



New Service Models in the Public Library

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Challenge

Our group challenge was to identify a new service model or new service for libraries. We narrowed our scope for this challenge to align with the aspirations and meet the needs of emerging adults. For this challenge emerging adults are defined as persons ages 18 - 25. The years from the late teens through the twenties are very important years that will shape the lives of individuals. We recognized the challenge emerging adults face and were interested in finding how libraries would be able to help. The paper includes literature reviews, an environmental scan, surveys and community conversations that helped identify two recommendations libraries can adapt.

Introduction

The post-adolescent stage of human development covering roughly the ages of 18-30 is not a new area of academic study. Contemporary views of this age group are shaped by theoretical and practical explorations beginning mostly with the work of developmental psychologist Erik Erikson going back to 1950 through the second half of the 20th century, until the early 2000s when conceptualizations of what had previously been referred to variously as prolonged adolescence (Erikson, 1968), the novice phase of development (Levinson, 1978), or simply by whatever generational moniker (ie Generation X, Millennial) matched that age group in the moment (Settersten & Ray, 2010), among others, coalesced into several related but competing formulations of this stage as discrete from adolescence and full-fledged adulthood. Since then, there has been a cannonade of articles and books (by individual authors and anthologies, both academic and popular) considering the subject from multiple disciplinary perspectives ranging from social sciences such as psychology, anthropology, and sociology, to biology, neuroscience, and more, on an international scale.

While this proliferation of study has been largely absent from the academic literature in Library and Information Science (LIS), the presence of numerous non-academic professional development resources (webinars, conference presentations, etc) and a practical book published by ALA Editions (Barbakoff, 2016) indicates a move towards the recognition of 18-30 year-olds as a distinct patron population for public libraries. This trend is likely influenced by mentions of emerging adults in the popular press such as a substantial article in the *New York Times Magazine* (Henig, 2010) which distills a small portion of the academic work on emerging adulthood for the general public. The purpose of this literature review is to examine historical and contemporary scholarly work on the post-adolescent age group and, not unlike Henig's article, provide a sense of context to emerging adulthood, and a gloss of some tentative conclusions as points of connection to the rest of this paper and platforms for inspiration for the development of service models for this age group in public libraries.

Before moving further, it is necessary to note that the scope of this review is limited by time and resources. Despite narrowing the field to work that focuses at least in part on defining and refining features of emerging adulthood as a concept (as opposed to studies where age groupings exist but are non-primary considerations), there have still been thousands of academic articles on the subject published worldwide over the past twenty years (Swanson, 2016). Though obviously non-comprehensive, this review aims to give the reader a feel of the general movements in the literature. One more note: As will be discussed briefly later, the terms "emerging adulthood" and "emerging adults" can refer both to a specific theoretical framework as in Arnett (2000), and the 18-30 year-old or so age group more generally as in Padilla-Walker et al (2017). Like the latter, it's use here will be non-exclusive.

Literature Review

History

While an in-depth history of academic study of emerging adulthood is not the purpose of this review, a short overview of relevant scholarship will be helpful in providing a foundation for understanding contemporary scholarship on the subject. As previously mentioned, while the term adolescence was first coined and described by G. Stanley Hall (1904), the general idea of a specific *post*-adolescent period has been alluded to in sociology and psychology since at least 1950.

In setting out his widely-used framework for emerging adulthood, Arnett (2000) gives a short historical background identifying Erik Erikson's work on human development (the concepts of "prolonged adolescence" and "psychosocial moratorium"), Daniel Levinson's "novice stage of development" (ages 17-33) as the time in which young people -- not unlike in Erikson's psychosocial moratorium -- experiment with life role and structures, and Kenneth Keniston's theory of youth (described as a "tension between self and society"), as precursors to his conception of the development period.

Erikson conceptualized adolescence primarily as the opposition of identity formation and role confusion, theorizing that in industrialized societies this stage could continue beyond the traditional age associated with adolescence. In tandem with this extended adolescence is a "...*psychosocial moratorium* granted to young people in such societies, 'during which the young adult through free role experimentation may find a niche in some section of his society'" (Arnett, 2015). This psychosocial moratorium shares some elements with the independently conceived idea of "semiautonomy" which originated in Kett (1977).

Scherzer (1992) details semiautonomy in boarders and apartment dwellers in mid-nineteenth-century New York as the period when adolescents, many foreign-born, struck out on their own enjoying a period of relative freedom as they established a career and eventually moved into family life. Notably, this period tended to conclude earlier chronologically than today's general age range for emerging adulthood. The link between semiautonomy and psychosocial moratorium is important because it is semiautonomy (but not the psychosocial moratorium) which Settersten et al (2005) identifies as a precedent to describing the "gap in life" which shares some qualities of what would in the early 2000s develop into a view of emerging adulthood that is distinct from Arnett's.

The study of identity formation among post-adolescents in the second half of the twentieth century and into the present owes a great deal to developments on the work of Erik Erikson. Schwartz et al (2015) marks Marcia's (1966) identity status model as the most enduring, though not the only, method of operationalizing Erikson's theories for research into the identity development. The identity status model looks at the "...dimensions of exploration and commitment. By juxtaposing high and low levels of exploration with high and low levels of commitment, Marcia derived four identity statuses: diffusion, foreclosure, moratorium, and achievement..." as described in the following table:

Diffusion (low exploration, low commitment): Apathy and disinterest in identity issues	Foreclosure (low exploration, high commitment): Rigidity and conformity in identity formation
Moratorium (high exploration, low commitment): The active search for a sense of self	Achievement (high exploration, high commitment): The consolidation of various self-elements into a coherent and integrated identity

Table based on description in (Schwartz et al (2005)).

Beyond the study of emerging adults focusing solely on identity formation, many researchers saw the age, rather, as a developmental process; Nelson (2015) describes two general views on the transition from adolescence to adulthood that dominated the second half of the twentieth century: The first saw this process as divided into developmental stages loosely tied to age, while the second focused on the "...transition to adulthood as a function of societal expectations and role transitions that emphasize the sociological aspects of development" (Nelson, 2015, pg. 2).

As an example of the first view, psychiatrist Roger Gould's work in the 1970s saw emerging adulthood as not distinct from, but a part of, an overarching theory of sequential, age-related psychological growth that saw attaining adulthood as moving through a series of "transformations" including in particular a sense of safety that shifts from relying on parents to one that is self-contained (Gould (1978) and (2013); Nelson (2015)).

On the other hand, examples of environment-based theories, according to Nelson (2015), are the developmental tasks model of education scholar, Robert J. Havighurst, and the idea of the "social clock" of psychologist Bernice Neugarten. The former "...proposed that specific developmental tasks dominate certain periods in one's life in terms of what should be accomplished and the pressures that influence development. He argued that the transition to adulthood is influenced by physical maturation, societal pressure, and personal expectation" (Nelson, 2015). Havighurst's model has been advanced and applied specifically to emerging adults in work such as Roisman et al (2004). Neugarten saw the transition into adulthood as marked by a social clock that influenced one's expectations as to when it was appropriate to, for example, get married, have kids, and establish a career. Recent approaches, however, see the transition to adulthood as neither tied solely to chronological age nor the achievement of specific social markers, but as a more of an individual process (Nelson, 2015). While there has been an abundance of work in the field of developmental psychology on defining specific life stages, there has been much less done on what those stages look like in transition (Roisman et al, 2004).

Nevertheless, the 1990s set the stage for what would become the development of emerging adulthood as a specific focus of research around the turn of the century with the publication of several books describing the characteristics post-adolescents and the conditions under which they were coming of age. Côté & Allahaar (1995) describe the adverse conditions under which adolescents were entering adulthood in the 1990s as compared to historically. Arnett (1996) draws conclusions about emerging adults of the moment from interviews with young adult heavy metal fans or "metal heads". Goldscheider & Goldscheider (1999) is an analysis of demographic survey data looking at transitions to adulthood through the lens of such elements as religion, ethnicity, and location to name a few.

Since 2000

In the May 2000 issue of *American Psychologist*, Joseph Jensen Arnett published "Emerging Adulthood A Theory of Development From the Late Teens Through the Twenties" which put a name and assigned attributes to "...neither adolescence nor young adulthood but [a stage that is] theoretically and empirically distinct from them both..." (Arnett, 2000). Aside from a historical overview of scholarly work that led to his theory (see previous section), the article adds qualities of demographic variability, meaning that, for example residential status, educational attainment, etc. are impossible to predict during this stage, subjective sense of ambiguity (Do emerging adults consider themselves adults? Many answer "yes and no"), and an emphasis on identity formation (particularly related to love, work, and worldviews). He also identified risk behaviors, familial and peer relationships, gender differences, media use as potential areas of further research where emerging adults may demonstrate their uniqueness. Notably, Arnett alluded to the need for further study of the "forgotten half," or emerging adults who are not in college or the workforce. Later, he differentiates "Emerging Adulthood" from adolescence and young adulthood; Arnett argues that since many emerging adults don't consider themselves adults, they are not technically in a stage of young adulthood. He concluded by noting that emerging adulthood is largely a western, middle/upper class phenomenon since it is here where marriage tends to be delayed, education extended, and there exists material opportunity for a prolonged adolescence.

Arnett's article essentially launched the study of emerging adulthood, having been cited almost six thousand times since its publication (Swanson, 2016). According to Henig (2010), "This makes it, in the world of academia, practically viral." Four years later, Arnett (2004, see Arnett 2015) further defined the features of emerging adulthood to include being between the ages of 18-25 and 1) Feeling in-between, 2) Being in the process of identity exploration, 3) A focus on the self (not self-centeredness, but lacking obligation to others), 4) Instability, and 5) A sense of possibilities, in a book on the subject. Cementing his theory, and the study of emerging adulthood, among scholars, Arnett and others went on to start The Society for the Study of Emerging Adulthood (SSEA) in 2003, and a peer-reviewed journal, *Emerging Adulthood*, as an outlet for research on emerging adults.

From the outset, however, Arnett's theory was not unanimously accepted. Bynner (2005) criticized Arnett's theory as being too United States-centric in his data analysis. He traces the history of European scholarship into post-adolescents highlighting its stronger emphasis on social and institutional structures as factors in the experience of emerging adults. Particularly, Bynner looked at longitudinal data from the UK concluding that while many opportunity gaps related to gender have closed, when looking at factors such as social class, qualification level and family economic status, the disadvantaged have been falling further behind. This translates, in Bynner's view, to a conception of emerging adulthood that needs to acknowledge a variety of pathways into adulthood beyond an age and psychological characteristics.

Côté (2014) represents a more strongly-worded takedown of Arnett's theory, accusing it of being methodologically unsound, poorly described, and dangerous in its potential influence on public opinion and youth policy. With regards to poor description, Côté notes Arnett's inconsistency in describing his idea of emerging adulthood as either a developmental stage evidenced by psychological indicators or a transition that depends on social and structural factors. He goes further, questioning the scientific rigor of Arnett's five factors of emerging adulthood, pointing out that the literature lacks empirical studies demonstrating their validity across social classes in the United States. Finally, Côté explains how through generalizing psychological experiences, Arnett's theory neglects the inequities present among post-adolescents. For example, "Arnett reduces the

churning experienced by many young people to 'identity explorations' with various types of jobs, rather than seeing their actions as coping with exploitive job situations" (Côté (2014), pg. 186).

While there are several other competing theories of emerging adulthood (see extended discussion in Côté (2014) and Hendry & Kloep (2011)) directly in conversation with Arnett's, a view of the "transition to adulthood" that emerged in seemingly unrelated parallel to Arnett's stage-based theory was described by the circle of twelve researchers along with other experts from various disciplines organized around the MacArthur Research Network on Transitions to Adulthood and Public Policy (Settersten & Ray, 2010). Under the auspices of the Network, three academic books (Settersten, Furstenberg, Rumbaut (2005), Osgood et al (2005) & Danziger & Rouse (2007)) were published, in addition to a book for the general public (Settersten & Ray, 2010), and an entire issue Princeton's *Future of Children* journal (Berlin et al, 2010), dedicated to the topic. Curiously, the work of Arnett and most other top-cited researchers surrounding the term emerging adulthood as identified by Swanson (2016) were little mentioned within the output of Network researchers. That is, with the exclusion of a later exchange between Furstenberg and Arnett regarding Arnett's claims that his theory applies to all social classes in the United States (see Arnett (2016a), Furstenberg (2016), and Arnett (2016b)).

Despite disagreements related to the transition/development stage debate and data/methods used to justify conclusions, and other details, there is little disagreement in the literature that emerging adulthood, or an extended timetable in the transition to adulthood, is a distinct phenomenon shaped by demographic shifts since World War II (Arnett (2016b), Settersten & Ray (2010)) which affected the timing and opportunities of the "Big Five" markers of adulthood, "...leaving home, finishing school, finding work, partnering, and parenting. Another parameter is spacing—how much time there is between status changes, such as between dating and engagement, engagement and marriage, marriage and a first birth, first and subsequent children, divorce or widowhood and remarriage. A final parameter is density, or the pileup of changes in a bounded period of time" (Settersten & Thogmartin, 2018, pg 364). The interplay of these external factors with psychological factors such as those essayed by Arnett, and the plethora of work done on emerging adult identity development is at the fore of contemporary research into emerging adulthood.

For further reading on defining emerging adulthood, Swanson (2016) looks at empirical research on emerging adulthood between 2000-2015. Schwartz et al (2015) reviews the field of articles on emerging adult identity since 2000, with some historical coverage. Syed & Mitchell (2015) give an overview of research in which race and ethnicity intersect with Arnett's five pillars of emerging adulthood starting around 2000. Two general anthologies that give a fine introduction to a cross-section of academic work on emerging adulthood are Settersten (2005) and Arnett (2015). For a deeper look at topics in emerging adulthood research, see the anthologies in the "Emerging Adulthood Series" published by Oxford University Press. Interested readers should also seek out the quarterly peer-reviewed academic journal *Emerging Adulthood* for the latest research into the topic.

Research Highlights

As previously mentioned, since 2000 there has been an enormous amount of research published about emerging adulthood and emerging adults. Swanson (2016) looked at over one thousand articles and sorted them into 40 categories with the five most frequent topics (high to low) being: alcohol/drugs/substance use, parent/family relationships, development, college/adulthood, and

sexual development/intimacy. Interestingly, the five least frequent topics (high to lowest) were: characteristics/identification, communication, separation from guardians, money, and employment. While the substantial range of articles about each of those topics (from approximately 35 to a high of about 275) makes it impractical to do a comprehensive review of any one topic in this paper, a glance at several sub-topics will be provided as a means of introducing research that goes beyond exclusively defining the concept of emerging adulthood.

Emerging Adults' Transition from the Foster Care System

In the United States, between twenty and thirty thousand youth emancipate from the foster care system every year, typically between the ages of 18-21, depending on their state's laws (Samuels & Pryce, 2008; Fowler, Toro, & Miles, 2011; Greeson & Thompson, 2015). This group has been the subject of a sizeable and growing body of research studying the multiplicitous qualities of their unique transition into adulthood. Indeed, within the context of theories of emerging adulthood, scholars have differentiated the foster youth experience as in some ways distinct from the emerging adulthood of the general population (Samuels & Pryce (2008); Berzin, Singer, & Hokanson (2014)).

Emerging adults that leave foster care can experience what researchers call an "off-time" and/or disordered transition characterized by the need to shift to independent living/full-fledged adulthood before they have the skills to do so (Greeson & Thompson, 2015). Contributing factors to a difficult transition are a sudden halt to services and potentially unreliable parental support (Fowler, Toro, & Miles, 2011). Samuels & Pryce (2008) described emerging adults who, while not feeling completely like adults, had to take on the responsibilities that would otherwise be ascribed to their parents, like caring for siblings and paying rent.

Unfortunately, adolescents that are forced to leave foster care at 18 are often missing basic independent living skills such as money management/consumer awareness, food management, housing, job seeking/maintenance skills, and interpersonal skills (Greeson & Thompson, 2015). These youth are "...placed in very precarious situations in which if they make mistakes common to other emerging adults, they end up in dire straits, whereas other emerging adults can fall back on existing supports. This reality may be demonstrated in the instability of these youths" (Fowler, Toro, & Miles, 2011, pg 336). This finding is echoed interviews conducted by Samuels & Pryce (2008) in which former foster youth described feeling a lack of "...continued security and ongoing support that other young adults had who had grown up with their parents," (pg. 1204) a feeling that only increases after they age out of the system. This is especially true for youth that leave the system early. According to a study by Fowler, Toro, & Miles (2011) of 265 emerging adults who aged out of foster care in Detroit, an earlier exit age from the foster care system was a strong contributing factor to youth being what they categorized as "Instable-Disengaged," or having an uncertain housing situation, lower educational attainment and employment status over time.

Risks for youth exiting foster care are many. They include limited educational attainment, homelessness or insecure housing, unplanned pregnancy, poverty, incarceration, precarious work situations, substance abuse, and a higher rate of mental health issues when compared to national norms (Fowler, Toro, & Miles, 2011; Hudson, 2013; Berzin, Singer, & Hokanson (2014); Greeson & Thompson, 2015). According to Pecora et al. (2005), foster youth ages 19-30 experience Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) at nearly twice the the rates of war veterans.

Yet, it is also these same risks that have shaped a sense of independence, resilience, and self-reliance in some foster youth (Samuels & Pryce, 2008). Indeed, many foster care youth transition successfully into adult roles, meaning that there are factors that work to off-set the difficult conditions for some emancipating youth (Fowler, Toro, & Miles, 2011).

Resilience research suggests that the presence of mentoring relationships between foster youth and an unrelated adult, particularly when that adult is a natural mentor ("Natural mentors are naturally occurring important adults in a youth's existing social network and can include teachers, extended family members, neighbors, coaches, and religious leaders" (Hamilton et al., 2006).) lead to positive long-term outcomes for emancipated foster youth (Greeson & Thompson, 2015). Greeson & Thompson (2015) suggest ways to increase the chances of such relationships developing by making use of models such as "Family Finding" which is a six stage model for identifying and engaging adults associated with foster care youth who could potentially serve as natural mentors. Hudson (2013) describes several focus groups of foster care youth in Los Angeles in which participants stressed the need for different types of mentors, particularly career mentors, in which foster youth are connected with practitioners in their chosen field. Indeed, when discussing career plans and goals, the majority of the emerging adults interviewed by Berzin, Singer, & Hokanson (2014) markedly did not include the presence career mentoring or counseling opportunities.

In their study, Fowler, Toro, & Miles (2011) found that an earlier exit age and the absence of contextual supports, which they identified as stable housing, educational attainment, and employment, contributed to mental health issues among foster care youth. Based on their research, their recommendations include providing a variety of support services to match the great diversity in level of needs, providing aid in building the scaffolding of contextual supports earlier rather than upon emancipation, and on a policy level, to potentially extend the exit age from 18 to 21, a move that has shown positive results in states where it has been adopted.

Based on the research described, some entry points for public libraries in thinking about service models based on the needs of recently emancipated foster youth are twofold: Serve as a place/mechanism of connection for foster care youth and career guides or other mentors. To encourage career mentorship, an example would be a Living Library-type program specifically for foster care youth to make connections with professionals. Another possible entry point would be to build structures for the experiential identity exploration (related to career, and beyond) that Berzin, Singer, & Hokanson (2014) and others believe is missing from the independent living skills programs (ILSP) available to foster youth. These models shift focus from the general provision of information access to individualized relationship-building; reorienting reference service from a query/response basis to a literal referral service, with the librarian serving as a relationship manager who is responsible for developing a "collection" or network of community connections.

The Role of Civic Engagement Among Emerging Adults

While it is obvious why civic engagement is vital for the success of a democratic society, it would be wise to begin this section by explaining what scholars mean when they write about civic engagement. The term can be seen as strictly focusing on voter participation, or expanded to include such activities as volunteering, working with community-based organizations, membership in political parties, attending protests, signing petitions, donating to social causes, and more (Arnett 2007; Flanagan & Levine, 2010; Mahatmya & Lohman, 2012; Lannegrand-Willems et al, 2018). Some scholars also see civic engagement as encompassing areas beyond outward behavior such as

civic attitudes and knowledge. This "psychological engagement" includes non-participation or disengagement (Lannegrand-Willems et al., 2018) as with the "stand-by citizens," or youth who follow social and political issues but choose not to participate at the moment (Amnå and Ekman, 2014). Traditionally, civic engagement was measured by ten measures of citizenship: "...belonging to at least one group, attending religious services at least monthly, belonging to a union, reading newspapers at least once a week, voting, being contacted by a political party, working on a community project, attending club meetings, and believing that people are trustworthy [, and volunteering]" (Flanagan & Levine, 2010, 161). Núñez & Flanagan (2015) and Suárez-Orozco et al. (2015) add forms of civic engagement unique to immigrant youth such as serving as "cultural brokers and translators" for members of their communities.

Regardless of the definition, recent trends for civic engagement among emerging adults in the United States have not been encouraging. While volunteerism has seen a steady increase over the last few decades after a decrease that began from the height of civic engagement in the United States in the 1970s (Arnett, 2007), most other measures of civic engagement do not share this trajectory (Flanagan & Levine, 2010). When compared with other age groups, emerging adults tend to be the least likely to participate in civic life (Flanagan & Levine, 2010). Notably, however, according to Núñez & Flanagan (2015) the age range associated with emerging adulthood has always had lower rates of civic engagement, regardless of the time period. Indeed, a common narrative in the scholarship on civic engagement among emerging adults is that the demographic and societal changes that have led to the recognition of emerging adulthood as a discrete stage or transitional period may also explain why rates of civic engagement among this group are lower than ever.

As a result of the lengthening of the time young adults take to reach the traditional markers of having reached adulthood (moving out, finishing school, getting married, having kids, establishing a career), and the demographic variability described in Arnett (2000), the lives of emerging adults lack the stability that historically led to civic engagement (Flanagan & Levine, 2010). Finlay et al. (2010, pg. 264) agree, explaining that "...adult roles help individuals to establish roots in communities and give them a vested interest in community affairs. During their thirties and forties individuals are more likely to be in jobs, relationships, and families that make them political stakeholders and recruit them into civic life". This being the case, it makes sense that voting rates among generational cohorts have gradually started lower (around 70% for 1965 or earlier versus around 40% for the 2000 cohort) but tend to even out to just above 70% for everyone over time (Flanagan & Levine, 2010).

Besides these ideas contextualizing the place of civic engagement for emerging adults from a life-cycle perspective, two other trends may affect how scholars measure civic engagement moving forward. Namely, the generational shift from more stable memberships in community organizations to more short-term and episodic bursts of engagement (Flanagan & Levine, 2010). Likewise, the emergence of online civic engagement resulting from the rise of interactivity on web pages and social network platforms has the potential to shift levels of civic engagement among young adults. It is already known that the otherwise sizable engagement gap between college and non-college emerging adults is much smaller when isolated to online civic activities.

Aside from online civic engagement, the engagement gap between classes as well as college and non-college emerging adults is a matter of note among scholars (Finlay et al, 2010; Núñez & Flanagan, 2015). Part of the story concerning the decrease of civic engagement among emerging adults encompasses the decrease in membership of institutions like unions, religious organizations,

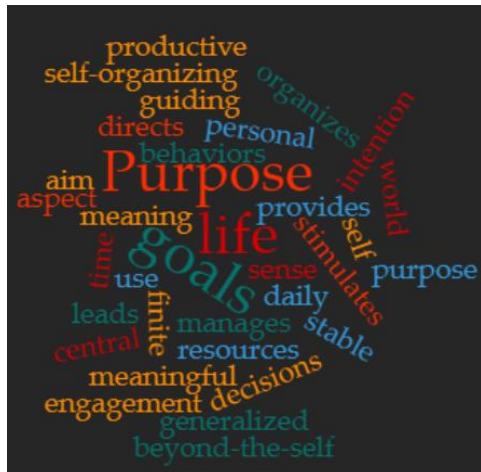
and civic groups that traditionally served as in-roads for non-college and low-income members of the community to become civically involved (Putnam, 2000). Yet, even prior to reaching the age where these institutions come into play, low-income youth are subject to a cumulative disadvantage throughout their youth and adolescence (Núñez & Flanagan, 2015). Both Pacheco & Plutzer (2008) and Mahatmya & Lohman (2012) found that while low voter turnout rates for youth of all ethnicities were strongly correlated with the education level of parents, neighborhood disadvantage played little role. Other factors such as school environment, being raised in a single-parents household, dropping out of school, arrests, and victimization, all had impacts that differed based on ethnicity and other demographic facets (for example, among African-Americans, getting arrested was the most impactful on turnout levels). The status of the engagement gap for immigrant youth regardless of socioeconomic status is more nuanced. Suárez-Orozco et al. (2015) found a relatively high rate of civic engagement when they interviewed 58 Latino 18-25 year-olds, in part due to the immediate and personal influence of politics on the youth's lives. Generally speaking, the study of civic engagement among immigrant emerging adults, with special attention paid to their unique modes of civic engagement, is an area of research that could use more empirical research.

Allowing that there are no interventions that could retroactively improve parental educational attainment of current and soon-to-be emerging adults, the academic literature does, to a certain extent, agree on what constitutes positive influences on civic engagement among emerging adults. While attending a 4-year college provides much opportunity in this area, Pacheco & Plutzer (2008) found that attending a 2-year college was also extremely impactful in increasing voter turnout, a finding also mentioned in Finlay et al. (2010). Both in their study and in summarizing substantial past evidence, Mahatmya & Lohman (2012) touted the importance of developing strong social connections in school, family, and community during adolescence. Emerging adulthood is not too late, however, to foster social connections in order to lay the groundwork for lasting civic engagement; Finlay et al. (2010) argue that the emerging adult years are an especially opportune time for developing affinity and skills for civic engagement; emerging adults are more likely than other age groups to be open to new political ideas, interact with a wider, more diverse social network, and, particularly for college students, have time and impetus for critical reflection. Therefore, one in-road for libraries to help increase civic participation among emerging adults is to provide teens and post-adolescents with links and encouragement to stay involved with community-based organizations, school groups, and look ahead to either continuing education or large-scale service and training organizations such as AmeriCorps. For libraries with more resources, similar advantages could be created by organizing sustainable, long-term, and purposeful programs where young adults work on personally meaningful community improvement projects.

Cultivating "Purpose in Life" for Emerging Adults

Though purpose has been a buzzword in popular self-help literature for some time, the academic study of purpose in life is relatively recent. Part of the reason for this new interest stems from the increasing reorientation of research aims towards positive psychology, or a shift towards studying psychological well-being and optimal human development as opposed to the field's traditional focus on mental hardships and pathologies (Bronk & Baumsteiger, 2017; for more on positive psychology see Seligman, 2011). The construct of purpose is related to, but distinct from, terms like meaning (popularized in Viktor Frankl (1959)), goals, and activity or activities that result from purpose (McKnight & Kashdan, 2009; Bronk, 2013). While there are a number of definitions of purpose in academic discourse, two stand out: Bronk (2013) proposed the following definition (initially brought forth in Damon et al (2003) and (2008)): "A purpose in life is a stable and

generalized intention that is at once meaningful to the self and at the same time leads to productive engagement with some aspect of the world beyond-the-self." In the same work, four main and necessary elements of purpose are identified: Long-term commitment, goal-directedness, personal meaningfulness, and a beyond-the-self focus. McKnight & Kashdan (2009) defined purpose in the following way: "Purpose is a central, self-organizing life aim that organizes and stimulates goals, manages behaviors, and provides a sense of meaning. Purpose directs life goals and daily decisions by guiding the use of finite personal resources." Of note, both definitions highlight the long-term, central, and productive (in the sense, that it motivates action) aspects of purpose.



Word cloud from definitions of purpose from McKnight & Kashdan (2009) and Bronk (2013) created via wordclouds.com

Generally, the presence and pursuit of purpose in life among all ages has been linked to a host of positive outcomes. Psychological well-being as a whole, as well as self-actualization, resilience, and successful educational experiences are all positively correlated with purpose or similar constructs (Bronk, 2013; Bundick, 2011; Steger et al, 2009; Hill et al, 2016). For emerging adults specifically, Burrow & Hill (2011) found that a commitment to purpose (along with, but to a slightly lesser extent, a sense of identity) correlated with a higher sense of life satisfaction, hope, and daily positive affects. Of particular importance to late adolescents, especially, is that having a purpose in life is also associated with having a positive self-image (Hill et al, 2016). The findings above are not, however, without limitations; while there is some agreement on the general definition of purpose, details vary as do survey instruments. Indeed, the majority of data gathered regarding sense of purpose is self-reported via these survey instruments since there is no methodology for independent observation of sense of purpose. Despite these limitations, the ongoing empirical research linking sense of purpose with positive developmental factors throughout life should be promising enough to spur action.

According to Bronk's (2013) survey of prior research, roughly 25% of young adults demonstrate a clear sense of purpose, 55% some sense of purpose that is either solely self-oriented (note that the above definitions of purpose requires a beyond-the-self focus) or not being acted on, and 20% demonstrate no purpose at all. Keeping in mind the ample positive benefits of purpose, it is of special importance to implement ways to cultivate purpose in adolescents and emerging adults. While it is easy to avoid devoting our limited resources to encouraging purpose in life for groups like at-risk emerging adults in order to focus on meeting their basic needs, this point-of-view is misguided. First of all, basic needs can be met in tandem with psychological needs and protective factors, and second, consensus is developing that a strong sense of purpose may actually create a

buffer against life's difficulties, increasing the chance of successful outcomes in spite of the odds (Bronk, 2013; Hill et al, 2016; McKnight & Kashdan, 2009). That being the case, the development of programs to address purpose in life among at-risk emerging adults is warranted.

Research on how to effectively foster purpose is still in its early stages, but a few methods have arisen. Bundick (2011) found that a 45-minute interview designed to inspire deep reflection on purpose in life contributed to an increase in goal-directedness and life satisfaction among emerging adults, even several months later (though purpose identification was not affected). Bronk & Baumsteiger (2017) list mentoring and career development efforts as other potential modes of developing purpose. In a study of nearly 600 college students, Okun & Kim (2016) found that frequency of volunteering was tied to purpose in life as long as it was motivated by either a high level of pressure-based prosocial motivation or high pleasure-based prosocial motivation. The relevance of this research for libraries is that increasing a sense of purpose among patrons may not require strenuous interventions; indeed, initiating conversations about purpose during events such as the ones proposed in Barbakoff (2016) may be enough to begin the process of purpose-building.

Environmental Scan

In addition to the library and academic literature, library professionals can learn much from looking to other institutions' methods of reaching out to emerging adults and scanning the greater socio-political landscape for important trends. This approach reveals the context in which emerging adults are living and the lens through which they perceive the world. It provides clarity on the types of messaging they receive which informs libraries on ways to make their own messaging stand out. It also provides an understanding of emerging adults' expectations regarding services and service models. The following section provides the results of an example statewide and national environmental scan.

Generation Z

The environmental scan conducted revealed widely held opinions that we are societally experiencing a generational shift amongst emerging adults. Today's emerging adults are no longer classified by researchers and marketers as millennials, but as Generation Z, Centennials, or post-millennials. Amidst points of disagreement, the following traits were cited cross-institutionally.

Diversity

Racially and ethnically, Generation Z is the most diverse generation in American history. California is already majority non-white, with the Census Bureau predicting the same for the rest of the country by the year 2044.

Generation Z have grown up in an age of high LGBTQ+ visibility. Same-sex marriage was first legalized in Massachusetts in 2004, in California in 2008, and across the United States in 2015. Even the oldest members of Generation Z will remember only a time when same-sex marriage was legal in some location in the US.

They have grown up in an era of increasing trans visibility, with high-profile battles being waged around restrooms and military service. Generation Z is the generation most likely to personally know someone who uses non-binary gender labels.

Among this growing visibility and diversity, there is an ever-increasing number of labels being used to define self-identity, particularly around sexuality and gender, but also around race, ethnicity, and culture.

A common theme amidst the landscape literature is that emerging adults expect to see this diversity reflected from their institutions, in staffing, in advertising, in patronage. When they do not see it, they may feel unwelcome and they will consider taking their business elsewhere.

Tech Savvy

The first iPhone debuted in 2007. Almost all of today's emerging adults will scarcely remember a time before this now-ubiquitous technology. This technology is part of their foundational and baseline understanding of society. They expect modern institutions to have strong digital presences with clean, intuitive, and fast-loading interfacing.

Social Media

Generation Z grew up with social media and is savvier about its uses and potential pitfalls⁴. They are aware of the importance of online reputation and personal branding. The distinction between analog and digital life is thin or non-existent.

Online media is fast replacing traditional entertainment avenues. Generation Z prefer to get their entertainment and instruction through short videos. They expect videos to be brief, instructive, and funny⁵.

Entrepreneurial

Generation Z is increasingly finding new income paths outside of traditional job paths. Many online services allow users to make money on their own schedule, selecting tasks to perform. Services such as TaskRabbit and Uber match customers and contractors together for a variety of services. Young people may enlist as a contractor with these services as a “side hustle” or may use them as their primary source of income⁶. In addition, entrepreneurs can turn their hobbies into income through digital channels. YouTube and Twitch.tv allow users to share their expertise and talents and receive income through the built-in advertising. Sales outlets such as Etsy allow users to directly sell their hand-crafted goods. In a sea of new income outlets, traditional job paths are but one option.

Conducting Environmental Scans

Environmental scanning is an ongoing process, rather than a one-time task. Ongoing analysis is necessary to recognize changes in the context in which emerging adults are learning about the world. Trends are necessarily ephemeral and the results of any given scan will become outdated over time. For local institutions, a more targeted local environmental scan may turn up very different results from statewide or national trends. To keep results relevant to its service population, local results should be prioritized over statewide or national trends.

Strategies include searching trade publications and blogs from other institutions, newspaper articles, and demographic research data. Look to non-profits, church ministries, commercial marketers, military recruiters, and political analysts. Note that different institutions use different vocabulary; search terms may include “emerging adults”, “young adults”, “college-age adults”, “young people” or “youth”. Generational analysis terms can be also be employed, incorporating terms such “Generation Z” or “post-millennial.”

One widely-used model for categorizing data is to break the findings into Social, Technological, Economic, and Political trends (STEP). Using this model informs researchers on additional keywords for search terms. For example, a researcher might conduct a search using the keywords “Generation Z economic trends” or “young adults social trends”. Rather than conducting recurring searches, researchers should consider setting up search alerts in their search engine or database of choice. By conducting ongoing environmental scanning methods, libraries can craft effect services, service models, and messaging to attract emerging adults.

Survey

In order to get a better understanding of emerging adults we conducted a survey. When developing the questions the intent was to find out what emerging adults aspirations were, as well as to find out the services already used by them and the barriers they faced that stopped them from visiting public libraries.

After careful consideration, the following were the eight (8) questions developed:

- How do you find out about what is going on in your community?
- What would you like to see in your community?
- What are some of your current goals?
- What do you want to learn or participate in, but are prevented due to barriers?
- Do you use your public library? If yes, what for? If no, why?
- What is your age? (optional)
- What is your zip code? (optional)

The survey was distributed through Facebook ads with two boosts. In addition, each of the team members distributed the survey through their individual library communication methods which consisted of: website, social media, community partners, and email blast.

Lastly, we conducted one (1) in person community conversation at East Los Angeles College. During the in person interaction with emerging adults, many seemed pleasantly surprised by the number of different services public libraries provide.

We received a total of 160 usable survey responses. Based on the survey results the following questions had the most common responses within emerging adults.

When asked, What would you like to see in your community? The top four (4) answers were:

- Events within the community
- Clean neighborhood
- Less racism with in individuals and groups
- Opportunities to learn more life skills

When asked, What are some of your current goals? The top four (4) answers were:

- Finish college/university
- Have a healthier lifestyle
- Move out of parents home
- Find a stable job

What do you want to learn or participate in, but are prevented due to barriers?

- Learn life skills such as cooking and/or investing
- Volunteer within my community
- Have a healthier lifestyle
- Assist in issues such as homelessness

When asked, Reasons for visiting a library? The top three (3) answers were:

- To study
- A quiet environment
- Check out books

When asked, Reason for not visiting a library? The top three (3) answers were:

- No time
- Availability of hours
- Not interested

Key Findings about Emerging Adults

Aspirations	Traits	Perceptions of Libraries
<ul style="list-style-type: none">- Achieve markers of adulthood- Establish financial independence- Achieve educational and job/career goals- Develop life skills	<ul style="list-style-type: none">- Desire for instant response/availability- Digital natives with high digital service expectations- Value shared economy- New career models (monetization of hobbies & "side hustle" i.e. Uber driver)	<ul style="list-style-type: none">- Useful when studying- Quiet- Books- Nothing for me

Recommendations

Marketing Toolkit

The common aspirations of emerging adults are already being addressed by libraries, however they are largely unaware of what libraries can offer them. Two key factors in this are the antiquated perception of libraries held by emerging adults, and the lack of library outreach and marketing strategies properly catering to this group. Both factors can be addressed through new outreach and marketing techniques specific to the characteristics and trends of this generation.

With the creation of an Outreach and Marketing Delivery Toolkit for Emerging Adults from the state-library level, libraries could better promote the services and resources provided that are relevant to these emerging adults, and as a result update their perceptions of libraries. The survey conducted during this project provided insight to how emerging adults receive information about their community - seventy percent of the time this occurs through social media. It also established that emerging adults perceived libraries as being useful mostly when they were in need of a quiet place to study, without much else to offer them in during their current life stage.

Combating both findings, the toolkit would include ready-made content that would be adaptable to individual communities and would include videos, images and messaging created with the understanding of emerging adults' commonalities, trends, and expectations. The need for creation of toolkit content at a state level stems from the need to ensure quality control so as not to further the antiquated perceptions, and to meet the standards of the technologically-savvy emerging adult. The toolkit would also contain best practices for use of social media as an outreach and marketing tool for this group and include ongoing training for library staff.

With implementation of the tools and strategies in the toolkit emerging adults would be able to rediscover libraries and take full advantage of the services already offered that align with their aspirations and libraries can better position themselves to serve and establish trust and connections with this group.

Social Opportunity – Connecting People to People

Examining our public library service model with regard to emerging adults led us to reimagine the informational delivery model into a social delivery model. Some of the factors that stood out when considering the long-term success of emerging adults are:

- Presence of non-family/non-institutional role models for life skills
- Access to a diverse peer network
- Entryways to community based, civic, religious and cultural groups

The commonality among those needs is social connectedness. In order to help address the needs of emerging adults, particularly those at-risk or underserved, we want to shift library service delivery to a more social model.

In our “Connecting People to People” model, we suggest opportunities to:

- Build emerging adult services outside the library, taking resources into existing emerging adult communities
- Creating a more robust digital service presence
- Reconnecting with the library as a trusted community hub
- Offering mentor matchmaking services
- Connecting people in their overall community to build social capital

This service model shift is not a completely new dynamic in library service, but represents a further push towards progress already in motion. Existing library events, programs and actions that bring community together can serve as the backbone to a more aggressive focus on the social opportunity model.

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