Emerging Adults in the Czech Republic: Views Into and Across Different Domains of Life

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Introduction

As is the case in other European countries, we can identify a period of emerging adulthood in the Czech Republic. This developmental stage has been proposed as most typical of industrialized and "post-industrial" countries (Arnett, 2000). It is evident that the Czech Republic has these attributes and that the living conditions and lifestyle of young Czechs do not differ substantially from the lives of their peers in other Western and Central European countries (Arnett, 2006; Macek, Bejček, & Vaníčková, 2007). However, emerging adulthood is also a socio-cultural phenomenon reflecting diversity in terms of the societal state and historical context. To understand the present-day Czech emerging adults, we consider the social changes over the past several decades, both in the former Czechoslovakia and in the current Czech Republic, that have greatly affected this generation and the generation of their parents. Further on, we will also investigate how the traditional markers of adulthood are represented and have changed in Czech society. The major part of this chapter describes how young people in the Czech Republic perceive themselves as emerging adults. We focus on some of the main psychological attributes or features of emerging adults (Arnett, 2004; Macek, Bejček, & Vaníčková, 2007), such as subjective developmental status, feelings of possibilities and autonomy, identity exploration, and commitments. These psychological characteristics are considered separately in four domains of functioning: relationship with parents, relationships with romantic partners, education, and work. Finally, we attempt to give more depth to this account by describing the four types or classes of emerging adults empirically identified in our data.[1]

Box 1

Empirical findings presented in this chapter (unless otherwise attributed) come from a currently running longitudinal study called "Paths to Adulthood". The study has been running for three years (out of five planned) in Brno, Czech Republic. The main purpose of this Internet-based project is to examine how emerging adults develop autonomy and the identity associated with their relationships, education, and work. In December 2012, we used a random selection of universities, secondary schools, companies, and employment offices in the Czech Republic to recruit participants for the study. The response rate was low, but the sample has since been enlarged through non-random procedures of Facebook announcements and class announcements at Masaryk University. The sample sizes dropped from 1 674 at the beginning to 998 in the most recent wave. We are collecting data in smaller packages three to four times per year. So far, we have collected six waves of data. For more information on data collected so far, see Macek et al. (2014).

Historical context and societal state

As is evident from a number of research studies, the lifestyle of the incoming new generation has changed significantly under the influence of rapid political and social changes in Central and Eastern Europe (e.g., Crockett & Silbereisen, 2000; Šerek, Macek, Ježek, & Lacinová, 2014). The present generation of young Czechs has a different experience of life from that of previous generations. Changes at the socio-psychological level are taking place at a much slower pace than are changes at the political-economic level. As research on transformation processes in post-communist countries has shown, past experiences from the previous regime survive in the collective memory (i.e., the memory of families) for at least one generation (Macek & Marková, 2004).

Current Czech emerging adults represent a unique generation born in the second half of the 1980s or in the early 1990s, when the totalitarian communist regime collapsed in former Czechoslovakia. These individuals spent their childhoods in a time of sweeping political, economic, and social changes, as Czechoslovakia was split into two new independent states in the 1990s. Furthermore, their identity development during the period of adolescence and emerging adulthood is taking place in the new millennium, when the Czech Republic has been consolidated as a standard European democracy.

From a psychological perspective, the 1980s could be labelled as Czechoslovakia's "age of the dependent child." This period of communist regime was marked by great dependence on the authority of the state, which was associated with a low degree of personal freedom, limited right to express one's own ideas, and even sanctions for breaching one's loyalty towards the communist regime; however, these restrictions were counterbalanced by a comparatively high level of fundamental social benefits. The need to take personal responsibility for one's own life was often eliminated by social assistance provided by the state (Klicperová, Feierbend, & Hofstetter, 1997). The most typical behaviour pattern upon entering adulthood involved graduating from secondary school, compulsory military service for men, marriage, and the birth of a child (often within the first year of marriage; cf. Možný & Rabušic, 1992). It was difficult to start a family without parental support – both financial and social – ranging from helping to raise children to using a network of influential patronages developed by the parents throughout their lives. The possibility of being admitted to university were limited as well, due to low quotas. Moreover, frequent job changes were condemned as an asocial feature and moral misconduct; as a result, people commonly held the same job all their lives. This was a typical picture of "entering adulthood" for a vast majority of the parents of today's emerging adults in the Czech Republic.

The 1990s, on the other hand, could metaphorically be called the "age of adolescence". The search for a new identity occurred at all levels – the national level (disintegration of Czechoslovakia and establishing of the Czech Republic on January 1, 1994); the social level (gradual social stratification, minority identity, etc.); and the individual level. Both the young and the old had to go through a re-socialization process, learning appropriate, responsible adult behaviour, and many were forced to revise their personal system of values and adopt new life goals and perspectives. In fact, there was a kind of "social moratorium" that provided a great opportunity to experiment; the legal environment was vague, breaking social norms was tolerated, and people had high hopes for their future prospects. Simultaneously with this new experience, however, there still remained the effect of the so-called post-communist syndrome, characterized by low self-confidence, avoidance of initiative and responsibility, hopelessness, and pessimism (cf. Klicperová, Feierabend, & Hofstetter, 1997; Macek & Marková, 2004).

The new millennium can be seen as Czech society's transition to adulthood. Due to the economic and political crisis of the late 1990s, bright-eyed optimism gave way to down-to-earth realism. The social moratorium came to an end with the country's accession to the European Union, and the Czech society reached a stage of developing "identity achievement," with exploration clearly aimed at accepting long-term commitments. The Czech Republic became a full-fledged member of the European Union (2004) and entered the "period of adulthood."

On the whole, to a certain extent, we can conclude that contemporary Czech youth cannot extricate themselves from the period in which they grew up and that their emerging adulthood is shaped by their particular childhood and adolescence experiences. On the other hand, there is a consistent concept that can be found among young people in all European countries, regardless of their particular historical experience, that focuses on a desire to enjoy freedom and independence before accepting the responsibilities of full adulthood (Arnett, 2006).

Demographic characteristics and traditional markers of transition to adulthood

Young people 20-29 years of age represented approximately thirteen percent of the Czech population in 2011 (Czech Statistic Office, ČSÚ, 2011). Legally, the basic milestone defining the beginning of adulthood is the age of 18. At this age, young people become free and full citizens and bear full legal responsibility for their actions. Some rights and

responsibilities are granted at the age of 15 (ID card, legal age for sexual activities, partial criminal responsibility, possibility to work for pay) but they cannot legally drink alcoholic beverages, drive a car, be employed without any restrictions or get married until they reach age 18.

Leaving home and school, beginning one's career, marrying, and becoming a partner and a parent represent traditional sociological markers of transition from adolescence to adulthood (Shanahan, Porfeli, Mortimer & Erickson, 2005). When observing these markers in young Czechs, we can observe trends corresponding to the theory of the second demographic transition (Van de Kaa, 1987). Two kinds of transitions can be observed here. The first transition is economic in nature and is most frequently related to the transition from education to paid work (Billari & Liefbroer, 2007). The second transition can be characterized as founding one's own family (Katrňák, Lecherová, Pakosta, & Fučík, 2010); therefore, it is the transition to adulthood at the level of emancipating oneself from the family of origin. It is interesting that Czech adolescents see these two transitions as having simultaneous timing; a majority of seventeen-year-old respondents anticipate leaving home at the same time as gaining economic independence (i.e., in their early or mid-20s) (Katrňák et al., 2010).

Current data show that young Czechs typically *leave their parents' household* at the age of about 24 (women) or 25 (men) (Nývlt, 2014). In comparison to the previous generation, we can see only a minor shift here: the generation born in the 1960s left home approximately two years earlier. These median ages are quite similar to those of other post-communist European countries like Hungary and Latvia (Macková, 2011). Currently, 48% of Czech men and 31% of Czech women aged 25-29 live in their parents' home, and this number appears to be continuously growing (Kohoutová & Nývlt, 2014). Young Czechs seem to be really in the "centre" of Europe: leaving home in the Czech Republic occurs neither too late, as is typical of Southern European countries, nor too soon, as we can see typically in Scandinavia. This is in accordance with the findings of Iacovou and Skew (2011), whose study identified two Eastern European clusters, the first consisting of the Czech Republic and Baltic countries and the second one including more religious countries like Poland and Slovakia.In the domain of *school and career*, there are easily recognizable tendencies defining emerging adulthood. At ages 18 to 24, about 60% of Czechs are still in some form of formal studies, yet this number decreases to 15% at ages 25 to 29 (ČSÚ, 2013). In a majority of European countries, most young people were still in formal education at age 19 in 2006 (EUROSTAT, 2009). The proportion of young people (age of 24) who have completed their secondary education is one of the highest in Europe - 90%. A university degree is obtained in

the age category of 20-29 years by 17%, which exactly corresponds to the European average. In 2007, the age at which at least half of the population cohort had already entered the labour market in the Czech Republic (21 years) was very close to the EU average (20 years) (EUROSTAT, 2009). Regarding the activity rate, i.e. the proportion of economically active young people aged 15 to 29, three groups of countries can be distinguished. The Czech Republic finds itself in the group of countries (also including Bulgaria, Italy, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Hungary, Romania and Turkey) where young people's activity rates are below 50%. Countries with activity rates above 70% include Denmark, the Netherlands, Iceland and Switzerland, and the rest of the countries have activity rates between 50% and 70% (EUROSTAT, 2009).

Currently, at ages 20 to 24, 21% of young Czechs *live in a partnership*; at ages 25 to 29, this percentage is 52% (Kohoutová & Nývlt, 2014). In 2010, the average age of individuals' first marriage was 28 years for women and 31 years for men. In 2006, in a majority of European countries, first marriages involved women below 30; in nearly half of the European countries, most first marriages involved men above 30. A total of 21% of men and 24% of women live with unmarried partners at the ages of 20-39 years, which roughly corresponds to the European average. In 2012, 43% of all live births were to unmarried women. In 2012, the average age at first childbirth was 28 years. Between 1995 and 2005 the average age at first childbirth increased in all EU member states (EUROSTAT, 2009). This increase was the most noticeable in the Czech Republic, Hungary and Slovenia. Despite this significant first birth postponement, however, the average age of Czech mothers at their first childbirth is still lower than that of a number of European countries. In 2005, the average age at first childbirth was the highest (between 29 and 30 years) in Germany, Spain, Luxembourg, the United Kingdom and Switzerland and the lowest (around 25 years) in Bulgaria, the Baltic States and Romania. The mean wanted number of children for a family was the lowest in the Czech Republic, Austria, Slovakia and Romania (close to or fewer than 2 children) for both sexes of the same age group of 25-39 years (EUROSTAT, 2009).

Subjective reflections of emerging adults

The data on transitional markers suggest that young Czechs do not differ much from their peers in other countries in Central and Western Europe. However, all these criteria represent a sociological view on the transition to adulthood. Another point of view is that of the transition to adulthood as a self-perceived process (Zittoun, 2006). Subjective perception

of one's own identity status and other characteristics associated with adulthood (e.g., responsibility, freedom) are just as important for a deeper understanding of the developmental stage of emerging adulthood (Benson & Furstenberg, 2003; Arnett, 2004; Reitzle, 2006; Johnson, Berg, & Sirotzki, 2007).

When we asked young Czechs (aged 18 to 30) whether they felt that they had definitely reached adulthood (subjective young-adult status), whether they still perceived themselves as immature adolescents (adolescent status), or whether they felt they were in an interim between adolescence and adulthood ("in-between" status), the results repeatedly showed the same picture: about two thirds of respondents reported perceiving themselves to be in a subjective "in-between" status, 30% regarded themselves as young adults and a mere 6-7% of respondents indicated that they did not consider themselves to be adults but rather still "immature" adolescents (Macek, Bejček, & Vaníčková, 2007; Macek & Bouša, 2013).

As expected, respondents' age correlates significantly with their subjective developmental status. With increasing age, the number of respondents regarding themselves as fully adult increases, too. Nonetheless, even in the 26 to 27 age group, half of the respondents reported the "in-between" status, and 40% did so in the 27 to 30 age group.

It is often argued that the "in-between" status is more likely to pertain to students and that young working people more often tend to feel fully adult. However, both of the above-cited studies show that at least half of working non-students also feel "in-between". The feeling of adulthood is enhanced by financial independence from parents and living in a separate household. Nonetheless, only half of those who do not live at home and make a living subjectively feel adult, with the rest feeling "in-between". The only markers clearly indicating the subjective adult status are marriage and parenthood. However, as stated above, in the third decade marriage and parenthood concern only a small number of Czechs (Macek, Bejček, & Vaníčková, 2007; Macek & Bouša, 2013).

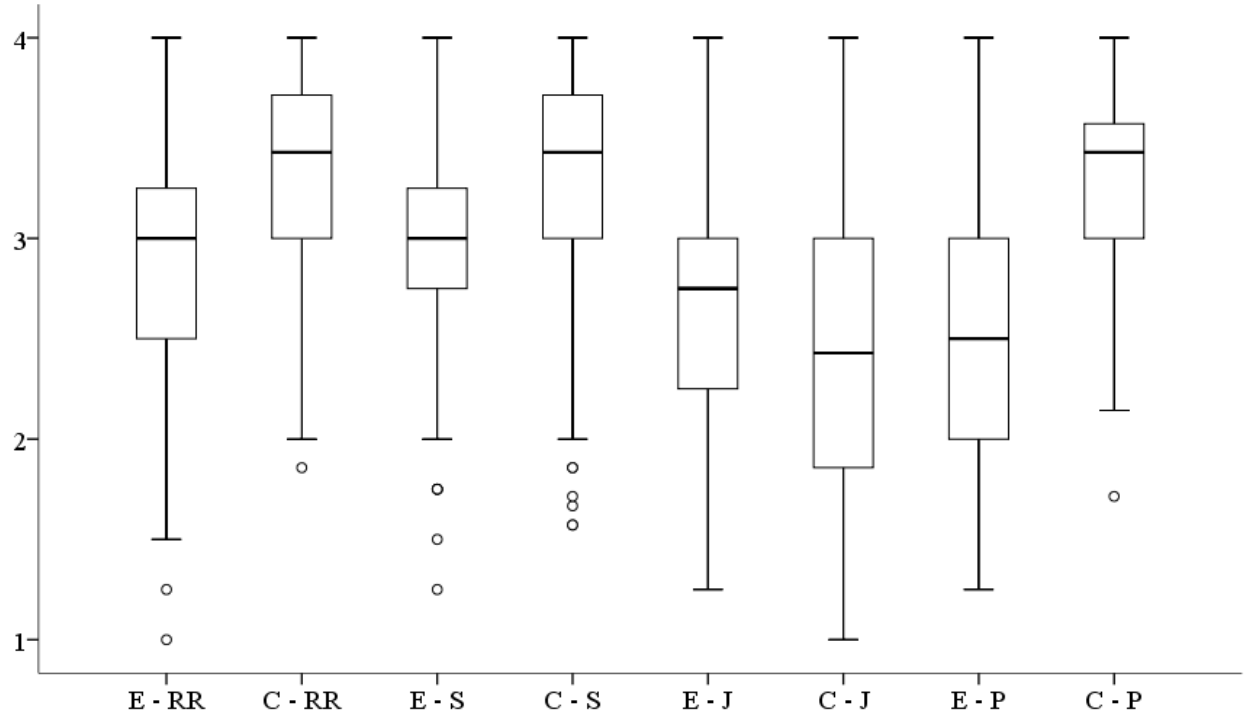
Emerging adulthood is a self-focused age of possibilities, in which young people usually experience more freedom and less social control than they did as adolescents or will once they reach full adulthood (Arnett, 2004). The feeling of individual freedom is generally a highly prized value in post-industrial democratic societies. However, we can expect freedom to hold a special meaning for current Czech emerging adults (cf. Nash, 2005; Macek, Bouša, & Košdy, 2009). In comparison to previous generations, they feel less pressure to make major decisions on important life issues, and they are more free to explore various possibilities (in relationships, love, studies, work, etc.). In psychology, freedom is often conceptualized as various forms of autonomy. Like freedom, autonomy refers both to a

person's objective status and to his or her subjective self-perception (Hmel & Pincus, 2002). Objective autonomy often translates to separation from parents in a psycho-dynamic sense, while subjective autonomy is conceptualised as the feeling of agency (e.g. Van Petegem, Beyers, Vasteenkiste, & Soenens, 2012). While separation should grow alongside objective markers of adulthood, agency follows in a much less predictable way. Noom, Dekovic, and Meeus (2001) discuss a broad range of cognitive aspects of autonomy, which brings to focus the cognitive burden of the sheer range of choices that ought to or could be made and the ensuing self-reflection by individuals. In many cases, freedom is accompanied by anxiety and doubts about one's own competences and possibilities as well as other people's behaviour.

It is not unusual for such insecurity to go hand in hand with the assumption of new adult roles. Historically, socio-political and economic changes have resulted in decreased social security and undermined faith in social institutions (Macek & Marková, 2004). Many of today's emerging adults in the Czech Republic must have been aware of many insecurities and fears arising in their parents' lives and even shared actively in these feelings. In spite of this, however, our studies show that they do not view their parents as a restriction of their personal freedom (Macek, Bejček, & Vaníčková, 2007; Macek, Bouša, & Košdy, 2009).

Identity issues play a prominent role in the theory of emerging adulthood (Arnett, 2000; Schwartz, Côté, & Arnett, 2005). In this period, the main focus of self-definition changes from that of adolescence – from social aspects of identity to personal identity, including self-development and personal perspective, creating personal autonomy and making commitments (Schwartz, Zamboanga, Luyckx, Meca, & Ritghie, 2013). Identity exploration is also deeper than in adolescence (Arnett, 2004). It is those Czech emerging adults who feel "in-between" that have the greatest need for identity exploration (Macek, Košdy, Mikauš, & Vokurková, 2008). Commitments change as well; they are specified for various domains of life, become more concrete and are interrelated both with agency and personal perspective and with life goals and plans (Salmela-Aro, Aunola, & Nurmi, 2007). This is evident both in the domain of romantic relationships (Shulman & Connoly, 2013) and in the education/career domain (Arnett, 2004; Kunnen, 2010).

Figure 1. The distribution of exploration and commitment in the four domains



Note. E = exploration, C = commitment, RR = romantic relationship, S = current education, J = current job, P = parents.

In our current study (see Box 1), we focused on four domains of life of emerging adults, mostly students, in which we observed the level of commitment and exploration (see Figure 1). Mean levels of exploration and commitment differ between domains (Macek, Bouša, Vančura, Sokoliová, & Neusar, 2011). This applies mainly to exploration where nearly all domains vary from each other ($F(2.9,880.3)=49.1$, $p<.01$, eta2=.14). The highest level is the level of exploration in the education domain, then in the romantic relationship domain and work domain, while the least exploration is observed in the domain of relationship with parents. This ordering of domains applies to both sexes, although females report higher exploration in all domains. Commitment is similarly high in all domains except work, where it is significantly lower ($F(2.2,679.2)=137.3$, $p<.01$, $\eta^2=.31$). Again, there are no gender differences here. This profile of exploration and commitments in individual domains of life is in accordance with our previous results pertaining to longitudinal examination of commitments and exploration at the ages of 17 and 19 (Macek et al., 2011). Exploration in all the examined domains grows continuously with age and culminates at the period of emerging adulthood.

As our results indicate, the overall level of commitment does not vary significantly across domains neither for adolescents nor for emerging adults. However, our measure does not provide us with deeper insight into the content of the commitments. Even though the entire level does not change, we can suppose that commitments in the period of emerging adulthood are qualitatively transformed in terms of identification with commitments or the degree to which these commitments become integrated in the individual's sense of self (Luyckx, Seiffge-Krenke, Schwartz, Crocetti, & Klimstra, 2014).

S*ense of self*, as a highly relevant issue for emerging adults (see Schwartz et al., 2013), is represented by three variables in our current study – self-esteem (measured by RSE; Rosenberg, Schooler, Schoenbach, & Rosenberg, 1995), clarity of self (SCCS; Campbell, Trapnell, Heine, Katz, Lavallee, & Lehman, 1996), and agentic autonomy (BPNS; Deci & Ryan, 2000). To examine how sense of self relates to commitment, we looked at how commitment in various domains of life predicts these three variables. Commitment in the domains of education and work moderately predicts self-esteem (β = .28 and β =.17, p<.01), whereas commitment in the relational domains of partners and parents does not (β = .07 and =.06, n.s.). We observed the same pattern with clarity of self as the predicted variable: the domains of education and work moderately predict it (β = .23 and β =.15, p<.01), whereas commitment in the relational domains of partners and parents does not (β = .05 and β =.08, n.s.). The feeling of agentic autonomy is predicted by the level of commitment in all four domains. The effect size is small (β s between .11 and .17, p<.01); nevertheless, in all cases, the correlation is positive, indicating that higher levels of commitment imply better developmental outcomes representing the individual's sense of self.

Obviously, in the individual domains of life different aspects of identity take on different manifestations. The well-being of young people during emerging adulthood is highly but not exclusively related to the quality of their family relationships (Roberts & Bengtson, 1993). Education/career and romantic relationships are also important domains of development (Mayseless & Keren, 2014). In the following sections, we present empirical evidence of the functioning of Czech emerging adults in four domains: relationship with parents, relationships with romantic partners and school/career identity formation.

Relationship with parents

Family ties and parental support traditionally play a significant role in the transition to adulthood (Wallace & Kovatcheva, 1998; Trommsdorff, Kim & Nauck, 2005). The importance of relationships with parents to the formation of identity in the period of emerging

adulthood seems to be culturally determined. For instance, in Scandinavian countries and some Western European countries, relationships with parents are not perceived as an important domain of identity (e.g., Frisén & Wängqvist, 2011). Undoubtedly, this is related to the fact that young people in these countries become independent and live separately from their original families earlier in life (Choroszewicz & Wolf, 2010). Conversely, in countries in Southern, Central and Eastern Europe, commitment and exploration in relation to one's parents are included into the structure and dynamics of forming one's identity (e.g., Crocetti & Meeus, 2014). Similarly, young Czechs also see their parents as important points of reference in their identity formation in the period of emerging adulthood. The persistent link between the lives of parents and children and the strong tradition of family solidarity is a characteristic attribute of the lives of many contemporary Czech emerging adults (Macek, Bejček, & Vaníčková, 2007).

Emerging adulthood extends the time for parental engagement in "parenting" of emerging adults. Parent–child interactions during emerging adulthood can be described as a modification rather than an elimination of the parent–child relationship, despite the fact that a substantial proportion of young people are already living independently. Most young people between 18 and 26 do not perceive themselves as fully adult. Moreover, this group also tends to believe that their parents do not regard them as fully adult either. As is revealed in current American data, only half of all parents see their children as adults (Arnett & Schwab, 2013), and this also applies to current Czech emerging adults, most of whom report that they believe they are not perceived by their parents as adults (Macek, Košdy, Mikauš, & Vokurková, 2008; Macek, Juříčková, & Bouša, 2011). This might be one of the reasons why parents may perceive an ongoing need to continue to nurture and care for their adult children. However, it is obvious that their parenting has to take a new form due to the achieved level of emerging adults' independence and autonomy in this developmental period.

Although there is evidence that security of attachment to parents is associated with self-development, studies empirically supporting and exploring the specifics of this relationship in emerging adults are few and far between (Kenny & Sirin, 2006). In our current study, we explored how individuals' sense of self, represented by self-esteem, clarity of self and autonomy can be explained by perception of parental support and behavior (maternal and paternal attachment anxiety and avoidance (ECR-RS), Fraley, Heffernan, Vicary, & Brumbaugh, 2011; maternal and paternal autonomy support (POPS), Robbins, 1994; maternal and paternal psychological control (PCS-YSR), Barber, 1996). Based on a series of regression analyses, we found that anxiety in attachment to mother alone weakly predicted *self-esteem*

(β = -.11, p= .02), while anxiety in attachment to mother together with maternal psychological control explained 8% of *clarity of self* variance (β = -.11 and -.29 respectively, p < .05), and avoidance and anxiety in attachment to father negatively predicted agentic autonomy (β = -.10, and -.10 respectively, p < .05; R^2=.17). The results show that emerging adults' self-esteem and clarity of self are slightly lower when their relationships to their mothers are characterized by a higher level of anxiety. Similarly, Leondari and Kiosseoglou (2000) found that securely attached college students reported greater level of self-esteem and lower level of anxiety and loneliness. With regard to autonomy, we found that its level is predicted only by attachment to the father figure. Similarly, Allen, Hauser, Bell and O'Connor (1994) observed that fathers' behaviours were more strongly related to adolescent ego development, whereas mothers' behaviours were more strongly related to adolescent self-esteem. These results are congruent with our findings and confirm a specific role of the mother and father in the self-development of emerging adults.

Romantic relationships

An extension of the attachment network and further development of the capacity for mature intimacy with friends and romantic partners are two crucial developmental tasks in the social relationships domain (Erikson, 1968; Hazan & Zeifman, 1994). According to Furman and Wehner (1997), heterosexual relationships are initially characterized by the presence of affiliative and sex/reproduction behavioural systems, and they gradually develop until late adolescence or young adulthood through the emergence and integration of further behavioural systems: attachment and caregiving. The mature functioning of romantic relationships depends on the presence of all four of the above-mentioned systems, and such a relationship then can fulfil adult attachment functions. This developmental trend is clearly documented by the results of our previous longitudinal study of the development of representations of romantic relationships before the period of emerging adulthood (Lacinová, Michalčáková, Ševčíková, & Konečný, 2011). The representation of what "dating" means to adolescents was examined via interviews from early adolescence (at age 13) and then repeatedly in other waves of examinations (ages 15 and 17). Respondents' answers comprised all four of the abovementioned behavioural systems: *attachment* (e.g., safe place, confiding, trust, support, and help with problem-solving); *affiliation* (e.g., spending time together, having fun, humour, and mutual interests); *physical contact* (e.g., kissing, holding hands, hugging, sexual intercourse), and *commitment* (e.g., common future, fidelity, declared willingness to make sacrifices for one another, restricting oneself to the benefit of the relationship or the partner).

A significant change was found in the examined period (i.e., in the sense of growth) in the categories of attachment and commitment. No significant change was detected in the period under examination in the affiliation category.

In our current study (see Box 1), we followed up on the above analyses by asking a question about what young people consider most important in romantic relationships. We used the aforementioned categorization schema (*attachment, affiliation, physical contact*, and *commitment*), and, due to the nature of gained data and developmental changes in emerging adulthood, we added the following categories: *relational maintenance* (e.g., communication, self-disclosure, sharing tasks); *identity and personal growth* (e.g., space for autonomy, self-affirmation); and *representation of partner* (requirements for certain qualities). Most emerging adults mentioned answers that fell into the category of *attachment* (71%), while answers in the categories of *affiliation* (37%) and *relational maintenance* (37%) were less frequent. We found that 19% of responses belonged to the *commitment* category, while another 19% of responses were relevant to the *identity and self-growth* category. Only one tenth of respondents mentioned *physical contact* as an important characteristic of romantic relationship. Even though mutual attraction and the presence of physical contact are the aspect differentiating romantic relationship from close friendship, the emerging adults rarely mentioned it. This may have been a result of a lack of willingness to share such intimate experiences, or it may mean that young people take this aspect of romantic relationships for granted. Finally, specific *characteristics of partner* represented 5% of answers. On the basis of these findings, we can conclude that in the period of emerging adulthood, young people's representations of romantic relationships are characterized by the increasing importance of the partner as a source of support and security (*attachment*) as well as more intensified awareness of *identity and relational maintenance*. Our results are consistent with the fact that the presence of behaviours related to the activation of the attachment system and the caregiving system complementing it increase in late adolescence and early adulthood, and their functioning is enabled by the gradually increasing length of intimate relationships (Furman, 2002).

Hazan and Zeifman (1994) and others (Keren & Mayseless, 2013; Trinke & Bartholomew, 1997) suggested that within a hierarchy of attachment figures, romantic partners replace parents at the top of the hierarchy during late adolescence and adulthood. However, we found that attachment preferences for the romantic partner are negatively associated with preferences for friends but not associated with preferences for the mother or father in our sample (Umemura, Lacinová, & Macek, in press). With respect to these results,

we could hypothesize that the structure of attachment relationships during emerging adulthood is not hierarchical but rather parallel or simultaneous.

Just as adolescence is characterized by high variability in forms of romantic relationship (Brown, Feiring, & Furman, 1999), emerging adults create and maintain a wide spectrum of intimate relationships as well. Shulman and Connolly (2013) described a relatively high prevalence of low-committed relationships in college students in the USA, as well as other forms of uncommitted romantic relationships such as "friends with benefits" (FWB). The prevalence rates of such relationships have ranged from 49% to 62% in the USA (Afifi & Faulkner, 2000; Bisson & Levine, 2009; Reeder, 2000) and have reached 39% among Czech emerging adults (Kühpastová, 2014). Even with increasing cohabitation, young people might not be committed or have joint plans for the future. Mayseless and Keren (2014) noted that, while cohabitation was once perceived to automatically mean subsequent marriage, a large proportion of emerging adults today cohabit but do not stay together in the future. In our sample (see Box 1), 57% of respondents reported that they currently had "stable" partners (length of romantic relationship in our sample in months: m=29; SD=22.4). Young people without stable relationships had the choice of describing their relational situation by choosing the most relevant option. One third indicated that they had had no relationship (including one-night stands) for more than half a year, whereas 13% indicated that they had a non-committed relationship and 11% answered that they had a "friend with benefits". The rest of the respondents without partners chose the option "none of the above fits my situation accurately", and some of them used the free space for clarification. Finally, one tenth of our respondents said they had not had any experience with a romantic relationship so far.

In this domain, we also explored how *the sense of self* can be explained by attachment anxiety and avoidance toward the partner (ECR-RS; Fraley, Heffernan, Vicary, & Brumbaugh, 2011), satisfaction with basic psychological needs in the relationship (BPNS; La Guardia, Ryan, Couchman, & Deci, 2000), motivation for sex (PLOC-S, Jenkins, 2004), and reconsideration of commitment (U-MICS, Crocetti, Schwartz, Fermani, & Meeus, 2010). Self-esteem was significantly predicted by attachment anxiety toward the partner (β = -.23, p < .01), fulfilment of the competence need in the relationship (β = .37, p < .01) and finally by personal motivation for sex (β = .16, p = .01). Next, clarity of self was predicted by attachment anxiety toward the partner (β = -.16, p < .01), fulfilment of the competence need in the relationship (β = .28, p < .01) and two types of motivation for sex: introjected (β = -.14, p = .02) and identified motivation (β = .15, p = .01). Finally, autonomy was predicted by

attachment anxiety toward the partner (β = -.16, p < .01), satisfaction with autonomy (β = .13, p = .03) and competence in the relationship (β = .23, p < .01), and finally by two types of motivation for sex: drive (β = -.17, p < .01) and personal motivation (β = .15, p = .02). The results suggest that attachment anxiety, satisfaction of basic psychological needs, and various types of motivation for sex, but not reconsideration of commitment in the current relationship, served as predictors for all studied outcomes. Overall, the results confirm links between attachment anxiety in romantic relationships and internal psychological processes. These results are consistent with prior literature showing that higher levels of self-esteem are almost always associated with lower levels of anxiety (Schmitt & Allik, 2005). In regard to autonomy, our findings support Bowlby's idea (1988/ 2009) that an insecure attachment may be expected to be associated with problematic autonomous functioning. Moreover, LaGuardia and Patrick (2008) suggest that sensitive close others responding to a person's initiatives can help the individual to develop autonomy and can encourage exploration. We can conclude that romantic relationships seem to be a significant factor affecting the quality of self-related characteristics and feelings of autonomy in emerging adulthood.

Career development

Traditionally, in line with the objective markers of adulthood, academic or vocational studies are considered mainly adolescent activity, whereas work is considered an adult activity. Despite the crudeness of this simplification, many Czech young people plan other adulthood milestones according to their progress through their studies and career. Marriage, independent household, parenthood and home ownership all may be conditioned upon finishing school or getting a stable job (Katrňák et al., 2010). The obvious reason for this association is simply the assumption that finishing school or getting a stable job will lead to achieving one of the most important features of adulthood – financial independence. This is supported by the finding of the association between economic dependence on parents and perceived developmental status in a sample of Czech emerging adults (Macek, Bejček, & Vaníčková, 2007). This assumption is further founded in the expectation that finishing one's studies (especially university studies) results in getting a stable, well-paid job. This, however, is less true today than previously, as the numbers of unemployed or underemployed individuals with university degrees are rising (Czech Employment Office, UPCR, 2014). One of the reasons for this may lie in the combination of the trend of prolonging study time with unclear career identity, which results in frequent merging of education and work, frequent changing of jobs in the early career phase (RANDSTAD, 2014) and a high proportion of full-

time workers (39%) who still perceive themselves to be emerging adults (Macek, Bejček, & Vaníčková, 2007). It appears that the period of university studies and the first few years after college is now largely dedicated to settling on a career identity. This fits well with emerging adulthood theory (Arnett, 2004) and is also supported by the finding from our ongoing study (see Box 1). Only 66% of responding students consider their current studies to be "direct preparation for their career" as opposed to indirect preparation (30%) or temporary activity (3%). Still, 67% consider education to be currently more important for them than work. Work is considered more important by only 9%, and 15% report that work and education are equally important.

While studying, emerging adults explore a variety of occupational possibilities through decisions concerning fields of study or different part-time jobs. The majority of participants in our sample were currently studying at higher education institutions (85.7%). At the same time, more than half of participants were working (51.3%, with 85.9% working students), while half the sample worked one or more full days a week at jobs that are not considered "minor" by our respondents. This is similar to Arnett and Schwab's (2012) finding of 70% of young American students working and studying at the same time. It should be noted that public university education is free of charge in the Czech Republic, so only a minority of students have tuition as the main reason for work. Half of those who have a job report that it is directly or indirectly related to their career goals, and only 45.3% percent report that it is only for the money, which supports the idea that young people feel they should enter the workplace as soon as possible. It has been established that collecting work experience (Stringer & Kerpelman, 2010), and especially career-relevant work experience (Ohler, Levinson, & Barker, 1996), can enhance career maturity and career decision self-efficacy, so we can appreciate the effort to enter the workplace while studying. In our study, we found a difference in the level of career-decision self-efficacy (CDSE; Betz, Klein, & Taylor, 1996) between young people with different work status ($F(3, 330) = 6.75$, $p < .01$), especially between working and studying respondents. Moreover, career-decision self-efficacy was found to be positively associated with self-esteem in the group of students who work ($r = .45$, $p < .01$).

One of the basic features of emerging adulthood is looking for identity-based work that provides them with self-expression and self-fulfilment (Arnett, 2004; Jensen, 2011). In our sample, 19% reported having their desired job, 15% considered their current job to be their back-up plan job and 62% considered it to be just a random job. This result corresponds with the idea of career exploration during the time of career preparation (Porfeli & Skorikov,

2010) as well as with Arnett's (2004) conclusion that, despite their positive expectations concerning their future job, young people have difficulty finding their ideal job and have to make some career compromises.

The role of relational support in enhancing or inhibiting the career decision-making process has been stated in much of the career developmental literature (e.g., Arnett, 2004; Germeijs & Verschueren, 2009; Murphy, Blustein, Bohlig,& Platt, 2010). It was pointed out that mothers' support is a significant contributor to a smooth school-to-work transition (Murphy et al., 2010). Although mothers' support was the most prevalent factor in our sample, general findings showed that young Czechs cannot count on the automatic support of their closest others in their career decisions. Only 60% of mothers and 48% of fathers agreed with their decisions to take their current jobs. In 42% of cases, both mother and father agreed. A little more than half of participants' romantic partners and friends agreed with their job choices. The reason for the disagreement of the close others may lie in the fact that many of these jobs were low-level jobs (e.g., shop assistant, bartender, or food service jobs), in which career relevancy may be seen only by the respondent. Moreover, getting a job is also an exercise of autonomy, which means that intrinsic motivation for the job is valued above approval by significant others.

As a developmental task, establishing a clear career identity is positively related to generic indicators of successful development like well-being or self-esteem. Kunnen, Sappa, van Geert, & Bonica (2008) found a positive association between stable commitment and high level of well-being in school and work life domains in emerging adulthood. Our study shows a small positive association between self-esteem and career identity commitment ($r = .15$, $p < .01$), as well as between self-esteem and school commitment ($r = .22$, $p < .01$).

In conclusion, the career domain plays a dual role in the achievement of adult status. It is important in achieving the objective markers of adulthood, but, at the same time, achieving career identity is an important developmental task in itself.

View across domains: The four classes of Czech emerging adults

So far, we have described some trends and characteristics of Czech emerging adults in several domains of life, including their relationships with parents and romantic partners and their school and work life. We have shown that each of these domains specifically affects self-development and identity formation. Until now, we have not stressed that these domains should not be viewed as separate but rather interrelated. Now, we focus on the specific

constellations of these characteristics that can be found in our sample of emerging adults. In line with the person-oriented approach (cf. von Eye & Spiel, 2010), we are first interested in whether there are groups of emerging adults that develop in a similar way in terms of the main descriptors of identity development across domains. The purpose of the following analysis was to empirically identify classes of respondents in terms of current levels of commitment and exploration in the domains of study, work, romantic relationships and relationship with parents. To examine the possible existence of groups that are similar in terms of the structure of their exploration and commitment, we conducted a latent profile analysis (LPA) in Mplus (Muthén & Muthén, 1998, 2012). The basic idea of LPA is to introduce a latent categorical variable to explain the variance and covariance of continuous observed indicators (exploration and commitment scores).

Table 1

Means and Standard Deviations for the Exploration and Commitment Variables

	N	M	SD
Exploration in romantic relationships	965	2.85	.52
Commitment in romantic relationships	963	3.27	.43
Exploration in current education (HI=HI exploration)	960	2.98	.49
Commitment in current education (HI=HI commitment)	961	3.23	.51
Exploration in current job (HI=HI exploration)	557	2.69	.58
Commitment in current job (HI=HI commitment)	557	2.49	.74
Exploration in relationship with parents	780	2.42	.59
Commitment in relationship with parents	776	3.32	.40

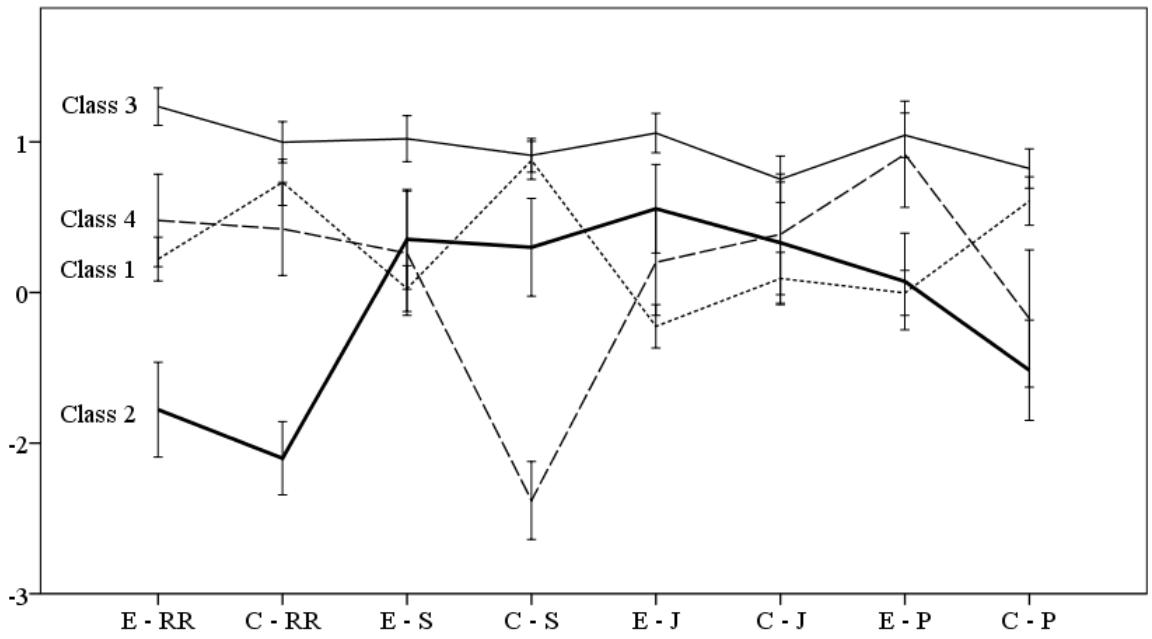
Basic class description

From several models we chose the four-class model based on statistical indicators (BIC, BLRT) and the subjective judgement of model interpretability. In the four-class model, there are 2 larger classes comprising 41% and 35% of respondents and two smaller classes comprising 13% and 11% of respondents, respectively (see Table 2). After conducting LPA to identify the latent classes, we then explored the difference between these classes in terms of other variables. Figure 2 reports the mean levels of exploration and commitment in the domains of romantic relationships, school, job, and relationship to parents. All variables in the figure have been standardized for ease of interpretation. Classes differ both in the overall level and in the patterns of commitment and exploration across domains. The character of the classes lies not only in their differences but also in their similarities. The classes do not differ in most demographics, like region, size of the place of residence, or parental education. The differences in mean age are also minimal; all class mean ages fit within a narrow half-year range. They also do not differ in the proportion of university/college students or their self-report of studying and/or working. It must also be noted that class membership is independent of missing values in C/E variables due to respondents who were neither students nor employed.

Table 2. Class Membership Proportions and Mean Probabilities

Class	N	%	Mean probability of membership
1 – Committed	402	35	0,72
2 – Career-oriented	123	13	0,79
3 – Achievers	480	41	0,78
4 – Reconsiderers	107	11	0,77

Figure 2. Class Profiles Based on Means



Note. E = exploration, C = commitment, RR = romantic relationship, S = current study, J = current job, P = parents. Error bars represent 95% CI.

Class 1: Committers

Class 1 (the second largest) reports similar exploration in all domains except work, where it is slightly lower. What is characteristic of this class is the pattern of levels of commitment, which are higher than exploration within each domain. This would suggest that respondents in this class have committed and are not exploring any more (or have not explored much). The fact that it is in the domain of career/job that they report their lowest levels of both exploration and commitment does not point to a developmental explanation but rather suggests that this is a personality-defined class. We use the label of "Committers" for this class.

On average, members of this class report the highest clarity of self and higher autonomy and self-esteem compared to other classes. Developmentally, this class presents itself as succeeding.

In the domain of relationship with parents, the four classes are clearly distinguished. This class reports lower than average exploration and higher commitment. Based on this, we could describe this subgroup as those who feel they do not have to think long to know what is

important in their relationships with their parents. In terms of quality of attachment (IPPA, Armsden & Greenberg, 1987), they reports higher values for both mother and father.

In the domain of romantic relationships, the "committedness" of this class is supported by the highest mean reported length of the current relationship. These respondents also reports higher psychological need satisfaction (autonomy, relatedness, and competence) in their current relationship. Members of this class usually study at the school at which they wanted to study (more than 75%). Around 70% of them think their studies are directly relevant to their career, and the remaining 30% think they are indirectly relevant. There are no differences in time spent working among the classes. Class 1 reports higher career decision self-efficacy and lower career indecision. So far, we can describe the Committers as those who study what they want, believe they chose well, and are willing to support themselves with "any random job". In regard to their future plans, they report less frequently the goals of independent living and living outside the Czech Republic.

Class 2: Career-oriented

This class, one of the smaller ones, is characterized by lower levels of exploration and commitment in the domain of romantic relationships. This is accompanied by a lower level of commitment towards parents. Thus, we may think of this class as career-oriented and not currently involved in relationships. In line with gender stereotypes, this class has a higher proportion of males (34% as compared to around 20% in other classes). We use the label of "Career-oriented" for this class.

On average, members of this class report lower autonomy and self-esteem compared to members of classes 1 and 3. In terms of subjective developmental status, members of this class more often than others report feeling like they are still adolescents rather than adults.

Respondents from this subgroup report lower than average exploration, as well as lower commitment in the domain of relationship with parents. They are not really sure about their commitment to their parents and do not think much about it. They are looking ahead and take their parents for granted or consider them to be unimportant. They report higher attachment avoidance in their relationship with the father than do the other classes, suggesting that at least part of this class may actually avoid thinking about this topic. In terms of quality of attachment (IPPA, Armsden & Greenberg, 1987), this class reports lower values than others for both mother and father.

The career-oriented class is the most specific class in the domain of romantic relationships. Members of this class are not sure what is important for them in terms of

romantic relationships and do not spend time thinking about it. It is not surprising that this class shows the highest level of avoidance in the relationship with romantic partner (with class 4 being second highest). In open responses about the important aspects of their relationships, they tend to give very general and vague descriptions. Also, in this class the proportion of people currently in relationship is slightly lower compared to other classes (47% compared to about 60%).

Only half of the members of this class study at the school at which they wanted to study, which is a substantially lower proportion compared to other classes. Around 70% in this class think their studies are directly relevant to their career, and around 30% think they are indirectly relevant. There are no differences in time spent working among the classes. The career-oriented individuals report lower career decision self-efficacy and higher career indecision compared to other classes. They may not all study exactly what they wanted, but they have a career vision and often support it with a career-relevant job. In terms of future plans and expectations, they mention romantic relationships and family less frequently than others.

Class 3: Achievers

This classes, the largest of the four, comprises respondents who report above-average levels of exploration and commitment in all four domains. We use the label of "Achievers" for them.

On average, members of this class report higher autonomy and self-esteem. In terms of subjective developmental status, members of this class report perceiving themselves less often as adolescents and more often as adults. Developmentally, this class presents itself as succeeding.

Compared to others, they report higher than average exploration and also higher commitment in the domain of relationship with parents. They seem to have healthy relationships with parents; they know what is important for them in their relationship with their parents and still take time to think about it periodically. Also, they report lowest avoidance in the attachment relationship with their mothers out of all the classes. In terms of quality of attachment (IPPA, Armsden & Greenberg, 1987), class 3 reports higher values for both mother and father.

Achievers report higher psychological need satisfaction (autonomy, relatedness, and competence) in their current relationship. Members of this class usually study at the school at which they wanted to study (over 75%). Around 70% of individuals in this class think their

studies are directly relevant to their career, and around 30% think it is indirectly relevant, like in Class 1. These respondents report higher career decision self-efficacy and lower career indecision compared to other classes. The Achievers believe they have chosen their career well, but also more often have a career-relevant job.

Regarding future expectations, they mention the plan to have a family and improve their current romantic relationship more often than do other classes.

Class 4: Reconsiderers

The smallest class is characterized by a very low level of commitment in current study and higher exploration in the relationship with parents combined with lower commitment in the current relationship. This suggests a pattern of reconsideration; thus, we use the label "Reconsiderers" for this class.

On average, members of this class report lower indicators of the sense of self, including autonomy, self-esteem, and clarity of self. Reconsiderers also report higher than average exploration but lower commitment in the domain of relationship with parents. They think a lot about the current role of their parents in their lives but are relatively unsure about what it is. In terms of quality of attachment (IPPA, Armsden & Greenberg, 1987), this class reports lower values for both mother and father. Moreover, they report the shortest length of current relationship of all the classes. This supports the image of this group as currently less committed, more exploring, and possibly reconsidering their choices.

Only 38% of the members of this class study at the school at which they wanted to study, which is the lowest proportion of all the classes. In this class, 58% report that their studies are only indirectly relevant to their career, and 14% think they are completely irrelevant. They spend about half a day per week less studying than do other classes, but there are no differences in time spent working among the classes. Also, they report lower career decision self-efficacy and higher career indecision. The Reconsiderers are often not studying what they wanted to study and typically support themselves with any job they can get. They spend less time studying but do not compensate for it with work. Their problem may be that they are not sure what they want and are uncertain whether they have chosen or can choose well. This may be related to the slightly higher proportion of students of non-professional study programmes in this class.

Compared to others, they report fewer future plans related to family building. More frequently than other classes, they mention plans to resolve some problems in their current

romantic relationship (adj. res. = 2.0), plans for long-term stay outside the Czech Republic and a desire for significant, unforgettable experiences.

Conclusions

In our study, we provide evidence that young Czechs between the ages 18 and 29 have many attributes generally used to delineate the period of emerging adulthood. Similarly to other young people in Central Europe, they are still not very committed to a long-term life perspective in their actions; more likely, they focus on achieving short-term goals and take up on various opportunities. As the first generation of young Czechs growing up from an early age in a free democratic society, they highly prize personal freedom and possibilities to direct and influence their own lives. That also corresponds with the finding that emerging adults are the most satisfied age group in the Czech population (see Rabušic & Hamanová, 2009).

In the Czech society, there is a long tradition of close relationships between members of the original family and parental support in the process of transition to adulthood. Parental support – financial and also social - was centred on starting family life, soon after graduation from secondary school or university. Societal changes from the early 1990s had influenced the change of life style of all generations and they had also transformed the relationship between parents and children. It can be said that most parents accept the life style and needs of current emerging adults. As is evident also from the results of our research, relationships between parents and children are more symmetrical and the role of each parent is becoming more specific. In particular, it means that direct influence and parental control are decreasing in various domains of the lives of emerging adults (romantic relationships, study and work). However, their influence still remains important for self-development and autonomy development. Perceived closeness to mother has been a long-time factor affecting self-esteem, whereas for internal motivation and assuming responsibility for one's actions it is the perception and evaluation of the relationship with father that matters.

Likewise, the significant others become differentiated. Romantic partners rise in importance and significance not only due to the erotic dimension of the relationship but also as a source of social support and care. Similarly to parents, they become important attachment figures for self-development and identity formation. However, partners generally do not tend to replace parents in the hierarchy of significant others. Our results show that these relationships are rather parallel or simultaneous. Romantic relationships can take on a great variety of forms and Czech emerging adults are very liberal at that. They are considered stable

by approximately a half of our respondents; yet they hardly ever see it in a time perspective longer than two years.

Furthermore, our data confirm that in emerging adulthood most young people combine study and work while still using the end of studies as a significant future milestone. At the same time, the speed of societal changes is reflected by the relatively low level of parental agreement with current job. Perhaps, in the absence of tuition, parents would rather see more commitment to study than work and need to be persuaded that today the commitment often means doing both.

All these results support our former conclusion that the third decade of life is viewed among young Czechs as a specific life stage, different from the preceding adolescence and different from full adulthood (Macek, Bejček, & Vaníčková, 2007).

There are some limitations that apply to the findings from our current study. It is necessary to say that our results are more relevant for women and students (people who entered tertiary education). Even though we do not find many or large gender differences among our respondents caution is warranted when interpreting these findings. It is possible that males voluntarily involved in this type of research share with females salient characteristics that we can only hypothesize. That is, demand characteristics of the study attenuated gender differences. Similar argument applies to the difference between students and non-students.

Committers, Career oriented, Achievers, and Reconsideres are only working labels for the four classes representing specific constellations of exploration and commitment in the four domains we investigated. Psychological relevancy of this classification is evidence by the differences in variables representing relationships with self, parents, partners and career development. An advantage of the person-oriented clustering approach is that the limitations of the sample place a limit mainly on the number of different classes identified, not so much on their characteristics. We can be fairly sure the classes described here exist (within the epistemological limits of LPA) but there are bound to be some other classes members of which were not sufficiently represented in our sample. Our analyses present only a cross-sectional picture. Thus the classes describe people in a particular point in time. Class membership may change as a person's life situation changes. Nevertheless, we have some indices that at least some of the characteristics of the classes are stable, personality related individual differences.

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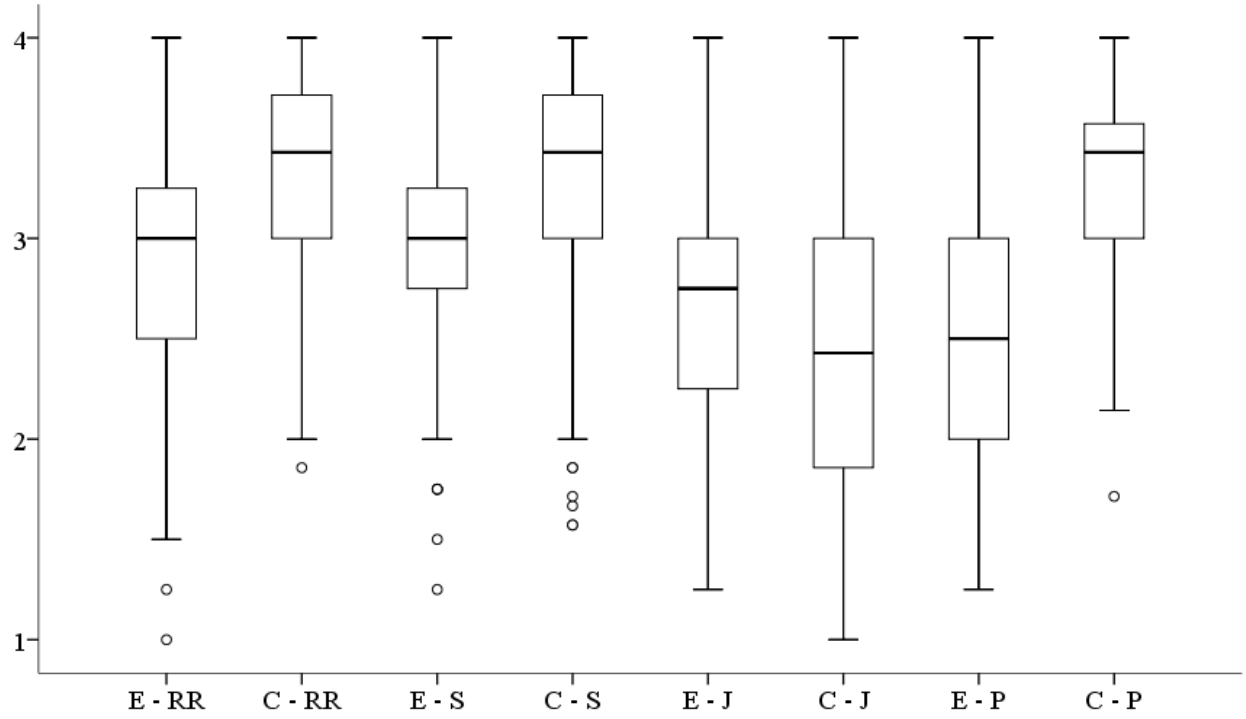
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Footnotes

1

Unless otherwise noted, all empirical results come from our currently running longitudinal study “Paths to Adulthood”, which is briefly described in Box 1. For more details regarding the methods of this study, see Macek et al. (2014).

Figure 1. The distribution of exploration and commitment in the four domains

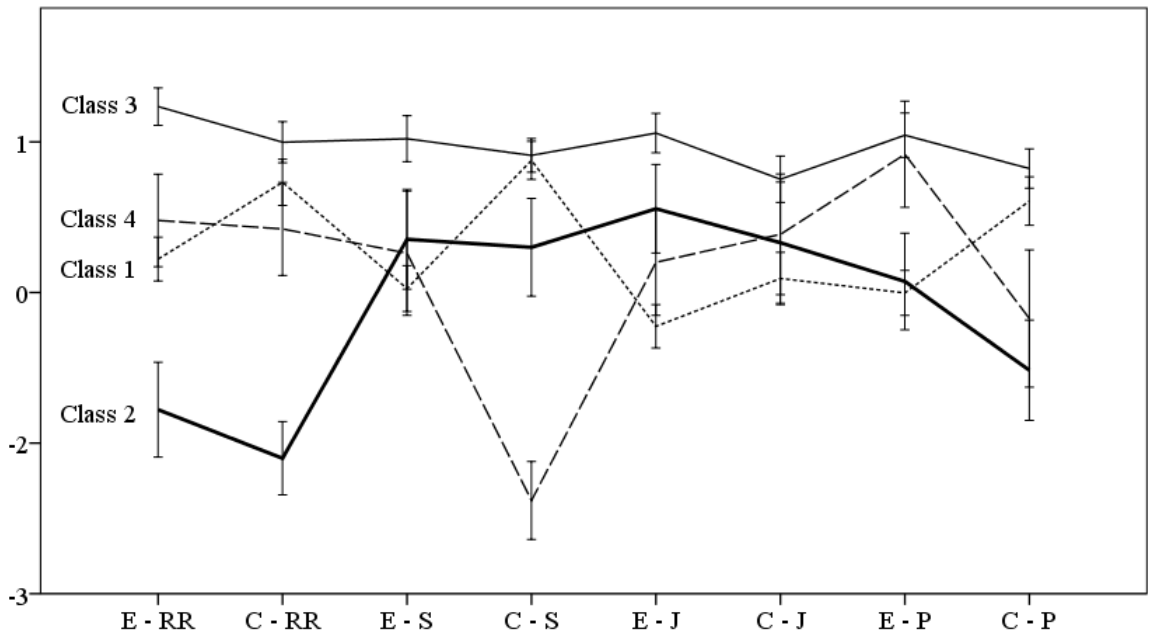


Note. E = exploration, C = commitment, RR = romantic relationship, S = current education, J = current job, P = parents.

Table 2. Class Membership Proportions and Mean Probabilities

Class	N	%	Mean probability of membership
1 – Committed	402	35	0,72
2 – Career-oriented	123	13	0,79
3 – Achievers	480	41	0,78
4 – Reconsiderers	107	11	0,77

Figure 2. Class Profiles Based on Means



Note. E = exploration, C = commitment, RR = romantic relationship, S = current study, J = current job, P = parents. Error bars represent 95% CI.