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# The Transitory Nature of Parent, Sibling and Romantic Partner Relationships in Emerging Adulthood

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 Springer

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# Chapter 1

## Introduction and Methodology

The transition from adolescence to adulthood is a significant period in the life of an individual. In fact, over the past decade a new developmental stage has been suggested to account for the uniqueness of this transition. Referred to as emerging adulthood recent theoretical contributions by Arnett (2000) suggest that this developmental phase, defined as the years following secondary school, should be viewed independently from adolescence or adulthood due to the dynamic and changeable features of this period. Characterized as a time of uncertainty and ambiguity Arnett (2007) describes the period of emerging adulthood as the “age of identity explorations, the age of instability, the self-focused age, the age of feeling in between, and the age of possibilities” (152). The independence, discovery, and changing roles of the post secondary-school years entail many distinct characteristics and hence must be viewed as a discrete developmental stage. Consequently, many empirical investigations on various cognitive, social, and emotional aspects of this stage of development have been undertaken.

More specifically, recent theoretical and empirical studies suggest that broader changes in society and educational expectations have extended the process of adolescent maturation thereby delaying the onset of adulthood (Kins et al. 2009). Driven more specifically by shifts in family and occupation, the current generation of post-secondary school youths find themselves in a more complex society. Previous cohorts had a very definitive demarcation line between adolescence and adulthood. Traditionally, marriage and securing a job were the hallmarks of entering adulthood (Arnett 2007). However, changes in the age of marriage and the need for higher education, as well as prolonged training for many occupations, have extended the period of transition between adolescence and adulthood. Considering the novelty of these societal shifts, a growing body of literature has focused on the various correlates and consequences of emerging adulthood.

The current book will provide a theoretical and empirical review of the societal and educational factors contributing to the relatively recent emergence of a new developmental stage occurring between adolescence and adulthood. The review will then specifically examine how these societal and educational changes