured a college teaching position. For young people without a satisfying intimate tie or a vocational direction, this can be a time of crisis.

To create an early adulthood culminating life structure, men usually “settled down” by focusing on certain relationship- ships and aspirations, in an effort to establish a niche in society consistent with their values, whether those be wealth, prestige, artistic or scientific achievement, or forms of family or community participation. In his late thirties, Ernie became a partner in his firm, coached his son’s soccer team, and was elected treasurer of his church. He paid less attention to golf, travel, and playing the guitar than previously.

Many women, however, remained unsettled in their thirties, often because they added an occupational or relationship commitment. When her two children were born, Sharese felt torn between her research position in the state health department and her family. She took three months off after the arrival of each baby. When she returned to work, she did not pursue attractive administrative openings that required travel and time away from home. And shortly after Christy began teaching, she and Gary divorced. Becoming a single parent while starting her professional life introduced new strains. Not until middle age did many women reach career maturity and take on more authority in the community.

Vaillant’s Adaptation to Life

Vaillant (1977) followed the development of nearly 250 men born in the 1920s, selected for study while they were students at a competitive liberal arts college. Participants were interviewed extensively while in college and answered lengthy questionnaires during each succeeding decade. Then Vaillant (2002) interviewed them at ages 47, 60, and 70 about work, family, and physical and mental health.

Looking at how the men altered themselves and their social world to adapt to life, Vaillant—like Levinson—confirmed Erikson’s stages but filled gaps between them. After focusing on intimacy concerns in their twenties, the men turned to career consolidation in their thirties. During their forties, they became more generative. In their fifties and sixties, they extended that generativity; they became “keepers of meaning,” or guardians of their culture, expressing a deep need to preserve and pass on cultural traditions by teaching others what they had learned from life experience (Vaillant & Koury, 1994). Finally, in their seventies, the men became more spiritual and reflective. In a later lifelong study of a sample of well-educated women, Vaillant (2002) identified a similar series of changes.

Nevertheless, the developmental patterns Vaillant and Levinson described are based largely on interviews with people born in the first few decades of the twentieth century. As our discussion of emerging adulthood illustrates, development is far more variable today—so much so that some researchers doubt that adult psychosocial changes can be organized into distinct stages (Newton & Stewart, 2010). Rather, people may assemble the themes and dilemmas identified by these theorists into individualized arrangements, in a dynamic system of interacting biological, psychological, and social forces. Studies of new generations—both men and women of diverse backgrounds—are needed to shed light on the extent of commonality and variation among young people in psychosocial development.
The Social Clock

As we have seen, changes in society from one generation to the next can affect the life course. Bernice Neugarten (1968a, 1979) identified an important cultural and generational influence on adult development: the social clock—age-graded expectations for major life events, such as beginning a first job, getting married, birth of the first child, buying a home, and retiring. All societies have such timetables. Research of two to three decades ago revealed that conformity to or departure from the social clock can be a major source of adult personality change, affecting self-esteem, independence, responsibility, and other attributes because adults (like children and adolescents) make social comparisons, measuring their progress against that of agemates (Helson, 1992; Vandewater & Stewart, 1997).

Among economically better-off young people, finishing one’s education, marrying, and having children occur much later in the lifespan than they did a generation or two ago. Furthermore, departures from social-clock life events have become increasingly common. As we will see later, a growing number of women, mostly of lower income, are not marrying and, instead, rearing children as single mothers, turning not to a spouse but rather to their extended families for assistance (Furstenberg, 2010).

These conditions can create intergenerational tensions when parents expect their young-adult children to attain adult milestones on an outdated schedule, at odds with their children’s current opportunities and desires. Young adults may also feel distressed because their own timing of major milestones is not widely shared by their contemporaries or supported by current public policies, thereby weakening both informal and formal social supports (Settersten, 2007). And while rendering greater flexibility and freedom to young people’s lives, an ill-defined social clock likely causes them to feel inadequately grounded—unsure of what others expect and of what to expect of themselves.

In sum, following a social clock of some kind seems to foster confidence and social stability because it guarantees that young people will develop skills, engage in productive work, and gain in understanding of self and others (Hendry & Kloep, 2007). In contrast, “crafting a life of one’s own,” whether self-chosen or the result of circumstances, is risky—more prone to breakdown (Settersten, 2007, p. 244). With this in mind, let’s take a closer look at how men and women traverse major tasks of young adulthood.

Look and Listen

Describe your social clock, listing major life events along with the age you expect to attain each. Then ask a parent and/or grandparent to recall his or her own early adulthood social clock. Analyze generational differences.

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Ask Yourself

Review Return to page 319 in Chapter 12, and review the contributions of exploration and commitment to a mature identity. Using the two criteria, explain why identity achievement is positively related to attainment of intimacy (fidelity and love), whereas identity moratorium is negatively predictive.

Apply In view of contemporary changes in the social clock, explain Sharese’s conflicted feelings about marrying Ernie.

Reflect Describe your early adulthood dream. Then ask a friend or classmate of the other gender to describe his or her dream, and compare the two. Are they consistent with Levinson’s findings?

Close Relationships

To establish an intimate tie to another person, people must find a partner and build an emotional bond that they sustain over time. Although young adults are especially concerned with romantic love, the need for intimacy can also be satisfied through other relationships involving mutual commitment—with friends, siblings, and co-workers.

Romantic Love

Finding a life partner is a major milestone of early adult development, with profound consequences for self-concept and psychological well-being (Meeus et al., 2007). As Sharese and Ernie’s relationship reveals, it is also a complex process that unfolds over time and is affected by a variety of events.

Because the social clock has become increasingly flexible, this 30-year-old attorney, committed to her challenging, demanding career, may not feel pressure to conform to a strict timetable for major life events such as marriage and parenthood.
Selecting a Mate. Recall from Chapter 13 that intimate partners generally meet in places where they are likely to find people of their own age, ethnicity, SES, and religion, or they connect through dating websites. People usually select partners who resemble themselves in other ways—attitudes, personality, educational plans, intelligence, physical attractiveness, and even height (Keith & Schaefer, 1991; Simpson & Harris, 1994). Romantic partners sometimes have complementary personality traits—one self-assured and dominant, the other hesitant and submissive. Because this difference permits each to sustain their preferred style of behavior, it contributes to compatibility (Sadler, Ethier, & Woody, 2011). But overall, little support exists for the idea that “opposites attract.” Rather, partners who are similar in personality and other attributes tend to be more satisfied with their relationship and more likely to stay together (Furnham, 2009; Markey & Markey, 2007).

Nevertheless, men and women differ in the importance they place on certain characteristics. In diverse industrialized and developing countries, women assign greater weight to intelligence, ambition, financial status, and moral character, whereas men place more emphasis on physical attractiveness and domestic skills. In addition, women prefer a same-age or slightly older partner, men a younger partner (Buunk, 2002; Cramer, Schaefer, & Reid, 2003; Stewart, Stinnett, & Rosenfeld, 2000).

According to an evolutionary perspective, because their capacity to reproduce is limited, women seek a mate with traits, such as earning power and emotional commitment, that help ensure children’s survival and well-being. In contrast, men look for a mate with traits that signal youth, health, sexual pleasure, and ability to give birth to and care for offspring. As further evidence for this difference, men often want a relationship to move quickly toward physical intimacy, whereas women typically prefer to take the time to achieve psychological intimacy first (Buss, 2012).

In an alternative, social learning view, gender roles profoundly influence criteria for mate selection. Beginning in childhood, men learn to be assertive and independent—behaviors needed for success in the work world. Women acquire nurturant behaviors, which facilitate caregiving. Then each sex learns to value traits in the other that fit with this traditional division of labor (Eagly & Wood, 2012). In support of this theory, in cultures and in younger generations experiencing greater gender equity, men and women are more alike in their mate preferences. For example, compared with men in China and Japan, American men place more emphasis on their mate’s financial prospects, less on her domestic skills. And both sexes care somewhat less about their mate’s age relative to their own. Rather, they place a high value on relationship satisfaction (Buss et al., 2001; Toro-Morn & Sprecher, 2003).

As the Social Issues: Health box on page 378 reveals, young people’s choice of an intimate partner and the quality of their relationship also are affected by memories of their early parent–child bond. Finally, for romance to lead to a lasting partnership, it must happen at the right time. If one or both do not feel ready to marry, the relationship is likely to dissolve.

The Components of Love. How do we know that we are in love? Robert Sternberg’s (1988, 2000, 2006) triangular theory of love identifies three components—intimacy, passion, and commitment—that shift in emphasis as romantic relationships develop. Intimacy, the emotional component, involves warm, tender communication, expressions of concern about the other’s well-being, and a desire for the partner to reciprocate. Passion, the desire for sexual activity and romance, is the physical-and psychological- arousal component. Commitment is the cognitive component, leading partners to decide that they are in love and to maintain that love.

At the beginning of a relationship, passionate love—intense sexual attraction—is strong. Gradually, passion declines in favor of intimacy and commitment, which form the basis for companionate love—warm, trusting affection and caregiving (Acker & Davis, 1992; Fehr, 1994). Each aspect of love, however, helps sustain the relationship. Early passionate love is a strong predictor of whether partners keep dating. But without the quiet intimacy, predictability, and shared attitudes and values of companionate love, most romances eventually break up (Hendrick & Hendrick, 2002).

Couples whose relationships endure generally report that they love each other more than they did earlier (Sprecher, 1999). In the transformation of romantic involvements from passionate to companionate, commitment may be the aspect of love that determines whether a relationship survives. Communicating that commitment in ways that strengthen intimacy—through warmth, attentiveness, empathy, caring, acceptance, and respect—strongly predicts relationship maintenance and satisfaction (Neff & Karney, 2008; Lavner & Bradbury, 2012). For example, Sharese’s doubts about getting married subsided largely because of Ernie’s warm expressions of commitment.

Partners who consistently express their commitment report higher-quality and longer-lasting relationships (Fitzpatrick &
Social Issues: Health

Childhood Attachment Patterns and Adult Romantic Relationships

In Bowlby’s ethological theory of attachment, the early attachment bond leads to construction of an internal working model, or set of expectations about attachment figures, that serves as a guide for close relationships throughout life. Adults’ evaluations of their early attachment experiences are related to their parenting behaviors—specifically, to the quality of attachments they build with their children (see pages 156–158 in Chapter 6). Additional evidence indicates that recollections of childhood attachment patterns predict romantic relationships in adulthood.

In studies carried out in Australia, Israel, and the United States, researchers asked people about their early parental bonds (attachment history), their attitudes toward intimate relationships (internal working model), and their actual experiences with romantic partners. In a few studies, investigators also observed couples’ behaviors. Consistent with Bowlby’s theory, adults’ memories and interpretations of childhood attachment patterns were good indicators of internal working models and relationship experiences. (To review patterns of attachment, see Chapter 6, page 154.)

Secure Attachment

Adults who described their attachment history as secure (warm, loving, and supportive parents) had internal working models that reflected this security. They viewed themselves as likable, were comfortable with intimacy, and rarely worried about abandonment. They characterized their most important love relationship in terms of trust, happiness, and friendship (Cassidy, 2001). Their behaviors toward their partner were empathic and supportive and their conflict resolution strategies constructive. They were also at ease in turning to their partner for comfort and assistance (Collins et al., 2006; Creasey & Jarvis, 2009; Roisman et al., 2002).

Avoidant Attachment

Adults who reported an avoidant attachment history (demanding, disrespectful, and critical parents) displayed internal working models that stressed independence, mistrust of love partners, and anxiety about people getting too close. They were convinced that others disliked them and that romantic love is hard to find and rarely lasts. Jealousy, emotional distance, lack of support in response to their partner’s distress, and little enjoyment of physical contact pervaded their most important love relationship (Collins et al., 2006). They endorsed many unrealistic beliefs about relationships—for example, that partners cannot change, that males’ and females’ needs differ, and that “mind reading” is expected (Stackert & Bursik, 2003).

Resistant Attachment

Adults recalling a resistant attachment history (parents who responded unpredictably and unfairly) presented internal working models in which they sought to merge completely with another person and fall in love quickly (Cassidy, 2001). At the same time, they worried that their intense feelings would overwhelm others, who really did not love them and would not want to stay with them. Their most important love relationship was riddled with jealousy, emotional highs and lows, and desperation about whether the partner would return their affection (Feeney, 1999). Resistant adults, though offering support, do so in ways that fit poorly with their partner’s needs (Collins et al., 2006).

Are adults’ descriptions of their childhood attachment experiences accurate? In several longitudinal studies, quality of parent–child interactions, observed or assessed through family interviews 5 to 23 years earlier, were good predictors of internal working models and romantic-relationship quality in early adulthood (Donnellan, Larsen-Rife, & Conger, 2005; Ogawa et al., 1997; Roisman et al., 2001). However, attributes of the current partner also influence internal working models and intimate ties. When generally insecure individuals manage to form a secure representation of their partner, they report stronger feelings of affection and concern and reduced relationship conflict and anxiety (Sibley & Overall, 2010; Sprecher & Fehr, 2011).

In sum, negative parent–child experiences can be carried forward into adult close relationships. At the same time, internal working models are continuously “updated.” When adults with a history of unhappy love lives have a chance to form a satisfying intimate tie, they may revise their internal working model.

Sollie, 1999; Madey & Rodgers, 2009). An important feature of their communication is constructive conflict resolution—directly expressing wishes and needs, listening patiently, asking for clarification, compromising, accepting responsibility, forgiving their partner, and avoiding the escalation of negative interaction sparked by criticism, contempt, defensiveness, and stonewalling (Johnson et al., 2005; Schneewind & Gerhard, 2002). In a longitudinal study, newlyweds’ negativity during
problem solving predicted marital dissatisfaction and divorce over the following decade (Sullivan et al., 2010). Those who displayed little warmth and caring often resorted to anger and contempt when dealing with problems. These findings reveal that deficits in intimacy foreshadow poor conflict-resolution skills and eventual weakening of the marital tie.

Compared with women, men are less skilled at communicating in ways that foster intimacy, offering less comfort and helpful support in their close relationships. Men also tend to be less effective at negotiating conflict, frequently avoiding discussion (Burleson & Kunkel, 2006; Wood, 2009).

Finally, for gay and lesbian couples, widespread social stigma complicates the process of forging a satisfying, committed bond. Those who worry most about being stigmatized, who try to conceal their romance, or who harbor negative attitudes toward their own sexual orientation report lower-quality and less enduring love relationships (Mohr & Daly, 2008; Mohr & Fassinger, 2006).

Culture and the Experience of Love. Passion and intimacy, which form the basis for romantic love, became the dominant basis for marriage in twentieth-century Western nations as the value of individualism strengthened. From this vantage point, mature love is based on autonomy, appreciation of the partner's unique qualities, and intense emotion (Hatfield, Rapson, & Martel, 2007). Trying to satisfy dependency needs through an intimate bond is regarded as immature.

This Western view contrasts sharply with the perspectives of Eastern cultures, such as China and Japan, where lifelong dependency is accepted and viewed positively and the self is defined through role relationships—son or daughter, brother or sister, husband or wife. Furthermore, in choosing a mate, Chinese and Japanese young people are expected to consider obligations to others, especially parents. College students of Asian heritage are less likely than those of American or European descent to endorse a view of love based solely on physical attraction and deep emotion (Hatfield, Rapson, & Martel, 2007; Hatfield & Sprecher, 1995). Instead, compared to Westerners, they place greater weight on companionship and practical matters—similarity of background, career promise, and likelihood of being a good parent.

Still, even in countries where arranged marriages are still fairly common (including China, India, and Japan), parents and prospective brides and grooms consult one another before moving forward (Goodwin & Pillay, 2006). If parents try to force their children into an unappealing marriage, sympathetic extended family members may come to children's defense. And in developing countries, women who attain higher education—and who therefore have acquired more of an autonomous identity—are more likely to insist on actively participating in an arranged marriage (Bhopal, 2011). In sum, today young people in many countries consider love to be a prerequisite for marriage, though Westerners assign greater importance to love—especially, its passionate component.

Friendship

Like romantic partners and childhood friends, adult friends are usually similar in age, sex, and SES. As in earlier years, friends in adulthood enhance self-esteem and psychological well-being through affirmation, acceptance, autonomy support (permitting disagreement and choice), and support in times of stress (Collins & Madsen, 2006; Deci et al., 2006). Friends also make life more interesting by expanding social opportunities and access to knowledge and points of view.

Trust, intimacy, and loyalty, along with shared interests and values and enjoyment of each other's company, continue to be important in adult friendships, as they were in adolescence (Blieszner & Roberto, 2012). Sharing thoughts and feelings is sometimes greater in friendship than in marriage, although commitment is less strong as friends come and go over the life course. Even so, some adult friendships continue for many years, at times throughout life. Female friends get together more than male friends do, which contributes to greater friendship continuity for women (Sherman, de Vries, & Lansford, 2000).

But because of the dramatic rise in social media use, today's friendships are no longer as constrained by physical proximity. Nearly three-fourths of 18- to 29-year-olds who access the Internet use social networking sites; Facebook reports more than 500 million active users worldwide. Consequently, networks of "friends" have expanded. Do social networking sites lead young adults to form a large number of acquaintances at the expense of intimate friendships? Research reveals that people with 500 or more Facebook friends actually interact individually—by "liking" posts, leaving comments on walls, or engaging in Facebook chats—with far fewer. Among these large-network Facebook users, men engaged in one-on-one communication with an average of just 10 friends, women with just 16 (Henig & Henig, 2012). Facebook led passive tracking of casual relationships to rise while core friendships remained limited.
Same-Sex Friendships. Extending a pattern evident in childhood and adolescence, women have more intimate same-sex friendships than men (see Chapter 12, pages 330–331). Barriers to intimacy between male friends include competitiveness, which may make men unwilling to disclose weaknesses, and concern that if they tell about themselves, their friends will not reciprocate (Reid & Fine, 1992). Because of greater intimacy and give-and-take, women generally evaluate their same-sex friendships more positively than men do. But they also have higher expectations of friends (Blieszner & Roberto, 2012). Thus, they are more disapproving if friends do not meet their expectations.

Of course, individual differences in friendship quality exist. The longer-lasting men's friendships are, the closer they become and the more they include disclosure of personal information (Sherman, de Vries, & Lansford, 2000). And gay and lesbian romantic relationships often develop out of close same-sex friendships, with lesbians, especially, forging compatible friendships before becoming involved romantically (Diamond, 2006).

As they develop romantic ties and marry, young adults—especially men—direct more of their disclosures toward their partners (Kito, 2005). Still, friendships continue to be vital contexts for personal sharing throughout adulthood. A best friendship can augment well-being when a marriage is not fully satisfying (but not when the marriage is low in quality) (Briditt & Antonucci, 2007). Turn back to Figure 12.1 on page 331 to view developmental trends in self-disclosure to romantic partners and friends.

Siblings as Friends. As young people marry and invest less time in developing a romantic partnership, siblings—especially sisters whose earlier bond was positive—become more frequent companions (Briditt & Antonucci, 2007). A childhood history of intense parental favoritism and sibling rivalry can disrupt sibling bonds in adulthood (Panish & Stricker, 2002). But when family experiences have been positive, relationships between adult siblings can be especially close and are important sources of psychological well-being (Sherman, Lansford, & Volling, 2006).

In families with five to ten siblings, common in industrialized nations in the past and still widespread in some cultures, close sibling bonds may replace friendships (Fuller-Iglesias, 2010). One 35-year-old with five siblings, who all—with their partners and children—resided in the same small city, remarked, “With a family like this, who needs friends?”

Other-Sex Friendships. From the college years through career exploration and settling into work roles, other-sex friendships increase. After marriage, they decline for men but continue to rise for women, who more often form them in the workplace. Highly educated, employed women have the largest number of other-sex friends. Through these relationships, young adults often gain in companionship and self-esteem and learn about masculine and feminine styles of intimacy (Bleske & Buss, 2000). Because men confide especially easily in their female friends, such friendships offer them a unique opportunity to broaden their expressive capacity. And women sometimes say male friends offer objective points of view on problems and situations—perspectives not available from female friends (Monsour, 2002).

Many people try to keep other-sex friendships platonic to safeguard their integrity (Messman, Canary, & Hause, 2000). But sometimes the relationship changes into a romantic bond. When a solid other-sex friendship does evolve into a romance, it may be more stable and enduring than a romantic relationship formed without a foundation in friendship. And emerging adults, especially, are flexible about people they include in their friendship networks (Barry & Madsen, 2010). After a breakup, they may even keep a former romantic partner on as a friend.

REVIEW Describe gender differences in traits usually desired in a long-term partner. What findings indicate that both biological and social forces contribute to those differences?

APPLY After dating for two years, Mindy and Graham reported greater love and relationship satisfaction than during their first few months of dating. What features of communication probably deepened their bond, and why is it likely to endure?

REFLECT Do you have a nonromantic, close other-sex friendship? If so, how has it enhanced your emotional and social development?
The Family Life Cycle

For most young people, the life course takes shape within the family life cycle—a series of phases characterizing the development of most families around the world. In early adulthood, people typically live on their own, marry, and bear and rear children. In middle age, as their children leave home, their parenting responsibilities diminish. Late adulthood brings retirement, growing old, and (more often for women) death of one's spouse (McGoldrick & Shibusawa, 2012). Stress tends to be greatest during transitions between phases, as family members redefine and reorganize their relationships.

But today, wide variations exist in the sequence and timing of family life cycle phases—high rates of out-of-wedlock births, delayed marriage and childbearing, divorce, and remarriage, among others. And some people, voluntarily or involuntarily, do not experience all phases. Still, the family life-cycle model offers an organized way of thinking about how the family system changes over time and the impact of each phase on the family unit and its members.

Leaving Home

Departure from the parental home is a major step toward assuming adult responsibilities. The average age of leaving has risen since the 1960s; today, it resembles the departure age at the beginning of the twentieth century. But reasons for coresidence have changed: Early twentieth-century young adults resided with parents so they could contribute to the family economy. Twenty-first-century young adults living at home are typically financially dependent on their parents. This trend toward later home-leaving is evident in most industrialized nations, though substantial variation in timing exists. Because government support is available, young adults in the Scandinavian countries move out relatively early (Furstenberg, 2010). In contrast, cultural traditions in Mediterranean countries promote lengthy coresidence, extending for men into the mid-thirties.

Departures for education tend to occur at earlier ages, those for full-time work and marriage later. Because the majority of U.S. young adults enroll in higher education, many leave home around age 18. Those from divorced, single-parent homes tend to be early leavers, perhaps because of family stress (Cooney & Mortimer, 1999). Compared with the previous generation, fewer North American and Western European young people leave home to marry; more do so just to be "independent"—to express their adult status.

Slightly over half of U.S. 18- to 25-year-olds return to their parents' home for brief periods after first leaving (U.S. Census Bureau, 2013). Usually, role transitions, such as the end of college or military service, bring young people back. But tight job markets, high housing costs, or failures in work or love can also prompt a temporary return home.

The extent to which young people live on their own before marriage varies with SES and ethnicity. Those who are economically well-off are more likely to establish their own residence. Among African-American, Hispanic, and Native-American groups, poverty and a cultural tradition of extended-family living lead to lower rates of leaving home, even among young people in college or working (De Marco & Berzin, 2008; Fussell & Furstenberg, 2005). Unmarried Asian young adults also tend to live with their parents. But the longer Asian families have lived in the United States, where they are exposed to individualistic values, the more likely young people are to move out before marriage (Lou, Lalonde, & Giguère, 2012).

Parents of young adults living at home are usually highly committed to helping their children move into adult roles. Many provide wide-ranging assistance—not just financial support, but material resources, advice, companionship, and emotional support as well (Fingerman et al., 2009, 2012b). Still, in homes where parents and young adults live together, conflict over personal and moral values related to the young person's future tends to rise (Rodríguez & López, 2011). But when young adults feel securely attached to parents and well-prepared for independence, departure from the home is linked to more satisfying parent–child interaction and successful transition to adult roles, even among ethnic minorities that strongly emphasize family loyalty and obligations (Smetana, Metzger, & Campione-Barr, 2004; Whiteman, McHale, & Crouter, 2010). And regardless of living arrangements, young people doing well typically have close, enjoyable relationships with their parents, who offer help because they see it as key to their child's future success (Fingerman et al., 2012c).

In contrast, leaving home very early because of a lack of parental financial and emotional support is associated with less successful educational, marriage, and work lives. U.S. poverty-stricken young people are more likely than their nonpoor counterparts to leave home by age 18 (Berzin & De Marco, 2010). But if still at home beyond that age, they often remain...
Joining of Families in Marriage

The average age of first marriage in the United States has risen from about 20 for women and 23 for men in 1960 to 26½ for women and 29 for men today. Consequently, just 20 percent of contemporary U.S. 18- to 29-year-olds are married, compared to 60 percent a half-century ago (U.S. Census Bureau, 2012b). Postponement of marriage is even more marked in Western Europe—to the early thirties for men and the late twenties for women.

The number of first and second marriages has declined over the last few decades as more people stay single, cohabit, or do not remarry after divorce. In 1960, 85 percent of Americans had been married at least once; today, the figure is 70 percent. At present, 51 percent of U.S. adults, only a slight majority, live together as married couples (U.S. Census Bureau, 2012b). In one recent survey, 4 out of 10 American adults agreed that “marriage is becoming obsolete.” Nevertheless, marriage remains a central life goal for young people (Pew Forum on Religion and Public Life, 2010; Smith & Snell, 2009). Irrespective of SES and ethnicity, most U.S. 18- to 23-year-olds say they want to marry and have children.

Same-sex marriages are recognized nationwide in Argentina, Belgium, Brazil, Canada, Denmark, France, Iceland, the Netherlands, New Zealand, Norway, Portugal, South Africa, Spain, and Sweden. In the United States, 12 states—Connecticut, Delaware, Iowa, Maine, Maryland, Massachusetts, Minnesota, New Hampshire, New York, Rhode Island, Vermont, and Washington—as well as the District of Columbia—have legalized same-sex marriage. Several other states either grant people in same-sex unions the same legal status as married couples or extend nearly all spousal rights to same-sex partnerships. Because legalization is so recent, research on same-sex couples in the context of marriage is scant. But evidence on cohabiting same-sex couples suggests that the same factors that contribute to happiness in other-sex marriages do so in same-sex unions (Diamond, 2006).

Marriage is more than the joining of two individuals. It also requires that two systems—the spouses’ families—adapt and overlap to create a new subsystem. Consequently, marriage presents complex challenges.

Marital Roles. Their honeymoon over, Sharese and Ernie turned to a multitude of issues they had previously decided individually or their families of origin had prescribed—from everyday matters (when and how to eat, sleep, talk, work, relax, have sex, and spend money) to family traditions and rituals (which to retain, which to work out for themselves). And as they related to their social world as a couple, they modified relationships with parents, siblings, extended family, friends, and co-workers.

Contemporary alterations in the context of marriage, including changing gender roles and living farther from family members, mean that couples must work harder than in the past to define their relationships. Although partners are usually similar in religious and ethnic background, “mixed” marriages are increasingly common today. Among new marriages in the United States, 15 percent are between partners of a different race or ethnicity, more than double the rate in 1980 (Taylor et al., 2012). Because of increased opportunities for interracial contact in colleges, workplaces, and neighborhoods and more positive attitudes toward intermarriage, highly educated young adults are more likely than their less educated counterparts to marry partners of another race or ethnicity (Qian & Lichter, 2011). Nevertheless, couples whose backgrounds differ face extra challenges in transitioning to married life.

Age of marriage is the most consistent predictor of marital stability. Young people who marry in their teens to mid-twenties are more likely to divorce than those who marry later (Lehrer & Chen, 2011). Both early marriage followed by childbirth and childbirth before marriage are more common among low-SES adults (U.S. Census Bureau, 2012b). This acceleration of family formation complicates adjustment to life as a couple.

Despite progress in the area of women’s rights, traditional marriages, involving a clear division of roles—husband as head of household responsible for family economic well-being, wife as caregiver and homemaker—still exist in Western nations. In recent decades, however, these marriages have changed, with many women who focused on motherhood while their children were young returning to the workforce later.

In egalitarian marriages, partners relate as equals, sharing power and authority. Both try to balance the time and energy they devote to their occupations, their children, and their relationship. Most well-educated, career-oriented women expect this form of marriage. And college-student couples who eventually intend to marry often plan in advance how they will coor-
ordinate work and family roles, especially if the woman intends to enter a male-dominated career (Peake & Harris, 2002).

In Western nations, men in dual-earner marriages participate much more in child care than in the past. U.S. fathers in such marriages put in 85 percent as much time as mothers do. But housework—cleaning, cooking, laundry, and picking up clutter—reveals a different story. Recent surveys indicate that women in the United States and most Western European nations spend nearly twice as much time as men on housework, and women in Australia spend four times as much (Sayer, 2010). In Sweden, which places a high value on gender equality, men do more than in other nations. In contrast, men typically do little housework or child care in Japan, where corporate jobs demand long work hours and traditional marriages are common (Geist, 2010; Shwalb et al., 2004).

Women's housework hours do decline as their employment hours increase. But a close look at gender differences in most industrialized countries reveals that men fail to compensate (Cooke, 2010; Lippe, 2010). As Figure 14.2 shows for Australia, the United Kingdom, and the United States, men spend the same amount of time at housework, irrespective of their partners' employment schedules. Therefore, employed women's reduced housework hours are made possible by either purchase of time-saving services (cleaning help, prepackaged meals) or greater tolerance for unkempt homes, or both (Lachance-Grzela & Bouchard, 2010). In sum, true equality in marriage is still rare, and couples who strive for it usually attain a form of marriage in between traditional and egalitarian.

**Marital Satisfaction.** Despite its rocky beginnings, Sharese and Ernie's marriage grew to be especially happy. In contrast, Christy and Gary became increasingly discontented. Differences between these two couples mirror the findings of a large body of research on personal and contextual factors, summarized in Table 14.1.

![FIGURE 14.2 Women's and men's housework hours by women's employment for couples in Australia, the United Kingdom, and the United States.](image)

Christy and Gary had children early and struggled financially. Gary's negative, critical personality led him to get along poorly with Christy's parents and to feel threatened when he and Christy disagreed. Christy tried to offer Gary encouragement.
and support, but her own needs for nurturance and individuality were not being met. Gary was uncomfortable with Christy's career aspirations. As she came closer to attaining them, the couple grew further apart. In contrast, Sharese and Ernie married later, after their educations were complete. They postponed having children until their careers were under way and they had built a sense of togetherness that allowed each to thrive as an individual. Patience, caring, common values and interests, humor, affection, sharing of personal experiences through conversation, cooperating in household responsibilities, and good conflict-resolution skills contributed to their compatibility.

Although quality of the marital relationship predicts mental health similarly for both genders, men tend to report feeling slightly happier with their marriages than women do (Howard, Galambos, & Krahn, 2010; Kurdek, 2005). Women feel particularly dissatisfied when the demands of husband, children, housework, and career are overwhelming (Forry, Leslie, & Letiecq, 2007; Saginak & Saginak, 2005). Equal power in the relationship and sharing of family responsibilities usually enhance both partners' satisfaction, largely by strengthening marital harmony (Amato & Booth, 1995; Xu & Lai, 2004).

Of course, from time to time, individuals are bound to say or do something upsetting to their partner. When this happens, the partner's attributions, or explanations for the behavior, make a difference. For example, a wife who interprets her husband's critical remark about her weight as unintentional ("He just isn't aware I'm sensitive about that") is far more likely to express both current and long-term marital satisfaction than a wife who views such comments as malicious ("He's trying to hurt my feelings") (Barelds & Dijkstra, 2011; Fincham & Bradbury, 2004). In fact, partners who hold overly positive (but still realistic) biases concerning each other's attributes are happier with their relationships (Claxton et al., 2011). As they turn to each other for feedback about themselves, these 'positive illusions' enhance self-esteem and psychological well-being.

In contrast, people who feel devalued by their partner tend to react with anxiety and insecurity—more so when they are low in self-esteem, which heightens fear of rejection. To protect themselves, they often mete out criticism and contempt in kind,
At a societal level, cultural norms that endorse male dominance and female submissiveness promote partner abuse (Kaya & Cook, 2010). As Figure 14.3 shows, in economically distressed countries that also sanction gender inequality, partner violence against women is especially high, affecting nearly half or more of the female population. Victims are chronically anxious and depressed and experience frequent panic attacks (Warshaw, Brasheer, & Gil, 2009). Yet a variety of situational factors discourage them from leaving these destructive relationships. A victimized wife may depend on her husband’s earning power or fear even worse harm to herself or her children. Extreme assaults, including homicide, tend to occur after partner separation (Campbell & Glass, 2009). And victims of both sexes, but especially men, are deterred by the embarrassment of going to the police.

**Intervention and Treatment**

Community services available to battered women include crisis telephone lines that provide anonymous counseling and social support and shelters that offer safety and treatment (see page 356). Because many women return to their abusive partners several times before making their final move, community agencies usually offer therapy to male batterers (Whitaker, Baker, & Arias, 2007). Most rely on several months to a year of group sessions that confront rigid gender stereotyping; teach communication, problem solving, and anger control; and use social support to motivate behavior change.

Although existing treatments are better than none, most are not effective at dealing with relationship difficulties or alcohol abuse. Consequently, many treated perpetrators repeat their violent behavior with the same or a new partner (Hamberger et al., 2009). At present, few interventions acknowledge that men also are victims. Yet ignoring their needs perpetuates domestic violence. When victims do not want to separate from a violent partner, a whole-family treatment approach that focuses on changing partner interaction and reducing high life stress is crucial.

**Parenthood**

In the past, the issue of whether to have children was, for many adults, a biological given or a compelling social expectation. Today, in Western industrialized nations, it is a matter of true individual choice. Effective birth control techniques enable adults to avoid having children in most instances. And changing cultural values allow people to remain childless with far less fear of social criticism.

In 1950, 78 percent of American married couples were parents. Today, 70 percent bear children, and they tend to be older when they have their first child. Consistent with this pattern of delayed childbearing and with the decision of most women to divide their energies between family and work, family size in industrialized nations has declined. In 1950, the average number of children per woman was 3.1. Currently, it is 2.1 in the United States, 1.9 in the United Kingdom, 1.7 in Sweden, 1.6 in Canada, 1.4 in Germany, and 1.3 in Italy and Japan (U.S. Census Bureau, 2012a, 2013). Nevertheless, the vast majority of married people continue to embrace parenthood as one of life’s most meaningful experiences.
The Decision to Have Children. The choice of parenthood is affected by a complex array of factors, including financial circumstances, personal and religious values, and health conditions. Women with traditional gender identities usually decide to have children. Whether a woman is employed has less impact on childbearing than her occupation. Women in high-status, demanding careers less often choose parenthood and, when they do, more often delay it than women with less consuming jobs. Parenthood typically reduces work hours and slows career progress among career-oriented women (Abele & Spurk, 2011). In contrast, it generally has no impact on men.

When Americans are asked about their desire to have children, they mention a variety of advantages and disadvantages. Some ethnic and regional differences exist, but in all groups, the most important reasons for having children include the warm, affectionate relationship and the stimulation and fun that children provide. Also frequently mentioned are growth and learning experiences that children bring to the lives of adults, the desire to have someone carry on after one's own death, and feelings of accomplishment and creativity that come from helping children grow (Cowan & Cowan, 2000; O’Laughlin & Anderson, 2001).

Among disadvantages of parenthood, Americans cite loss of freedom most often, followed by concerns about role overload (not enough time for both family and work responsibilities) and about the financial strains. According to a conservative estimate, today's new parents in the United States will spend about $280,000 to rear a child from birth to age 18, and many will incur substantial additional expense for higher education and financial dependency during emerging adulthood (U.S. Department of Agriculture, 2012).

Transition to Parenthood. The early weeks after a baby enters the family are full of profound changes: constant caregiving, added financial responsibilities, and less time for the couple’s relationship. In response, gender roles of husband and wife usually become more traditional—even for couples like Sharese and Ernie who are strongly committed to gender equality (Katz-Wise, Priess, & Hyde, 2010; Lawrence et al., 2010).

For most new parents, however, the arrival of a baby—though often associated with mild declines in relationship satisfaction and communication quality—does not cause significant marital strain. Marriages that are gratifying and supportive tend to remain so (Doss et al., 2009; Feeney et al., 2001). But troubled marriages usually become even more distressed after childbirth (Houts et al., 2008; Kluwer & Johnson, 2007). And when expectant mothers anticipate lack of partner support in parenting, their prediction generally becomes reality, yielding an especially difficult postbirth adjustment (Driver et al., 2012; McHale & Rotman, 2007).

Violated expectations about division of labor in the home powerfully affect new parents’ well-being. In dual-earner marriages, the larger the difference in men’s and women’s caregiving responsibilities, the greater the decline in marital satisfaction after childbirth, especially for women—with negative consequences for parent–infant interaction. In contrast, sharing caregiving predicts greater parental happiness and sensitivity to the baby (McHale et al., 2004; Moller, Hwang, & Wickberg, 2008).

Postponing childbearing until the late twenties or thirties, as more couples do today, eases the transition to parenthood. Waiting permits couples to pursue occupational goals, gain life experience, and strengthen their relationship. Under these circumstances, men are more enthusiastic about becoming fathers and therefore more willing to participate. And women whose careers are well under way and whose marriages are happy are more likely to encourage their husbands to share housework and child care, which fosters fathers’ involvement (Lee & Doherty, 2007; Schoppe-Sullivan et al., 2008).

A second birth typically requires that fathers take an even more active role in parenting—by caring for the firstborn while the mother is recuperating and by sharing in the high demands of tending to both a baby and a young child. Consequently, well-functioning families with a newborn second child typically pull back from the traditional division of responsibilities that occurred after the first birth. Fathers’ willingness to place greater emphasis on the parenting role is strongly linked to mothers’ adjustment after the arrival of a second baby (Stewart, 1990).

Generous, paid employment leave—widely available in industrialized nations but not in the United States—is crucial for parents of newborns (see Chapter 3, page 81). But financial pressures mean that many new mothers who are eligible for unpaid work leave take far less than they are guaranteed by U.S. federal law, while new fathers take little or none. When favorable workplace policies exist and parents take advantage of them, couples are more likely to support each other and experience family life as gratifying (Feldman, Sussman, & Zigler, 2004). As a result, the stress caused by the birth of a baby stays at manageable levels.
Families with Young Children. In today’s complex world, men and women are less certain about how to rear children than in previous generations. Clarifying child-rearing values and implementing them in warm, involved, and appropriately demanding ways are crucial for the welfare of the next generation and society. Yet cultures do not always place a high priority on parenting, as indicated by lack of many societal supports for children and families (see Chapter 2, pages 50–51). Furthermore, changing family forms mean that the lives of today’s parents differ substantially from those of past generations.

In previous chapters, we discussed a wide variety of influences on child-rearing styles, including personal characteristics of children and parents, SES, and ethnicity. The couple’s relationship is also vital. Parents who engage in effective coparenting, collaborating and showing solidarity and respect for each other in parenting roles, are more likely to gain in warm marital interaction, feel competent as parents, use effective child-rearing practices, and have children who are developing well (McHale et al., 2002a; Schoppe-Sullivan et al., 2004).

For employed parents, a major struggle is finding good child care and, when their child is ill or otherwise in need of emergency care, taking time off from work or making other urgent arrangements. The younger the child, the greater parents’ sense of risk and difficulty—especially low-income parents, who must work longer hours to pay bills; who often, in the United States, have no workplace benefits (health insurance or paid sick leave); who typically cannot afford the cost of childcare; and who experience more immediate concerns about their children’s safety (Halpern, 2005b; Nomaguchi & Brown, 2011). When competent, convenient child care is not available, the woman usually faces added pressures. She must either curtail or give up her work, with profound financial consequences in low-income families, or endure unhappy children, missed workdays, and constant searches for new arrangements.

Despite its challenges, rearing young children is a powerful source of adult development. Parents report that it expands their emotional capacities, enriches their lives, and enhances psychological well-being (Nomaguchi & Milkie, 2003; Schindler, 2010). For example, involved parents say that parenthood helped them tune in to others’ feelings and needs, required that they become more tolerant, self-confident, and responsible, and broadened their extended family, friendship, and community ties. In a survey of a large, nationally representative sample of U.S. fathers, engagement with children predicted greater community service and assistance of extended family members in middle adulthood (Eggebeen, Dew, & Knoester, 2010).

Families with Adolescents. Adolescence brings sharp changes in parental roles. In Chapters 11 and 12, we noted that parents must establish a revised relationship with their adolescent children—blending guidance with freedom and gradually loosening control. As adolescents gain in autonomy and explore values and goals in their search for identity, parents often complain that their teenager is too focused on peers and no longer cares about being with the family. Heightened parent–child bickering over everyday issues takes a toll, especially on mothers, who do most of the negotiating with teenagers.

Overall, children seem to navigate the challenges of adolescence more easily than parents, many of whom report a dip in marital and life satisfaction. More people seek family therapy during this period of the family life cycle than during any other (Steinberg & Silk, 2002).

Parent Education. In the past, family life changed little from one generation to the next, and adults learned what they needed to know about parenting through modeling and direct experience. Today’s world confronts adults with a host of factors that impinge on their ability to succeed as parents.

Contemporary parents eagerly seek information on child rearing. In addition to popular parenting books, magazines, and websites, new mothers access knowledge about parenting through social media, including chat rooms and blogs. They also reach out to networks of other women for knowledge and assistance. Fathers, by contrast, rarely have social networks through which they can learn about child care and child rearing. Consequently, they frequently turn to mothers to figure out how to relate to their child, especially if they have a close, confiding marriage (Lamb & Lewis, 2004; McHale, Kuersten-Hogan, & Rao, 2004). Recall from Chapter 6 that marital harmony fosters both parents’ positive engagement with babies, but it is especially important for fathers.

Parent education courses exist to help parents clarify child-rearing values, improve family communication, understand how children develop, and apply more effective parenting strategies. A variety of programs yield positive outcomes, including enhanced knowledge of effective parenting practices, improved parent–child interaction, and heightened awareness by parents of their role as educators of their children (Bert, Ferris, & Borkowski, 2008; Smith, Perou, & Lesesne, 2002). Another benefit is social support—opportunities to discuss concerns with experts and other dedicated parents.

Men are less likely than women to learn about child rearing through informal social networks. Fathers especially may benefit from parent education programs that help them clarify child-rearing values, learn about child development, and parent effectively.
The current array of adult lifestyles dates back to the 1960s, when young people began to question the conventional wisdom of previous generations and to ask, “What kinds of commitments should I make to live a full and rewarding life?” As the public became more accepting of diverse lifestyles, choices such as staying single, cohabiting, remaining childless, and divorcing seemed more available.

Today, nontraditional family options have penetrated the American mainstream. As we will see, some adults make a deliberate decision to adopt a lifestyle, whereas others drift into it. The lifestyle may be imposed by society, as is the case for cohabiting same-sex couples in the United States, who cannot marry legally in most states. Or people may choose a certain lifestyle because they feel pushed away from another, such as a marriage gone sour. In sum, the adoption of a lifestyle can be within or beyond the person’s control.

**Singlehood**—not living with an intimate partner—has increased in recent years, especially among young adults. For example, the rate of never-married Americans in their twenties has nearly tripled since 1960, to 75 percent of young people. As they move into their thirties, more people marry: By 30 to 34 years of age, about 32 percent remain single. More people marry later or not at all, and divorce has added to the numbers of single adults—slightly more than half when adults of all ages are considered. In view of these trends, it is likely that most Americans will spend a substantial part of their adult lives single, and a growing minority—about 8 to 10 percent—will stay that way (Pew Research Center, 2010a; U.S. Census Bureau, 2013).

Because they marry later, more young-adult men than women are single. But women are far more likely than men to remain single for many years or their entire life. With age, fewer men are available with characteristics that most women seek in a mate—the same age or older, equally or better educated, and professionally successful. In contrast, men can choose partners from a large pool of younger unmarried women. Because of the tendency for women to “marry up” and men to “marry down,” men with a high school diploma or less and highly educated women in prestigious careers are overrepresented among singles after age 30.

Ethnic differences also exist. For example, the percentage of never-married African Americans is nearly twice as great as that of Caucasian Americans in early adulthood (U.S. Census Bureau, 2013). As we will see later, high unemployment among black men interferes with marriage. Many African Americans eventually marry in their late thirties and forties, a period in which black and white marriage rates come closer together.

The most commonly mentioned advantages of singlehood are freedom and mobility. But singles also recognize drawbacks—loneliness, the dating grind, limited sexual and social life, reduced sense of security, and feelings of exclusion from the...
world of married couples. Single men have more physical and mental health problems than single women, who more easily come to terms with their lifestyle, in part because of the greater social support available to women through intimate same-sex friendships (Pinquart, 2003). But overall, people over age 35 who have always been single are content with their lives (DePaulo & Morris, 2005; Lucas et al., 2003). Though not quite as happy as married people, they report feeling considerably happier than people recently widowed or divorced.

Nevertheless, many single people go through a stressful period in their late twenties or early thirties, when most of their friends have married. Widespread veneration of marriage, along with negative stereotyping of singles as socially immature and self-centered, contributes (Morris et al., 2008). The mid-thirties is another trying time for women, as the biological deadline for pregnancy approaches (Sharp & Ganong, 2011). A few decide to become parents through artificial insemination or a love affair. And an increasing number are adopting, often from overseas countries.

Cohabitation

Cohabitation refers to the lifestyle of unmarried couples who have a sexually intimate relationship and who share a residence. Until the 1960s, cohabitation in Western nations was largely limited to low-SES adults. Since then, it has increased in all groups, with an especially dramatic rise among well-educated, economically advantaged young people. Today’s young adults are much more likely than those of a generation ago to form their first conjugal union through cohabitation. Among American young people, cohabitation is now the preferred mode of entry into a committed intimate partnership, chosen by over 60 percent of couples (U.S. Census Bureau, 2013). Cohabitation rates are even higher among adults with failed marriages.

Although Americans are more open to cohabitation than in the past, their attitudes are not as positive as those of Western Europeans. In the Netherlands, Norway, and Sweden, cohabitation is thoroughly integrated into society, with cohabiters having many of the same legal rights and responsibilities as married couples. Consequently, they are nearly as committed to each other as married people (Fussell & Gauthier, 2005; Perelli-Harris & Gassen, 2012). Compared with those in Western Europe, U.S. cohabiting unions are far more likely to dissolve within two years. Furthermore, U.S. couples who cohabit before they are engaged to be married are more prone to divorce than couples who wait to live together until after they have made a commitment to each other. But this association is less strong or absent in Western European nations (Jose, O’Leary, & Moyer, 2010; Rhoades, Stanley, & Markman, 2006). U.S. young people who cohabit prior to engagement tend to have less conventional values. They have had more sexual partners and are more politically liberal, less religious, and more androgynous. In addition, a larger number have parents who divorced (Kurdek, 2006).

These personal characteristics may contribute to the negative outcomes associated with U.S. cohabitation. But the cohabitation experience itself also plays a role. U.S. cohabiters have poorer-quality relationships (Kline et al., 2004). Perhaps the open-ended nature of the cohabiting relationship reduces motivation to develop effective conflict-resolution skills. When cohabiters carry negative communication into marriage, it undermines marital satisfaction.

Certain couples, however, are exceptions to the trends just described. People who cohabit after separation or divorce often test a new relationship carefully to prevent another failure, especially when children are involved. As a result, they cohabit longer and are less likely to move toward marriage. Similarly, cohabitation is often an alternative to marriage among low-SES couples (Pew Research Center, 2010a). Many regard their earning power as too uncertain for marriage and continue living together, sometimes giving birth to children and marrying when their financial status improves.

Finally, U.S. cohabiting gay and lesbian couples report strong relationship commitment (Kurdek, 2006). When their relationships become difficult, they end more often than those of heterosexual cohabiters and married couples because of fewer barriers to separating. For example, in 38 U.S. states, same-sex cohabiters cannot legalize their relationship because of laws or constitutional provisions that limit marriage to a man and a woman. Furthermore, same-sex cohabiters are less likely to have children in common and more likely to have extended family members who are unsupportive (Lau, 2012; Rothblum, Balsam, & Solomon, 2011). In a study in which same-sex couples in Vermont were followed over three years, cohabiters were more likely than couples in civil unions to have ended their relationships (Balsam et al., 2008). Civil unions were as stable as heterosexual marriages.
Childlessness

At work, Sharese got to know Beatrice and Daniel. Married for seven years and in their mid-thirties, they did not have children and were not planning any. To Sharese, their relationship seemed especially caring and affectionate. “At first, we were open to becoming parents,” Beatrice explained, “but eventually we decided to focus on our marriage.”

Childlessness in the United States has increased steadily, from 9 percent of women between ages 20 and 44 in 1975 to about 20 percent today, with similar trends occurring in other Western nations (Livingston & Cohn, 2010). Some people are involuntarily childless because they did not find a partner with whom to share parenthood or their efforts at fertility treatments did not succeed. Beatrice and Daniel are in another category—men and women who are voluntarily childless. But voluntary childlessness is not always a permanent condition. A few people decide early that they do not want to be parents and stick to their plans. But most, like Beatrice and Daniel, make their decision after they are married and have developed a lifestyle they do not want to give up. Later, some change their minds.

Besides marital satisfaction and freedom from child-care responsibilities, common reasons for not having children include the woman’s career and economic security (Amba & Martinez, 2006; Kemkes-Grottenhaler, 2003). Consistent with these motives, the voluntarily childless are usually college-educated, have prestigious occupations, and are highly committed to their work.

Voluntarily childless adults are just as content with their lives as parents who have warm relationships with their children. But adults who cannot overcome infertility are likely to be dissatisfied—some profoundly disappointed, others more ambivalent, depending on compensations in other areas of their lives (Letherby, 2002; Nichols & Pace-Nichols, 2000). Childlessness seems to interfere with adjustment and life satisfaction only when it is beyond a person’s control.

Divorce and Remarriage

Divorce rates have stabilized since the mid-1980s, partly because of rising age of marriage, which is linked to greater financial stability and marital satisfaction. In addition, the increase in cohabitation has curtailed divorce: Many relationships that once would have been marriages now break up before marriage. Still, 45 percent of U.S. marriages dissolve (U.S. Census Bureau, 2013). Because most divorces occur within seven years of marriage, many involve young children. Divorces are also common during the transition to midlife, when people have adolescent children—a period (as noted earlier) of reduced marital satisfaction.

Factors Related to Divorce. Why do so many marriages fail? As Christy and Gary’s divorce illustrates, the most obvious reason is a disrupted husband–wife relationship. Christy and Gary did not argue more than Sharese and Ernie. But their problem-solving style was ineffective. When Christy raised concerns, Gary reacted with contempt, resentment, defensiveness, and retreat. This demand–withdraw pattern is found in many partners who split up, with women more often insisting on change and men more often retreating (Birditt et al., 2010; Haltzman, Holstein, & Moss, 2007). Another typical style involves little conflict, but partners increasingly lead separate lives because they have different expectations of family life and few shared interests, activities, or friends (Gottman & Levenson, 2000).

What problems underlie these maladaptive communication patterns? In a nine-year longitudinal study, researchers asked a U.S. national sample of 2,000 married people about marital problems and followed up three, six, and nine years later to find out who had separated or divorced (Amato & Rogers, 1997). Wives reported more problems than husbands, with the gender difference largely involving the wife’s emotions, such as anger and hurt feelings. Husbands seemed to have difficulty sensing their wife’s distress, which contributed to her view of the marriage as unhappy. Regardless of which spouse reported the problem or was judged responsible for it, the strongest predictors of divorce during the following decade were infidelity, spending money foolishly, drinking or using drugs, expressing jealousy, engaging in irritating habits, and moodiness.

Background factors that increase the chances of divorce are younger age at marriage, not attending religious services, being previously divorced, and having parents who had divorced. Low religious involvement subtracts an influential context for instilling positive marital attitudes and behaviors. And research following families over two decades reveals that parental divorce elevates risk of divorce in at least two succeeding generations, in part because it promotes child adjustment problems and reduces commitment to the norm of lifelong marriage (Amato & Cheadle, 2005; Wolfinger, 2005).
Consequences of Divorce. Divorce involves the loss of a way of life and therefore a part of the self sustained by that way of life. As a result, it provides opportunities for both positive and negative change. Immediately after separation, both men and women experience disrupted social networks, a decline in social support, and increased anxiety, depression, and impulsivity (Amato, 2000). For most, these reactions subside within two years. Nonworking women who organized their identities around their husbands have an especially hard time (Coleman, Ganong, & Leon, 2006). And some noncustodial fathers feel disoriented and rootless as a result of decreased contact with their children.

Finding a new partner contributes most to the life satisfaction of divorced adults (Forste & Heaton, 2004; Wang & Amato, 2000). But it is more crucial for men, who adjust less well than women to living on their own. Despite loneliness and a drop in income (see Chapter 10), women tend to bounce back more easily from divorce. However, a few women—especially those who are anxious and fearful, who remain strongly attached to their ex-spouses, or who lack education and job skills—experience a drop in self-esteem and persistent depression (Amato, 2000). For most, these reactions subside within two years. Nonworking women who organized their identities around their husbands have an especially hard time (Coleman, Ganong, & Leon, 2006). And some noncustodial fathers feel disoriented and rootless as a result of decreased contact with their children.

Remarriage. On average, people remarry within four years of divorce, men somewhat faster than women. Remarriages are especially vulnerable to breakup for several reasons. First, practical matters—financial security, help in rearing children, relief from loneliness, and social acceptance—figure more heavily into a second marriage. Second, some people transfer the negative patterns of interaction learned in their first marriage to the second. Third, people with a failed marriage behind them are more likely to view divorce as an acceptable solution when marital difficulties resurface. Finally, remarried couples experience more stress from stepfamily situations (Coleman, Ganong, & Leon, 2006). As we will see, stepparent-stepchild ties are powerful predictors of marital happiness.

Blended families generally take three to five years to develop the connectedness and comfort of intact biological families. Family life education, couples counseling, and group therapy can help divorced and remarried adults adapt to the complexities of their new circumstances.

Varied Styles of Parenthood

Diverse family forms result in varied styles of parenthood. Each type of family—blended, never-married, gay or lesbian, among others—presents unique challenges to parenting competence and adult psychological well-being.

Stepparents. Whether stepchildren live in the household or visit only occasionally, stepparents are in a difficult position. Stepparents enter the family as outsiders and, too often, move into their new parental role too quickly. Lacking a warm attachment bond to build on, their discipline is usually ineffective (Ganong & Coleman, 2004). Compared with first-marriage parents, remarried parents typically report higher levels of tension and disagreement, most centering on child-rearing issues. When both adults have children from prior marriages, rather than only one, more opportunities for conflict exist.

Stepparents are especially likely to experience conflict. Those who have not previously been married and had children may have an idealized image of family life, which is quickly shattered. Expected to be in charge of family relationships, stepmothers quickly find that stepparent-stepchild ties do not develop instantly. After divorce, biological mothers are frequently jealous, uncooperative, and possessive of their children. Even when their husbands do not have custody, stepmothers feel stressed (Church, 2004; MacDonald & DeMaris, 1996). As stepchildren go in and out of the home, stepmothers find life easier without resistant children and then may feel guilty about their “unmaternal” feelings.

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many couples built a coparenting partnership that improved interactions with stepchildren (Ganong, Coleman, & Jamison, 2011). But because stepparent–stepchild bonds are hard to establish, the divorce rate is higher for remarried couples with stepchildren than for those without them.

**Never-Married Single Parents.** Today, about 40 percent of U.S. births are to single mothers, more than double the percentage in 1980. Whereas teenage parenthood has declined (see page 300 in Chapter 11), unwed parenthood among mothers in their twenties and older has risen. About 11 percent of U.S. children live with a single mother who has never married (U.S. Census Bureau, 2013).

In the United States, African-American young women make up the largest group of never-married parents. About 64 percent of births to black mothers in their twenties are to women without a partner, compared with 28 percent of births to white women (U.S. Census Bureau, 2013). African-American women postpone marriage more and childbirth less than women in other U.S. ethnic groups. Job loss, persisting unemployment, and consequent inability of many black men to support a family have contributed to the number of African-American never-married, single-mother families.

Never-married African-American mothers tap the extended family, especially their own mothers and sometimes male relatives, for help in rearing their children (Gasden, 1999; Jayakody & Kalil, 2002). For about one-third, marriage—not necessarily to the child’s biological father—occurs within a decade after birth of the first child (Wu, Bumpass, & Musick, 2001). These couples function much like other first-marriage parents. Their children are often unaware that the father is a stepfather, and parents do not report the child-rearing difficulties typical of blended families (Ganong & Coleman, 1994).

Still, for low-SES women, never-married parenthood generally increases financial hardship; about half live in poverty (Mather, 2010). Nearly 50 percent of white mothers and 60 percent of black mothers have a second child while unmarried. And children of never-married mothers who lack father involvement achieve less well in school and display more antisocial behavior than children in low-SES, first-marriage families—problems that make life more difficult for mothers (Waldfogel, Craigie, & Brooks-Gunn, 2010). But marriage to the child’s biological father benefits children only when the father is a reliable source of economic and emotional support. For example, adolescents who feel close to their nonresident father fare better in school performance and emotional and social adjustment than do those in two-parent homes where a close father tie is lacking (Booth, Scott, & King, 2010). Unfortunately, most unwed fathers—who usually are doing poorly financially—gradually spend less and less time with their children (Lerman, 2010). Strengthening parenting skills, social support, education, and employment opportunities for low-SES parents would greatly enhance the well-being of unmarried mothers and their children.

**Gay and Lesbian Parents.** About 20 to 35 percent of lesbian couples and 5 to 15 percent of gay couples are parents, most through previous heterosexual marriages, some through adoption, and a growing number through reproductive technologies (Gates et al., 2007; Goldberg, 2010; Patterson & Riskind, 2010). In the past, because of laws assuming that homosexuals could not be adequate parents, those who divorced a heterosexual partner lost custody of their children. Today, some U.S. states hold that sexual orientation by itself is irrelevant to custody. A few U.S. states, however, ban gay and lesbian couples from adopting children. Among other countries, gay and lesbian adoptions are legal in Argentina, Belgium, Brazil, Canada, Iceland, Mexico, the Netherlands, Norway, South Africa, Spain, Sweden, the United Kingdom, and Uruguay.

Most research on homosexual parents and children is limited to volunteer samples. Findings indicate that gay and lesbian parents are as committed to and effective at child rearing as heterosexual parents and sometimes more so (Bos, van Balen, & van den Boom, 2007; Tasker, 2005). Also, whether born to or adopted by their parents or conceived through donor insemination, children in gay and lesbian families did not differ from the children of heterosexuals in mental health, peer relations, gender-role behavior, or sexual orientation (Allen & Burrell, 1996; Bos & Sandfort, 2010; Farr, Forssell, & Patterson, 2010; Goldberg, 2010). Three additional studies, which surmounted the potential bias associated with volunteer participants by including representative samples of lesbian-mother...
families, also reported that children were developing favorably (Brewaeys et al., 1997; Chan, Raboy, & Patterson, 1998; Golombok et al., 2003).

When extended-family members withhold acceptance, homosexual mothers and fathers often build “families of choice” through friends, who assume the roles of relatives. Usually, however, parents of gays and lesbians cannot endure a permanent rift (Fisher, Easterly, & Lazear, 2008). With time, interactions between homosexual parents and their families of origin become more positive and supportive.

A major concern of gay and lesbian parents is that their children will be stigmatized by their parents’ sexual orientation. Most studies indicate that incidents of teasing or bullying are rare because parents and children carefully manage the information they reveal to others (Tasker, 2005). Overall, families headed by homosexuals can be distinguished from other families only by issues related to living in a nonsupportive society.

**ASK YOURSELF**

**REVIEW** Return to Chapter 10, pages 275–276, and review the impact of divorce and remarriage on children and adolescents. How do those findings resemble outcomes for adults? What might account for the similarities?

**APPLY** After dating for three months, Wanda and Scott decided to live together. Their parents worried that cohabitation would reduce the couple’s chances for a successful marriage. Is this fear justified? Why or why not?

**REFLECT** Do your own experiences or those of your friends match research findings on cohabitation, singlehood, never-married parents, or gay and lesbian parents? Select one instance and discuss.

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**Career Development**

Besides family life, vocational life is a vital domain of social development in early adulthood. Young people must learn how to perform work tasks well, get along with co-workers, respond to authority, and protect their own interests. When work experiences go well, adults develop new competencies, feel a sense of personal accomplishment, make new friends, and become financially independent and secure. And as we have seen, aspirations and accomplishments in the workplace and the family are interwoven.

**Establishing a Career**

Our discussion earlier in this chapter highlighted diverse paths and timetables for career development. **TAKE A MOMENT...** Consider, once again, the wide variations among Sharese, Ernie, Christy, and Gary. Notice that Sharese and Christy, like many women, had discontinuous career paths—ones that were interrupted or deferred by child rearing and other family needs (Huang & Sverke, 2007; Moen & Roehling, 2005). Furthermore, not all people embark on the vocation of their dreams. As noted in our consideration of emerging adulthood, the late-2000s recession greatly increased the number of young people in jobs that do not match their educational preparation.

Even for those who enter their chosen field, initial experiences can be discouraging. At the health department, Sharese discovered that paperwork consumed much of her day. Because each project had a deadline, the pressure of productivity weighed heavily on her. Adjusting to unanticipated disappointments in salary, supervisors, and co-workers is difficult. As workers in their twenties become aware of the gap between their expectations and reality, they change jobs often.

Recall from our discussion of Levinson’s theory that career progress often depends on the quality of a mentoring relationship. Access to an effective mentor is jointly affected by the availability of willing people and the individual's capacity to select an appropriate individual (Ramaswami & Dreher, 2007). The best mentors are seldom top executives, who tend to be preoccupied and therefore less helpful and sympathetic. Usually, young adults fare better with mentors who are just above them in experience and advancement or who are members of their professional associations (Allen & Finkelstein, 2003). Furthermore, mentoring early in a worker’s career increases the likelihood of mentoring later on (Bozionelos et al., 2011). The professional and personal benefits of mentoring induce employees to provide it to others and to seek it again for themselves.

**Women and Ethnic Minorities**

Women and ethnic minorities have penetrated nearly all professions, but their talents often are not developed to the fullest. Women, especially those who are members of economically disadvantaged minorities, remain concentrated in occupations that offer little opportunity for advancement, and they are underrepresented in executive and managerial roles (see Chapter 13, pages 363–364). And although the overall difference between men's and women's earnings is smaller today than 30 years ago, it remains considerable in all industrialized countries (Rampell, 2010). U.S. government surveys following 9,000 U.S. college-educated workers for a decade revealed that a year after receiving their bachelor's degrees, women working full time earned just 80 percent as much as men. The difference was largely (but not entirely) due to gender differences in college majors: Women more often chose education and service fields, men higher-paying scientific and technical fields. Ten years after graduation, the gender pay gap had widened: Women's pay was only 69 percent of men's, and in no profession did women's earnings equal men's (Dey & Hill, 2007). Gender disparities in career...
development accounted for about 90 percent of the gap, with the remaining 10 percent attributed to on-the-job discrimination.

Especially for women in traditionally feminine occupations, career planning is often short-term and subject to change. Many women enter and exit the labor market several times, or reduce their work hours from full-time to part-time as they give birth to and rear children (Furchtgott-Roth, 2009; Lips, 2013). Time away from a career greatly hinders advancement—a major reason that women in prestigious, male-dominated careers tend to delay or avoid childbearing (Blair-Loy & DeHart, 2003).

In addition, low self-efficacy with respect to male-dominated fields limits women’s career progress. Women who pursue nontraditional careers usually have “masculine” traits—high achievement orientation, self-reliance, and belief that their efforts will result in success. But even those with high self-efficacy are less certain than their male counterparts that they can overcome barriers to career success. In a study of women scientists on university faculties, those reporting a sexist work climate (sexual harassment or discrimination in salary, promotion, or resources) were less satisfied with their jobs and less productive (Settles et al., 2006).

Gender-stereotyped images of women as followers rather than leaders slow advancement into top-level management positions. And because men dominate high-status fields, they must be willing to mentor women into leadership positions and take time from their work responsibilities to do so. Mentoring by a senior-male executive predicts progress into management roles and pay gains more strongly for women in male-dominated industries than for men (Ramaswami et al., 2010). When a powerful male leader sponsors the advancement of a talented woman, designating her as having the qualities to succeed, senior-level decision makers are far more likely to take notice.

Despite laws guaranteeing equality of opportunity, racial and ethnic bias in career opportunities remains strong (Smith, Brief, & Colella, 2010). In one study, researchers recruited two three-member teams consisting of a white, a black, and a Hispanic male job applicant, each 22 to 26 years old and matched on verbal and interpersonal skills and physical attractiveness. The applicants were assigned identical fictitious résumés (with the exception that the résumé of the white member of the second team disclosed a criminal record) and sent out to apply for 170 entry-level jobs in New York City (Pager, Western, & Bonikowski, 2009). The white applicant received callbacks or job offers from employers slightly more often than the Hispanic applicant, with the black applicant trailing far behind. When the experiment was repeated with the second team, the white felon remained slightly preferred over both minority applicants, despite their clean records. In line with these findings, African Americans spend more time searching for work, experience less stable employment, and acquire less work experience than Caucasian Americans with equivalent job qualifications (Pager & Shepherd, 2008).

Ethnic minority women often must surmount combined gender and racial discrimination to realize their career poten-

tial. Those who succeed frequently display an unusually high sense of self-efficacy, attacking problems head-on despite repeated obstacles to achievement. In interviews with African-American women who had become leaders in diverse fields, all reported intense persistence, fueled by supportive relationships with other women, including teachers and peers. Many described their mothers as inspiring role models who had set high standards for them (Richie et al., 1997). Others felt empowered by a deep sense of connection to their African-American communities.

Combining Work and Family

The majority of women with children are in the work force (see page 277 in Chapter 10), most in dual-earner marriages or cohabiting relationships. More women than men report moderate to high levels of stress in trying to meet both work and family responsibilities (Higgins, Duxbury, & Lyons, 2010; Zhao, Settles, & Sheng, 2011).

**TAKE A MOMENT...** Think about a dual-earner family you know well. What are the main sources of strain? When Sharese returned to her job after her children were born, she felt a sense of role overload, or conflict between the demands of work and family responsibilities. In addition to a challenging career, she also (like most employed women) shouldered more household and child-care tasks. And both Sharese and Ernie felt torn between the desire to excel at their jobs and the desire to spend more time with each other, their children, and their friends and relatives. Role overload is linked to increased psychological stress, physical health problems, poorer marital relations, less effective parenting, child behavior problems, and poorer job performance (Perry-Jenkins, Repetti, & Crouter, 2000; Saginak & Saginak, 2005; ten Brummelhuis et al., 2012).
CHAPTER 14  Emotional and Social Development in Early Adulthood

Emotional and Social Development in Early Adulthood

Time-flexible policies enabling employees to work from home help parents adjust work roles to meet family needs. As a result, employees work harder, take less time off, and feel more committed to their jobs.

**Applying What We Know**

**Strategies That Help Dual-Earner Couples Combine Work and Family Roles**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strategy</th>
<th>Description</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Devise a plan for sharing household tasks.</td>
<td>As soon as possible in the relationship, discuss relative commitment to work and family and division of household responsibilities. Decide who does a particular chore on the basis of who has the needed skill and time, not on the basis of gender. Schedule regular times to rediscuss your plan.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Begin sharing child care right after the baby’s arrival.</td>
<td>For fathers, strive to spend equal time with the baby early. For mothers, refrain from imposing your standards on your partner. Instead, share the role of “child-rearing expert” by discussing parenting values and concerns often. Attend a parent education course together.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Talk over conflicts about decision making and responsibilities.</td>
<td>Face conflict through communication. Clarify your feelings and needs and express them to your partner. Listen and try to understand your partner’s point of view. Then be willing to negotiate and compromise.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Establish a balance between work and family.</td>
<td>Critically evaluate the time you devote to work in view of your family values and priorities. If it is too much, cut back.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Press for workplace and public policies that assist dual-earner-family roles.</td>
<td>Encourage your employer to provide benefits that help combine work and family, such as flexible work hours, parental leave with pay, and on-site high-quality, affordable child care. Communicate with lawmakers and other citizens about improving public policies for children and families.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Workplace supports can greatly reduce role overload, yielding substantial payoffs for employers. Among a large, nationally representative sample of U.S. working adults, the greater the number of time-flexible policies available in their work settings (for example, time off to care for a sick child, choice in start and stop times, and opportunities to work from home), the better their work performance (Halpern, 2005a). Employees with several time-flexible options missed fewer days of work, less often arrived at work late or left early, felt more committed to their employer, and worked harder. They also reported fewer stress-related health symptoms.

**LOOK AND LISTEN**

Talk with one or more dual-earner couples about workplace supports for good parenting. Which policies are available? Which additional ones would they find especially helpful?

Effectively balancing work and family brings many benefits—a better standard of living, improved work productivity, enhanced psychological well-being, greater self-fulfillment, and happier marriages. Ernie took great pride in Sharese’s dedication to both family life and career. And the skills, maturity, and self-esteem each derived from coping successfully with challenges at home strengthened their capacity to surmount difficulties at work (Graves, Ohlott, & Ruderman, 2007). Applying What We Know above lists strategies that help dual-earner couples attain mastery and pleasure in both spheres of life.

**ASK YOURSELF**

**REVIEW** Why do professionally accomplished women, especially those who are members of economically disadvantaged minorities, typically display high self-efficacy?

**APPLY** Write an essay aimed at convincing a company executive that family-friendly policies are “win-win” situations for both workers and employers.

**REFLECT** Ask someone who has succeeded in a career of interest to you to describe mentoring relationships that aided his or her progress.
A Gradual Transition: Emerging Adulthood (p. 369)

What is emerging adulthood, and how has cultural change contributed to it?

- In **emerging adulthood**, young people from the late teens to the mid- to late-twenties have not yet taken on adult responsibilities. Instead, those with economic resources engage in extended exploration of alternatives in education, work, and personal values. Identity development extends into the college years, with young people exploring possibilities in breadth and depth.
- During the late teens and early twenties, religious attendance drops to its lowest level. Regardless of whether they participate in organized religion, many emerging adults begin to construct an individualized faith. They are also committed to improving their world, often engaging in community service.
- Increased education required for entry-level positions in many fields, gains in economic prosperity, and reduced need for young people's labor in industrialized nations have prompted the appearance of emerging adulthood. But because of its strong association with SES and higher education, some researchers do not view emerging adulthood as a distinct period of development.
- In exploring possibilities, emerging adults must adjust to disappointments in love and work, and their explorations may extend risky behaviors of adolescence. A wide array of personal attributes and social supports foster resilience. Relationships with parents are especially influential.

Erikson's Theory: Intimacy versus Isolation (p. 374)

According to Erikson, what personality changes take place during early adulthood?

- In Erikson’s theory, young adults must resolve the conflict of **intimacy versus isolation** as they form a close relationship with a partner. The negative outcome is loneliness and self-absorption.
- Young people also focus on aspects of generativity, including parenting and contributions to society through work and community service.

Other Theories of Adult Psychosocial Development (p. 374)

Describe and evaluate Levinson's and Vaillant's psychosocial theories of adult personality development.

- Expanding Erikson's stage approach, Levinson described a series of eras in which people revise their life structure. Young adults usually construct a dream, typically involving career for men and both marriage and career for women, and form a relationship with a mentor. In their thirties, men tend to settle down, whereas many women remain unsettled into middle adulthood.
- Also in the tradition of Erikson, Vaillant portrayed the twenties as devoted to intimacy, the thirties to career consolidation, the forties to generativity, and the fifties and sixties to passing on cultural values.
- Young adults’ development is far more variable today than Levinson’s and Vaillant’s theories depict.

What is the social clock, and how does it affect personality in adulthood?

- Following a **social clock**—age-graded expectations for major life events—grants confidence to young adults. Deviating from it can bring psychological distress.

As age-graded expectations for appropriate behavior have become increasingly flexible, departures from social-clock life events are common and can create intergenerational tensions.

Close Relationships (p. 376)

Describe factors affecting mate selection and the role of romantic love in the young adult's quest for intimacy.

- Romantic partners tend to resemble each other in age, education level, ethnicity, religion, and various personal and physical attributes.
- According to an evolutionary perspective, women seek a mate with traits that help ensure children's survival, while men look for characteristics signaling sexual pleasure and ability to bear offspring. From a social learning perspective, gender roles profoundly influence criteria for mate selection. Research suggests that both biological and social forces are involved.
- According to Sternberg's **triangular theory of love**, the balance among intimacy, passion, and commitment changes as romantic relationships move from passionate love toward companionate love. The Western emphasis on romantic love in mate selection does not characterize all cultures.

Describe adult friendships and sibling relationships.

- Adult friendships, like earlier friendships, are based on trust, intimacy, and loyalty. Women's same-sex friendships tend to be more intimate than men's. After marriage, other-sex friendships decline with age for men but increase for women, who tend to form them in the workplace. When family experiences have been positive, adult sibling relationships often resemble friendships.

The Family Life Cycle (p. 381)

Trace phases of the family life cycle that are prominent in early adulthood, and cite factors that influence these phases today.

- Wide variations exist in the sequence and timing of the family life cycle. A trend toward later home-leaving has occurred in most industrialized nations. Departures generally occur earlier for education than for full-time work or marriage; role transitions may prompt a move back. Parents of young adults living at home are usually highly committed to helping their children move into adult roles.
- The average age of first marriage in the United States and Western Europe has risen. Many countries and a growing number of U.S. states recognize same-sex marriages.
The Diversity of Adult Lifestyles (p. 388)

Discuss the diversity of adult lifestyles, focusing on singlehood, cohabitation, and childlessness.

- Postponement of marriage and a high divorce rate have contributed to a rise in singlehood. Despite an array of drawbacks, singles typically appreciate their freedom and mobility.
- Cohabitation among U.S. couples has increased, becoming the preferred mode of entry into a committed intimate partnership. Compared with their Western European counterparts, Americans who cohabit before marriage tend to be less conventional in values and less committed to their partner, and their subsequent marriages are more likely to fail. But gay and lesbian couples who cohabit because they cannot legally marry report commitment equal to that of married couples.
- Voluntarily childless adults tend to be college-educated, career-oriented, and content with their lives. But involuntary childlessness interferes with adjustment and life satisfaction. Cite factors that contribute to today’s high rates of divorce and remarriage.
- Almost half of U.S. marriages dissolve. Although nearly two-thirds of divorced people remarry, many divorce again. Maladaptive communication patterns, younger ages at marriage, a family history of divorce, poverty, the changing status of women, and American individualism all contribute to divorce.
- Remarriages are especially vulnerable to breakup. Reasons include the prominence of practical concerns in the decision to remarry, the persistence of negative styles of communication, the acceptance of divorce as a solution to marital difficulties, and problems adjusting to a stepfamily.

Discuss challenges associated with varied styles of parenthood, including stepparents, never-married parents, and gay and lesbian parents.

- Establishing stepparent–stepchild ties is difficult, especially for stepmothers and for stepfathers without children of their own. A caring husband–wife bond that includes a coparenting partnership, cooperation from the biological parent, and extended-family support promote positive stepparent–stepchild ties.
- Never-married single parenthood is especially high among African-American women in their twenties. Even with help from extended family members, these mothers find it difficult to overcome poverty.
- Gay and lesbian parents are as effective at child rearing as heterosexual parents, and their children are as well-adjusted as those reared by heterosexual parents.

Career Development (p. 393)

Discuss patterns of career development, and cite difficulties faced by women, ethnic minorities, and couples seeking to combine work and family.

- Men’s career paths are usually continuous, whereas women’s are often interrupted by family needs. Once young adults settle into an occupation, their progress is affected by opportunities and access to an effective mentor.
- Women and ethnic minorities have penetrated most professions, but their career advancement has been hampered by time away from the labor market, low self-efficacy, lack of mentoring, and gender stereotypes. Racial and ethnic bias remains strong. Ethnic minority women who succeed display an unusually high sense of self-efficacy.
- Couples in dual-earner marriages often experience role overload. Effectively balancing work and family enhances standard of living, work productivity, psychological well-being, and marital happiness.

Important Terms and Concepts

- Cohabitation (p. 389)
- Companionsate love (p. 377)
- Egalitarian marriage (p. 382)
- Emerging adulthood (p. 369)
- Family life cycle (p. 381)
- Intimacy versus isolation (p. 374)
- Passionate love (p. 377)
- Social clock (p. 376)
- Traditional marriage (p. 382)
- Triangular theory of love (p. 377)