Chapter 4
Studying Transition Processes

The way one conceptualizes the transition to adulthood suggests the methods that one would use to study it. For example, sociology's life-course approach emphasizes how socially structured opportunities and limitations explain differences in the duration and sequencing of events associated with the transition to adulthood. The life-course approach studies the specific order of events that structure a person's life, including life stages and transitions, as well as formal institutions and cultural values that contribute to that structure. Here a cause – effect relationship between limitations, opportunities, and some of the structurally defined properties of the transition (duration) are monitored and analyzed. Often retrospective recollection of the opportunities, limitations, and the duration of the transition provide data for the analysis. Such studies are often either cross-sectional (one time point measured) or longitudinal (two or more time points measured). Many questionnaire-based studies are complemented by some qualitative studies mainly relying on retrospective narrative accounts. Anthropological approaches to the transition to adulthood study how physiological changes are acknowledged in culturally structured events that, in turn, recognize the individual's readiness for incorporation into adult social groupings or roles (e.g., Schlegel & Barry, 1991; van Gennep, 1909/1960). Social recognition during structured events highlights the salience of community relationships. Phenomenological approaches examine the meaning of adulthood as well as self-descriptors (e.g., being responsible) during the transition to adulthood (Arnett, 1997; Arnett & Taber, 1994; Nelson & Barry, 2005; Shanahan et al., 2005). Developmental psychological and social psychological approaches (e.g., Fuligni & Pedersen, 2002; Reitzle, 2007; Scharf et al., 2004) emphasize personal characteristics such as agency or the subjective experience of adulthood to explain differences in individuals' pathways into or out of social positions or roles associated with adulthood. Psychological approaches also study personality characteristics, which are assumed to be relatively stable, as impacting the outcome of the transition process (e.g., Cohen et al., 2005).

In general then, the emphasis in studying transition to adulthood across social science disciplines is on individuals. The conceptualization of social relationships plays a minor role in most research on the transition to adulthood. It also is often assumed that both objective and subjective transition information and events are

freely accessible and reproducible by research participants either in questionnaires or narratives. In addition, the transition is often seen as a result of the causal impact of some variables or as an event or a series of events, and not as a goal-directed process. Thus, not only are longitudinal measures seldom used, but when they are employed, they contain only a few discrete measurement points. Further, transition is seldom defined, fully including manifest, social, and subjective processes.

We propose an approach to the transition to adulthood based on the joint action between individuals that over time coalesce to construct transition to adulthood projects (see also Domene & Young, 2008; Valach, Young, et al., 2002; and Young, Valach, & Domene, 2005; for detailed descriptions of the method). Our conception goes beyond individual processes. It assumes joint goal-directed processes and includes manifest, social, and subjective processes. The focus of the cases reported in this book is on the joint action of several youth, parents, and counselors who are engaged in one way or another in making the transition to adulthood or with those making the transition. Thus, this conceptualization calls for methods to study the transition to adulthood in a longitudinal way, accounting for joint goal-directed processes.

In describing how we studied the transition processes reported in this book, it is important to underline that we were interested in monitoring these processes as they occurred in everyday life, in a way in which would be compatible with counselors' work. We also hope that the method allows counselors to implement this view in their work. In our studies we put a high priority on participants not being used in the research process as uninformed, passive subjects, easily manipulated. Rather, we approached and engaged them in these research studies as active, informed, self-responsible, self-determined, and empowered human beings participating in social relationships and in the social construction of their lives. It also was relevant for us that we formulated research questions relevant to the participants' lives. Two examples from our research illustrate the method we have used.

Example 1

Consider the case of an 18-year-old woman and her mother who volunteered to participate in a research study on how parents and youth work together to facilitate youth's transition to adulthood. The young woman is in Grade 12 and works part-time on the weekends. She plans to attend university in the following academic year and she aspires to become a schoolteacher. Her parents are immigrants to Canada from Asia. The mother works as an instructor.

This mother and daughter began their participation by responding to an advertisement for research participants with a telephone call to our research team in which the nature of their involvement was explained, preliminary data and agreement to participate was obtained. Both mother and daughter participated in this telephone interview separately and agreement to participate was obtained separately for each of them. A face-to-face meeting with two research assistants followed the telephone

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interview. This meeting consisted of a warm-up or introductory interview with the youth, her mother, and two research assistants. Its purpose was to identify the topics of conversations that the mother and daughter are having relevant to the daughter's transition to adulthood. Inviting the youth to describe her current life and activities as well as her short- and long-term aspirations facilitated identifying these topics. Then her mother was invited to comment on her role in what her daughter has just described. Once two or three topics were identified, these research participants were invited to have a video-recorded conversation on one of them without the researchers' present. In this case, the mother and daughter had a 17-minute conversation that covered a range of topics including logistics of the daughter's prom, negotiating about expenses, issues about continuing to live in, or move out of, the family home, and time management.

Immediately following the conversation, the mother and daughter were interviewed separately by one of the researchers. In this procedure, called the self-confrontation interview, the video of the conversation was played back and stopped every minute by the research assistant, who asked the participant to recall her thoughts and feelings for that minute that they had just viewed on the video (see also Chapter 15 for an extensive discussion of the use of the self-confrontation procedure in counseling). For example, in her self-confrontation interview, the mother recalled for a particular minute of the conversation:

> At this point, when she's, when I threw out the whole array of subjects that she wanted to talk about this, so I thought, that's a good thing to talk about. And these are kind of difficult things we will talk about at home and so I thought, we can go by that. And I was thinking, will it qualify in your transition to adult kind of thing. So I wasn't quite sure. I thought. . .

Later in the self-confrontation, the mother recalled her feelings when the conversation had turned to the difficult topic of finances:

> . . .so then I kind of – when I saw that, I try to calm . . . but my voice and my tone – I realize that I don't have a good voice. I don't have a good calming voice. I have a very excitable voice, so I try to be calm and when I sense that she's not too . . . because I do want to keep the conversation going and not have her shut down. . .

The record of these procedures were subsequently transcribed and analyzed in conjunction with the video-recordings. The two research assistants who had collected the data with this mother and daughter, which is described later in this chapter, undertook the analysis. Subsequently, the research team reviewed their analysis to ensure consensus and consistency across analyses in the study. The analysis resulted in three narrative summaries written in the everyday language of goals, steps, and behaviors. One narrative was from each of the perspectives of the daughter and her mother, and a joint narrative summary, which tentatively identified the joint transition to adulthood project in which this mother and daughter were engaged. In this case, the joint project was briefly identified as "promoting the daughter's independence by means of collaboration and cooperation."

About 2 months after the initial data collection procedure, this mother and daughter met with the two researchers again to review their individual and joint narratives, to consider the tentative identification of the joint project, and to make any changes

in it. In this case, both mother and daughter were in agreement with the project as identified from the analysis of their data. They were then invited to monitor this project over the next 6 months by completing a log whenever they engaged in a conversation or an action pertinent to the project and by responding to researcher-initiated telephone calls every 2 weeks to provide further data on the progress of their joint project. In this case, the daughter responded to eight telephone interviews with the researcher, while the mother completed six. Neither participant completed any logs.

Following the 6-month monitoring period, the youth and her mother attended a final face-to-face data collection session in which they were invited to have another joint conversation on their project followed by self-confrontation interviews, as described above. Finally, there was a short debriefing interview in which any outstanding issues for the participants were discussed. The whole data set was transcribed and analyzed.

The focus of the data-gathering procedure is to gather the actual joint actions that people engage in during the transition to adulthood. In the case described above, the actions are the conversations that the mother and daughter engaged in together that they considered as relevant to the transition. Inasmuch as these actions coalesced across time in terms of shared meaning, we could identify them as a joint project.

Example 2

Of course, transition to adulthood involves joint actions and projects with people other than the youth's parents. Counseling is one such joint action and project, which is one of the foci of this book. The following case illustrates how we collected data in counseling for the transition to adulthood project from an action-theoretical perspective.

In this case, a 21-year-old female university student volunteers to receive four counseling sessions in which she is able to discuss issues pertinent to the transition to adulthood. A professional counselor with experience working with clients in this age group offered the counseling. The client in this instance wants to resolve career issues and to gain greater independence from her parents – issues that she saw as related.

Both the counselor and the client had agreed to have their counseling video-recorded and to participate in the other aspects of the research study. The counseling proceeds under the theoretical and professional competence of the counselor. However, following each session, both the client and the counselor participate with one of the researchers in the self-confrontation interview described earlier. In this case, the researchers identified a 15-minute segment of the counseling session for review in the self-confrontation interview. These segments were randomly determined, but were the same for both the client and the counselor, and neither the client nor the counselor knew beforehand what 15-minute segment was to be reviewed. Data from each counseling session and the corresponding self-confrontation

interviews were transcribed and analyzed using procedures described below. At the beginning of the third counseling session, the researcher met briefly with the counselor and client to identity a tentative counseling project that the researchers had identified on the basis of the analysis of the first two counseling sessions. In this case, the tentative statement of the joint counseling project was to explore family and childhood issues that may be influencing the client's decision-making process, particularly the conflict between two career options that the client is considering. The counselor and client were free to use or ignore the information provided.

The Action-Project Method

This research method represents an alternative to the traditional ways in which the transition to adulthood has been studied, as we briefly reviewed earlier in this chapter. It reflects the actual goal-directed experiences of young people who are actively engaged in this transition. In reflecting on these experiences, the method undertakes to respond to the complexity that is involved in the transition to adulthood.

In previous chapters, we described contextual action theory, which serves as the conceptual framework for understanding the transition. The action-project method is an open, holistic, and flexible approach that reflects this conceptual framework. We have engaged in a range of studies in which this method has been developed and refined. Some of these studies have dealt explicitly with the transition to adulthood, others with younger adolescents, their parents, with topics that anticipate the transition to adulthood as well as other pertinent topics such as health.

Formulating Research Questions

Our studies have been guided by specific research questions generated from the literature and consistent with the conceptualization of transition to adulthood as a goal-directed joint project. For example, in one study, we formulated the research questions as follows:

> How do the joint actions of parents and youth facilitate the transition of youth from school to post school activities and engagement?
>
> How do youth and their parents jointly construct, articulate, and act on goals and strategies pertinent to the transition to post school life? (Young et al., 2008, p. 298)

The first task in formulating these research questions is to conceptualize the transition to adulthood as goal-directed action and series of actions. The previous chapters readily make apparent that a goal-directed conceptualization is warranted and may be generative for studying the transition to adulthood, as well as other phenomena.

Unit of Analysis

Action, specifically the joint conversations between parents and youth and counselors and youth, was the unit of analysis we employed in most of the cases reported in this book. We assumed, however, that transition to adulthood encompassed a complex series of actions, best understood as a project or projects. Thus, while the unit of analysis began with the joint action of youth with either parents or counselors, we undertook to gather a series of them so that we would have data on what the participants saw as a common joint project over time.

Data Gathering

By video-recording the actual joint actions between parents and youth and counselors and youth, we are able to meet the criterion that data be considered from the three perspectives on action, that is, manifest behavior, internal processes, and social meaning. We also collected data at subsequent time points over a 6- to 8-month period for the parent–youth studies and over four counseling sessions for the counselor youth study, making our data not only longitudinal but also representing joint projects. These different kinds of data are illustrated in Fig. 4.1. Specifically, video-recordings of the actual conversations between the participants captured the manifest behavior of the action. The video-recording of manifest behavior provides a starting point for gathering data, moment by moment, on subjective processes occurring during the recorded conversation. In the case of counseling, the action was deemed to be the counseling conversation between the counselor and the client. For the study of the parent–youth transition to adulthood study, the action was the conversation between the parent and youth. These were supplemented across time with participant log and researcher-initiated telephone monitoring. Data on internal processes were gathered through a video-supported recall of the participant's thoughts, feelings, and sensations, called the
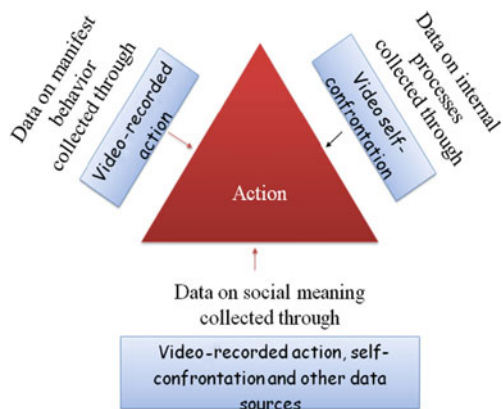

Fig. 4.1 Data sources and means of data collection using the action-project method (Young et al., 2005, p. 219). Reprinted with permission Journal of Counseling Psychology

self-confrontation interview. Finally, the social meaning of the action was accessed through the participant's perceptual comments about the action at various times during the data-gathering processes including during the self-confrontation, initial, and final interviews. The data from these sources allowed us to construct rich, detailed descriptions of the transition-to-adulthood process as a joint project between both parents and youth and counselors and youth.

Data Sources

Video-recording served to capture the manifest behavior between parent and youth and counselor and youth. These recordings provided material for obtaining information on subjective processes in the self-confrontation procedure. In the parent–youth studies, manifest behavior was also reported through logs kept by the participants and the researcher-initiated telephone monitoring of the participants. In the case of both the participant logs and the telephone monitoring, behavioral reports are provided from the participant's perspective and are retrospective, but the primary data is actual ongoing action between the participants in the form of joint actions.

Gathering concurrent cognitions and emotions that the participant experienced during the action augmented manifest behavior data. These cognitions and emotions were accessed by replaying the videotape of the action, stopping it approximately every minute, and asking the participant to recall the thoughts and feelings they had during that moment in the conversation. This procedure, called the self-confrontation, has connections with similar procedures, for example, Bloom's (1954) procedure using audiotape and Kagan's (1984) Interpersonal Process Recall have been used extensively in training and research. Our use of this procedure is embedded in our conceptualization of action and serves as one perspective on the action. The procedure is guided by two general questions, which are, "What were you thinking during that segment of the conversation?" and "What were you feeling during that segment of the conversation?" The self-confrontation procedure was conducted with both participants. In combining data on manifest actions and the subjective processes we achieved better insight and understanding of the ongoing internal and external processes that contribute to an action. However, this understanding could not be achieved without referring to the social meaning of these processes.

Data about the social meaning attributed to the action is usually collected through naïve observation in which members of a communication community describe ongoing behaviors. In these studies, these data emerged in the self-confrontation procedure, as participants not only provided specific recall of their thoughts and feelings, but commented on the meaning of their own and other's actions for them. For example, in this segment from the self-confrontation of the conversation cited earlier, the mother explained to the researcher, who is not Asian, the meaning of her parenting behavior:

> Yeah and I do. I do, because I sometimes . . . I mean well and then my Asian parenting skills will come in and then I will be so task focused, task oriented and then I forget that it's about

the relationship. It's not about keeping budget. So I have to tell myself and that's okay. So it's hard for me to – but I do conscientiously try to have a calmer voice in that kind of . . . situation. . . . This is Canadian.

In the studies involving parents and adolescents, data about the social meaning of actions were also gathered in the participant logs, the telephone monitoring, and the initial warm-up and debriefing interviews.

Implementing Procedures

The action-project method was implemented in slightly different ways for the study of parent–youth joint actions and counselor–client joint actions. However, both involved video-recording the conversations between the participants, that is, the action.

In the case of the study of parent–youth joint projects regarding the transition to adulthood, this data-gathering procedure included an introductory interview between the participants and two members of our research team. The purpose of these interviews was to facilitate a conversation between the parent and youth about a topic important to them and relevant to the transition to adulthood by tapping into the youth's goals and current activities, and how both parents and youth were involved in helping to realize them. Parents were asked explicitly, "How are you involved in helping (youth's name) realize his or her goals?" This initial conversation generated a conversation or conversations that could readily be carried on independently by the participants: For example, in the mother–daughter project described earlier in this chapter, the daughter described the kind and topics of their joint conversations in the introductory interview as follows:

> I think more of my future, my education. We talk about that quite a lot. Um, we do talk sometimes, like, she'll be watching Dr. Phil or Oprah and then I'll come have a seat with her and, you know, when she can sense that I've got something important to say or just want to chat, then she'll turn off the TV and we'll have some mom-daughter time, and we just talk about, like, how I'm feeling with my friends or stuff at church. Not really so much guy relationships but more my friends and my circle.

In the parent–youth studies, the researcher suggested to the participants that their conversation could last about 15 min, but they were instructed that they could take as much or as little time as they wanted to have the conversation. In effect the mean time for the initial parent–youth conversations in the Young et al.'s (2008) study was 12.9 minutes. The final conversations in this research were an average of 13.6 minutes.

The parent–youth conversations were followed by separate self-confrontation interviews with the parent and youth on their immediately preceding conversation (described above). These conversations were further supplemented with logs that parents and youth were invited to keep, in which they were asked to record actions, events, and thoughts on joint actions relevant to their transition to adulthood project.

The procedures used in the counseling for transition to adulthood study also gather data about social meaning, internal processes, and manifest behavior. In

this instance, the manifest behavior was the counseling between the counselor and the young person about what the latter saw as a transition-to-adulthood concern. Internal processes and social meaning were gathered through the self-confrontation procedure for a random selected 15-minute segment of the counseling session.

Analysis

In order to answer the research questions we posed in these studies, we sought to describe the transition to adulthood actions and projects that were shared between parents and youth or in counseling. By describing these in great detail and seeing several related actions over time, we were able to infer transition-to-adulthood projects. The project was not arrived at asking the participants "what is the most important project you are involved in?" but was inferred from the joint actions in which the participants engaged in their conversation. This is a substantial difference from many other studies as we conceptualize that these projects are based on performative (on what people actually do) processes and are not a perfect execution of premeditated processes. The analysis begins with description, and ends with identifying how these projects are organized, that is, how they fit within the larger configuration of life projects, how they are steered, controlled, and regulated, and the internal and external resources needed for their implementation. The analysis of these transition-to-adulthood actions resembles a hermeneutic process (e.g., Packer, 1985), although not working primarily with texts, in which there is a back and forth movement between the data we had collected and the action theory framework enunciated earlier in the book. The analysis proceeds from description to organization. It begins with "detailed, progressive descriptions of episodes of social interchange and gradually articulates more and more of their organization" (Packer, p. 1,089). The purpose in the analysis of the transition to adulthood used in this book is to describe the actions that occurred and to identify how similar actions across time are organized to form joints projects.

In analyzing parent–youth conversations or client–counselor counseling sessions, we considered all the data sources simultaneously. Two members of our respective research teams worked together to intensively analyze the data record for each case. These initial analyses were then reviewed by the entire research team and discussed until consensus was reached. In this analysis, the research team studied the goal-directed processes by identifying and coding action elements (level 3) and functionally defined action steps (level 2) in meaningful units of action (level 1). While the subjective data from the self-confrontation interview was used directly in the description of the observed processes, the work with data on social meaning needs special consideration. Social meaning is derived from naive observation.

Naïve Observation

The participants in these studies could be said to approach the recorded actions without systematic scientific propositions. Thus, they were able to describe the

processes using their everyday language. This is an important component of our research approach. It underlines that our analysis is neither presented as definitive, objective truth independent from our inquiry nor that we are studying solely physically defined data. Our analysis is rooted in the social meaning of a given communication community's knowledge of processes. In studies in which members of cultural and communicative communities other than those in which the research team members are involved, we engaged naïve observers to provide us with their informed description of the target processes. In studies with participants from the same communicative groups as the research team, we ourselves often assume the position of naïve observers when describing the target processes at the first viewing. We should also keep in mind that when the research team identified the ongoing action by assuming a participant's individual or joint goal, they described this in a socially meaningful language. In this way they relied on their everyday knowledge and understanding of the social community in which the research participants participate. In addition, we use information provided by the participants when describing the observed actions of others (see also the discussion of naïve observation in Chapter 10).

The Canadian communication community relevant in some of our studies is that of youth in transition to adulthood and their parents. How youth describe the actions of their parents and how they make the ongoing behavior meaningful to them and how parents describe the actions of youth and make ongoing behavior meaningful to them comprise naïve observations. These parents and youth use an everyday action theory in making sense of each other's behavior. Youth use some important concepts for parental actions within the joint parent–youth actions. These concepts include *autonomy*, that is, whether parents are *giving youth control over their own actions,* and whether parents are emotionally hurting such as through *criticizing* or *nagging*, *being fair and just*, *allowing them to be different from the parents*, *letting youth find their own way.* As is evident in subsequent chapters of this book, parents also use a range of concepts to describe their joint actions with youth in transition to adulthood. These concepts may be less salient in other cultures and were less prominent in other historical times where and when many parental and youth behaviors were seen in different ways. Thus, it is easy to understand when parents brought up in a different culture bring up their children in Canada, these children will apply the social conventions of the youth of country of their education. As a result, parents and youth might clash over how to interpret some social conventions. The possibility of differences over interpretation suggests the need to develop a joint cultural project, as evident in our study of the joint cultural projects in Chinese parents of adolescents in Canada (Young et al., 2003).

Analysis Products

Using the analysis procedures described above allowed the researchers to produce several different analysis documents, depending on the particular study. These documents represent the analysis of the data in different ways and are significant steps in arriving at findings. It is important to remember that the research questions guiding

these studies asked for descriptions of actions and projects. These analysis products are various levels of description of the actions and projects we have studied.

In the studies with parents and youth, the first products after the first data collection were parent and youth narratives describing the action of the conversation from the perspective of each of the participants, using lay language that captured the goal-directed nature of the action between them (see also Chapter 14 for a discussion of the use of narratives in counseling youth in transition to adulthood). For example, in the parent–youth joint action referred to previously in this chapter, the following is an excerpt from the two-page youth narrative:

> The daughter's main goals in the conversation included (1) to provide her mother with information and assistance in order to get her permission, (2) to convey her own position, express perceptions about herself, and share her concerns with respect to different issues, for example, moving out and handling adult responsibilities, and (3) when disagreements arise she wanted to express her needs, and to actively engage with her mother in figuring out solutions. She attempted to accomplish her goals by providing information and clarifications, answering and asking questions, and providing explanations. She expressed disagreement with her mother by sharing her thoughts and feelings, describing her opinion, asserting her needs, offering solutions, and responding to her mother's suggestions.

The initial analysis of the joint conversation also resulted in a document in which the joint transition to adulthood project was tentatively described. In the case of this mother and daughter, their joint formulated as:

> Promoting the daughter's independence by means of collaboration and cooperation; negotiating when there are differences in opinion, and working together to find solutions when challenges arise. The mother supports the daughter by offering her thoughts, opinions, and ideas when the daughter shares her experiences, and mother and daughter offer each other ongoing emotional support.

These documents summarizing the joint action are shared with the participants, and verified and/or modified in concert with the researchers.

A second analysis document was produced at the end of the 6- to 8-month involvement of the parents and youth in the parent–youth transition-to-adulthood study in which all the data, including initial and final joint conversations, participant logs, and telephone monitoring data, are summarized. This overall analysis used the following categories to describe the joint parent–youth project: project, parent conceptualization of the project, youth conceptualization of the project, parents' strategies, youth strategies, linkages (that is, the ways in which the project is shared), barriers, and continuation (that is, the anticipated future of the joint project). This analysis document, which includes extensive references to the transcribed data sources, provides the basis for a detailed discussion in the research team of the emerging themes and constructs which are identified and noted. For example, in the case cited, the emerging themes and constructs were identified as follows: balanced initiation and collaboration between mother and daughter in tasks facilitating the transition to adulthood, a close and supportive relationship between them, the mother's awareness of a distinct parenting project, consistency over time in reaching goals, and both culture and religion important in guiding the transition project.

Finally, in the study of parent–youth transition-to-adulthood projects, a cross-case analysis was undertaken by identifying commonalities and differences across cases on the following dimensions: nature of the transition project, relationship, independence, role of parents and youth in the project, parent reflexivity on parenting practice, and financial, physical space, and time consideration, as well as a comparison on the emergent themes and constructs such as the ones identified above.

In the transition to adulthood counseling study, similar analyses were in place, but these were represented in slightly different ways of documenting the description of the projects. The counseling *actions* were analyzed on session-by-session basis. This analysis resulted in (1) a detailed narrative description of each session using the language of goal-directed action, and including supporting quotations from the session as well as the counselor and client self-confrontation interviews, and (2) a short summary. In addition, the across-sessions analysis for each client–counselor was organized and summarized by content, client, and counselor goals, functional steps, joint interaction pattern, joint goals, and other relevant notes. This side-by-side presentation of the analysis for each counseling dyad allowed the identification of changes across sessions for each dyad. In the case of this study, we have been able to describe in detail the joint relationship and identity projects, intertwined with goal-directed projects outside counseling in occupational, educational, and familial domains (Young et al., 2009).

Value and Limitations of the Method

Using this method in several studies, we have been able to describe the process of the transition to adulthood as goal-directed action. The findings and their usefulness are evident in this book and in several studies that have been reported independently (e.g., Marshall, Young, Domene, & Zaidman, 2008; Young et al., 2006, 2008). In the chapters that follow we have concentrated describing individual cases to illustrative aspects and processes in the transition to adulthood. The separately reported journal articles have presented across-case or aggregate findings. In both cases the complexity of the transition to adulthood, and human action generally, is unpacked to some extent by identifying how projects are constructed from, and contribute to, a variety of goals and how these goals are intertwined. The method allowed us to identify the elements (specific behaviors and resources), functional steps, and goals within and across participant dyads. We hope the method highlights for readers the importance of communication, the place of emotion and emotional regulation, and the construction of joint and individual goals in joint transition to adulthood projects.

Notwithstanding the strengths of this method and that it generates empirical data from different perspectives, a number of challenges and limitations exist. The data collection and analysis is labor-intensive. It depends on a research team working collaboratively and consistently. It is to a degree an interpretative method, but in our view justifiably interpretative in light of how people generally engage in and

make sense of human action. The most important criterion is whether and to what extent the cases reported in this book and the analysis we have made of them are meaningful to you as readers and transferable to your work with young people in the process of moving from adolescence to adulthood.

Conclusion

Transition to adulthood can be conceptualized as a goal-directed joint action and project. These actions and projects occur between youth and others, notably in the case of the material discussed in this book, between youth and their parents and between youth and their counselors. We have described in this chapter how we accessed and analyzed these actions and processes. The method stems from and is highly consistent with how we conceptualize both the transition to adulthood and counseling, as well as other human actions. In addition, the method has aspects that extend beyond its use as a research method. In subsequent chapters we describe how a number of these research procedures can be used effectively in the counseling practice.