Failure to Launch: Understanding Young Adults Who Get Stuck

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A New Stage of Development

• 1970’s - Focus on adult well-being.

• Mid-1980’s - Shift back to focus on children.

• By 1990’s - Very child-centric culture.

• Cultural and societal trends: earlier puberty, later career initiation, later marriage, later “adult” markers.
What Should We Call Them?

- Young Adults (Erikson)
- Emerging Adults (Arnett)
- Pre-Adults (Verhaagen)
- New Adults (Publishing)
- Aspiring Adults (Arum & Roksa)
Emerging Adulthood

Emerging adulthood represents a new stage of psychosocial development that Erikson did not observe.

It sits between adolescence and young adulthood.

The key task of this stage of development is:

Responsibility vs. Postponement
3 Features of Emerging Adults

• Who am I?

• Where am I going?

• Am I an adult or child?

Adapted from Emerging Adulthood: The Winding Road From the Late Teens Through the Twenties by Jeffrey Jensen Arnett
Yes, I Have Reached Adulthood!
What Are Emerging Adults Like?
What Happens to the Cool Kids?

• Cool at 13 - popular, good-looking, partying, having sex, etc.

• “Pseudomature” kids - sought out good-looking friends, had more romances that were emotionally intense and sexually involved, and dabbed in minor delinquency (truancy, vandalism, shoplifting, etc.

• At 23, they had a 30% greater chance of drug problems, as well as higher risks of legal trouble and more difficulties in maintaining long-term relationships.
Good News

• More racially and ethnically diverse
• More likely to graduate high school
• More likely to attend college
• Less likely to smoke
• Prescription drug abuse rates have dropped recently.
• Read more often (88% under 30 read a book last year; 78% over 30 did).
College Enrollment Among 18-24 Year Olds

- 1900
- 1920
- 1940
- 1960
- 1980
- 2000
Bad News

• More student debt
• Earn less
• 1 in 5 are obese
• Lower labor participation rate (down 10% over 30 years)
• Marijuana and opiate abuse rates are up.
• Rates of binge drinking are much higher*
• Rates of depression are higher (16% increase since 2000)

*Definition of binge: 4 or more drinks for women; 5 or more for men.
Top 10 Cities For Young Adults

1. Washington, D.C.
2. Denver
3. Portland
4. Houston
5. Austin
6. San Francisco
7. Seattle
8. Riverside
9. Dallas
10. Charlotte
Percent of Young Adults Cohabitating Before Marriage

Median U.S. Marriage Age

- Women
- Men

Year:
- 1950
- 1960
- 1970
- 1980
- 1990
- 2000
- 2010

Age:
- 18
- 19
- 20
- 21
- 22
- 23
- 24
- 25
- 26
- 27
- 28
Politics of Millennials

- More liberal but get more fiscally conservative when they start making money.

- Very liberal on gay marriage, legalization of pot, and immigration reform.

- 65% want to cut gov’t spending; 62% want more spending on infrastructure and job creation.

- 42% believe socialism is better than capitalism; only 16% could accurately define socialism.
Descriptors

Entitled  67  58
Tolerant  67  58
Hard-Working  74  49
Responsible  77  49
Selfish  71  71

18-29
30+

Reason-Rupe Poll Aug. 19, 2014
The Result?

A lot more are living at home.

They don’t tend to have a coherent worldview.

They believe they are still kids or “adults in the making.”
Every Generation in the U.S. Has Surpassed Their Parents...Until This One
Two Years Following On-Time College Graduation

• About a quarter (24%) are back living at home with parents.

• About a quarter (23%) in the labor market are unemployed or underemployed.

• Less than half (47%) have jobs that pay more than $30K.

• About three quarters (74%) are being financially supported by their parents.

Arum & Roska, Aspiring Adults Adrift, 2014
Labor Force Participation for Young Men

Figure 2.1. Labor force participation for young men declined nearly three times as much in the “lost decade” as during the previous two decades.

Annual Earnings Gap

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>18 to 29 years old</th>
<th>30 to 54 years old</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1981</td>
<td>$21,000</td>
<td>$34,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2008</td>
<td>$22,000</td>
<td>$41,000</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

SOURCE: GEORGETOWN UNIVERSITY CENTER ON EDUCATION AND THE WORKFORCE ANALYSIS OF CURRENT CONDITIONS
Older vs. Younger Wealth Accumulation

In 1984, older adults had 13 times as much wealth of young adults. By 2009, they had 44 times as much wealth.

The Result?

- Less career opportunity
- Less earning potential
- Less labor participation
Media and Technology Trends
Tech Effects

• “Currently no evidence to suggest Internet use has or has not had a profound effect on brain development.” (Mills, 2014)

• Online interaction boosted self-esteem among youth who were socially excluded (Gross, 2009).

• Moderate Internet use is associated with more physical activity and sports involvement, not less (Romer, et al, 2009).

• Heavy gaming and Internet use were associated with more depression and lack of participation (Romer, et al, 2009).
Nearly All Young Adults Use Social Networking Sites

Social networking site use by age group, 2005-2013
% of internet users in each age group who use social networking sites, over time

- **All internet users**
- 18-29
- 30-49
- 50-64
- 65+

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Month</th>
<th>18-29</th>
<th>30-49</th>
<th>50-64</th>
<th>65+</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Feb-05</td>
<td>9%</td>
<td>8%</td>
<td>7%</td>
<td>6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Aug-06</td>
<td>1%</td>
<td>1%</td>
<td>1%</td>
<td>6%</td>
</tr>
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<td>May-08</td>
<td>6%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Apr-09</td>
<td>7%</td>
<td>8%</td>
<td>9%</td>
<td>9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>May-10</td>
<td>8%</td>
<td>9%</td>
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</tr>
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<td>Aug-11</td>
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<td>Aug-12</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dec-12</td>
<td>9%</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>9%</td>
<td>9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>May-13</td>
<td>9%</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>9%</td>
<td>9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sep-13</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>9%</td>
<td>9%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Video game Revenue

2000
$8,000,000,000

2013
$66,000,000,000

Projected worldwide revenue for 2017 is $82 Billion
The average age of game players is:

30

AGE of Game Players

32% under 18 years
32% 18-35 years
36% 36+ years
Computer Memory Costs

1990
$11,200 per Gigabyte

2000
$11 per Gigabyte

2013
5¢ per Gigabyte
hard drive cost per gigabyte (USD)
Source: Doctor took selfie

Cardiac arrest said to follow biopsy

A clinic staffer told investigators a doctor took a selfie in the procedure room as Joan Rivers was anesthetized, a source says. FULL STORY

- Howard Stern cried 'like a baby'
- Timeline emerges in Rivers' death
- Life in photos | In her words
- 25 of her jokes | Women in comedy
- Photos: People we lost in 2014
Top Selfie Cities

1. Makati City, Philippines
2. Manhattan, NY
3. Miami, FL
4. Anaheim/Santa Ana, CA
5. Petaling Jaya, Malaysia
6. Tel Aviv, Israel
7. Manchester, England
8. Milan, Italy
9. Cebu City, Philippines
10. George Town, Malaysia

77. Denver
Percents Who Have Shared Selfies

- Millennial
- GenX
- Boomer
- Silent
Reality TV Shows

2000
4

2013
320
THE INTERSECTING WORLD OF REALITY TV
More Narcissism

• Self-reported rates of narcissism are at a 50 year high.

• The majority of college students thought they were better leaders than the average student.

• Traits related to narcissism are also up: materialism, low empathy, and self-focus.

• Key question: To what extent do you agree with this statement: I am a narcissist. (Narcissist means egotistical, self-focused, and vain) Rate: 1-7*

*3 is above average; 4 is at the 80th %ile
The Result?

More about recording the moment than being in the moment.

More about seeming than being.

More self-promoting than other-centered.
The World’s A Scary Place…Right?
Violent Crime Rate for Juveniles (12-17 Year Olds)

Rate per 1,000 youth
Perception of A Scary World

- Youth violence is way down.

- Violent crime is the lowest it has been since 1963.

- Bullying is one-third of what it was 20 years ago. (JAMA Pediatrics)

- The murder rate has dropped in half over the past 20 years. (9.8 per 100,000 in 1991; 5.0 now)

- You are 271 times more likely to die in a workplace accident than you are from terrorism.
Perception of A Scary World

• And yet we continue to be fearful for our children and overprotect them.

• The majority believe a child should be at least 10 before he can play in the front yard unsupervised.

• We think they should be at least 12 before they can be left alone in a car for 5 minutes on a cool day.

• We believe they should be at least 13 before they can stay at home unsupervised for any length of time.
Perception of A Scary World

• Gallup polls indicate U.S. citizens overwhelmingly believe the crime rate is going up.

• 62% (erroneously) believe children face more threats to their safety now than they did in the past*

• 70% of adults think that news media reports and political talk about dangers to kids are either accurate accounts or underestimates of the true danger their children face*

*Reason-Rupe Poll Aug. 6-10, 2014
What’s More Likely To Kill You?

• Terrorist attack or being crushed by furniture?

• Shark attack or cow attack?

• House fires or mosquitos?

• Tornadoes or hot dogs?

• Autoerotic asphyxiation or falling out of bed?
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Did you know cold weather kills more people than homicide, liver disease, and leukemia combined?
Brief History of Childhood

• Work on the farm at age 4, full-time by age 10.

• 1850, school attendance was mandatory for the first time.

• 1876, child labor laws urged.

• Formal study of adolescence began in 1940’s

• 1850, onset of puberty was 17 for girls and 18 for boys. Now it is 11 for girls and 12 for boys.
The Curious Case of Debra Harrell
But Wait, There’s More…

- In Hawaii, Robert De Mond was arrested for making his 8 year old son walk a mile home after school. (Fined, probation, required to take parenting classes)

- In Florida, Nicole Gainey was arrested for letting her 7 year old son walk to a park unattended less than a mile from their home. (She faces up to 5 years in jail for child neglect)

- In Cleveland, a third grader was taken out of his mother’s custody because he was obese.

- In Chicago, a woman was charged with child endangerment after leaving her young son in the car for 5 minutes in 75 degree weather when she went into Whole Foods.
The Result?

We have fearful, overprotective parents.

We overestimate risks to our kids and young adult children.

We don’t allow them to make mistakes or get hurt.

We have a nanny state culture.
Failure to Launch: Young Adults Who Get Stuck
Young Adults Who Get Stuck

• Contributing factors:
  • Perception of unsafe world
  • Overprotection and over indulgence
  • More entitled and self-centered
  • Economic hardships

• Message: It’s scary out there, but it’s safe in here.
3 Common Types of FTL Young Adults

• **Differently Wired** - Asperger’s, ADHD, Learning Disabled, etc.

• **Emotionally Fragile** - anxious, depressed, dysregulated, etc.

• **Addicted or Obsessed** - drugs, drinking, porn, internet, gaming, etc.

Sometimes All Three
Therapeutic Challenges

- Developing identity
- Building emotional muscle
- Becoming more other-centered
- Resolving family challenges
- Taking positive risks
Bonus Slides
Incarceration Rate

Rate per 100,000 males ages 18–24

Black, non-Hispanic
Hispanic
Other race, non-Hispanic
White, non-Hispanic
Violent Death Rate

Deaths per 100,000 young adults

Homicides

Suicides

White, non-Hispanic
Black, non-Hispanic
Hispanic
White, non-Hispanic
Black, non-Hispanic
Hispanic

Male
Female
Relative Earning of Young Men

SOURCE: GEORGETOWN UNIVERSITY CENTER ON EDUCATION AND THE WORKFORCE ANALYSIS OF CURRENT POPULATION SURVEY, MARCH, 1980-2011, CPS UTILITIES, UNICON RESEARCH CORP.