

## Abstract

The monograph, *Emerging Adult Students on their Way to Adulthood*, discusses new research findings on the developmental period of emerging adulthood. Special attention is paid to research findings, with the Slovene university students, obtained by the contributing authors. The book consists of six chapters: 1) Developmental Period of Emerging Adulthood – Defining Features, 2) Student Representations of Adulthood, 3) Relationships with Parents – a Way to Independence or Failure to Launch, 4) Measuring the Aspects of Individuation at the Transition to Adulthood, 5) Intimate Relationships of Students', and 6) Career Decision-Making and Student Representations of their Future Work.

The first chapter entitled, *Developmental Period of Emerging Adulthood – Defining Features*, provides an introduction to the developmental period between late teen years and over the twenties. The period is distinct from both adolescence and adulthood in its demographic and psychological features. In the first part of the chapter, Maja Zupančič summarizes key social changes that, on the one hand, assured youths an extended time frame for education and independent exploration of several possibilities, but on the other hand led to a delay in taking over the responsibilities and commitments towards others that are characteristic of adult social roles. In the second part, she further describes and explains basic psychological features of emerging adulthood, i.e., identity exploration, instability, self-focusing, experiencing feelings between an adolescent and an adult, rampant optimism, self-perceived independence, and a time of numerous possibilities. In the third part of the chapter, the author considers changes in self-reported expression of personality traits within a framework of the five-factor personality model. It has been shown that emerging adulthood is the last developmental period of considerable change in personality traits. Change and stability in the personality traits of an emerging adult is presented from the point of view of several types, i.e., normative, relative, structural and ipsative change/stability. These developments were suggested by consistent research findings in longitudinal studies with university students across postmodern societies. Finally, potential factors such as close interpersonal relationships, contributing to stability and change in the five personality traits in emerging adulthood are highlighted.

The second chapter, *Student Representations of Adulthood* by Maja Zupančič and Melita Puklek Levpušček, offers an insight into criteria that are viewed as important for entering adulthood among adolescents, emerging adults and adults across societies. The research area is presented from two perspectives: the Arnett's array of criteria for adulthood which is based on theoretical considerations in

anthropology, sociology and psychology, and the analysis of answers by students from Austria, Slovenia and USA to several open questions about adulthood. The freely generated responses suggest that the list of Arnett's criteria needs to be revised, as these students often emphasized aspects of adulthood not included in the list. However, the list has been widely used in psychological research over the past decade and, therefore, the authors of this chapter discuss the findings on societal criteria for adulthood, the individuals' subjective criteria and criteria achieved by emerging adults across different countries, including cross-cultural comparisons. In a collaborative international project the authors also conducted a study with over 600 Austrian (University of Vienna), Slovene (University of Ljubljana), and American (Grand Valley State University, Michigan, U.S.A.) students. This study provides an insight into the results within a framework of the extant findings in the field. The views on societal, subjective and personally achieved criteria for adulthood in seven domains (personal independence, family capacities, norm compliance, biological transitions, legal/chronological transitions, role transitions, and interdependence) are analyzed and compared in detail with the Slovene sample of students. In addition, predictive associations of demographic variables (student age, gender, living arrangement, intimate relationship status, citizenship) and characteristics of the students' individuation in relation to parents with the self-reported fulfilled criteria for adulthood are explained. In the concluding part of the chapter, the international findings on factors advancing and/or hindering the students' entry into adulthood are presented.

Melita Puklek Levpušček contributed to the third chapter, *Relationships with Parents – a Way to Independence and Failure to Launch*, which focuses on the characteristics of the individuals' relationship with parents during adolescence and emerging adulthood. First, the author describes fundamental changes within the family that occur in adolescence and introduces factors contributing to the quality of parent-adolescent relationships. In the majority of families, the relationship between the adolescent and the parent becomes more symmetrical and reciprocal. At the transition to adulthood those relationships gain several new qualities due to changes in living conditions of the young people, new experiences and social roles, developing autonomy and psychosocial maturity. The author explains the process of individuation from the point of view of the psychodynamic theory, attachment theory and individuation theory. Accordingly, she introduces findings from Slovene and international studies about typical patterns of individuation in young people. The proceeding parts of the chapter discuss the characteristics of emerging adult-parent relationships. In most families the relationship between

parents and their emerging adult children improves, becomes more spontaneous, less conflicted, and eventually more emotionally connected than before. The author devotes some attention to the phenomenon in emerging adults from Slovenia, where leaving home is delayed. She presents findings of an international study which included students of three universities (University of Vienna, University of Ljubljana and Grand Valley State University). The students reported about their living conditions (living in/out of home, frequency of home visits, frequency of contact with parents) and their expectations on achieving traditional adult markers, such as full-time employment, financial independence, marriage, home leaving and parenthood. The results show that the proportion of Slovene students who still live in their parents' home is considerably higher than the proportion of students living with their parents in the other two countries. Furthermore, Slovene students visit their parents more often than their peers in Austria and Michigan. The former also expect to move out of their parents' home at an older age. The author explains this phenomenon citing economic and psychosocial reasons, and she also emphasizes cultural influences on achieving independence.

The chapter, *Measuring the Aspects of Individuation at the Transition to Adulthood*, written by Luka Komidar and Martina Horvat concerns a review of the most frequently used instruments to assess aspects of adolescents' and emerging adults' individuation in relation to parents. Some of the well established instruments appear to have unsatisfactory metric characteristics and none of them are appropriate for measuring individuation in emerging adulthood. Therefore, the authors report on the development of a new questionnaire, created in Slovenia, to measure individuation in emerging adulthood (IT-EA), capturing items which are suitable for emerging adults.

In the chapter, *Romantic Relationships in Students*, Andreja Avsec and Gaja Zager Kocjan present the importance of successful romantic relationships for individuals. There have been many studies to determine the basic characteristics of romantic relationship in emerging adults which is a period of intense changes. There are many intensive changes in understanding and forming romantic relationships in the period of emerging adulthood. The chapter addresses specific characteristics of romantic relationships in emerging adulthood and also several problems concerning the measurement of this topic. Further, some indicators of adjustment in relation to the romantic status are presented, since the experience of romantic relationships is very important for the individuals' psychosocial development and adjustment. Three important theoretical approaches to studying romantic relationships, which form a theoretical basis for research not only in adolescence but also

over the long period of adulthood, are presented. Attachment theory is the theoretical basis of many studies of romantic relationships and, therefore, its fundamental assertions and research findings with a sample of Slovene psychology students are described. The distribution of attachment styles of psychology students is close to that found in previous international studies, and differences among individuals with different attachment styles are meaningfully related to differences in fulfillment of their basic psychological needs. Next, Sternberg's triangular theory of love is presented and findings from two Slovene studies, building on this theory. The results suggest that the components of love are related to loneliness in romantic relationships, self-disclosure to romantic partner, satisfaction in romantic relationships, and love styles. Finally, the theory of social support is presented and, in relation to this theory, a Slovene study with upper-secondary school students, exploring the characteristics and correlates of the perceived social support from a best friend and the intimate partner. The results suggest that the social support in the two social contexts is significantly related to all of the selected indicators of students' psychosocial adjustment.

Eva Boštjančič and Boštjan Bajec contributed to the last chapter entitled, *Career Decision-Making and Student Representations of their Future Work*. In the first part, they introduce career development, theories of career decision-making and their use in career counseling with students. Next, characteristics of the Slovene student population and the students' representations of a working career are presented. The authors focus on factors related to the students' experiences, representations and conceptions of the world, developmental characteristics and the environment they grew up in. Values of the youth are described and compared across generations. Present day students were found to be open and curious. They seek secure employment with a work environment that provides consistent and good communication, possibilities for career development and promotion, acknowledgement from their leaders and inclusion in everyday activities. The authors present results from two current Slovene research studies – the first one describes the students' self-concept in a domain of work, the second one explores students' career expectations and their views on the obstacles and opportunities for their future career. Conclusions from those studies offer possibilities for more directed student counseling.