

Making Meaning

Emerging Adults and Service-Learning

Beth Cousens

Principal, Imagine Jewish Education, San Francisco

Emerging adults are a significant audience for the global Jewish service-learning infrastructure. This article provides an understanding of the developmental stage of emerging adulthood and the developmental growth that some emerging adults undergo in Jewish service-learning settings. The article suggests that emerging adults engage in a unique set of developmental tasks compared to other adults; in JSL settings, these tasks are facilitated to highly productive ends, in which emerging adults' curiosity and emotional vulnerability meet the opportunity for discovery that Jewish service-learning experiences offer. Further research is needed to document the growth that emerging adults accomplish in Jewish service-learning settings.

Emerging adults (Arnett, 2004) are a significant audience for the existing global Jewish service-learning (JSL) infrastructure. A primary target of Repair the World and of many specific program providers, as well as a ready audience on campus, this population in their late teens and twenties can, with less complications than most adults, spend a school break in Ghana or in Miami, or a year in India or with a local nonprofit as an organizer in training. During 2009–11, Repair the World helped 2,400 adults in this age group participate in immersive JSL programs; anecdotal evidence suggests that during the same time, several thousand also participated in local service on campus.¹ As Moishe House and Repair the World launch a partnership and as Repair the World begins to work with Jewish Studies professors on campus, an untold additional number of emerging adults should become involved in service, some in new and unique ways.

This emphasis on emerging adults has developed for a variety of reasons. The population has time at the ready: during college, when they can spend a school break or a Sunday afternoon helping those in need, and after college, when they are prepared or even eager to take time to try something that may be totally different from, or exactly in preparation for, their ultimate life plan.

Perhaps more significantly, emerging adults are, by definition, an exploring population. In industrialized countries and, often, in higher socioeconomic statuses,²

Beth Cousens is a consultant to Jewish educational organizations, working in the area of educational research, leadership development, measurement and evaluation, and strategic planning. Her dissertation (Brandeis 2008) is entitled "Shifting Social Networks: Studying the Jewish Growth of Adults in their Twenties and Thirties."

¹As collected through my experience as a professional in the Hillel: Foundation for Jewish Campus Life offices and reported to me by local/ on-campus Hillel professionals.

²Documented primarily in the United States, the emerging adulthood discourse argues that the life-stage is not exclusive to the United States. However, studies focus primarily on societies that privilege education and knowledge professions. When I say "individuals" in this article, I want to recognize that, on the one hand, this life-stage applies to more than only Americans but, on the other hand, it may not be inherent to the entire human life-cycle, as represented throughout the world. Similarly, the phenomenon of emerging adulthood has not been fully studied as applied to all socioeconomic statuses. For example, do those who do not attend college but enter the workforce immediately after high school experience this process of identity resolution? What if one does not receive a high school diploma? What if one works throughout college? Arnett's sample (2004) did not focus only on the upper class and upper middle class; at the same time, additional work can be done to examine the relationship between emerging adulthood and class.

Visit <http://repairlabs.org/jjcs/> for additional articles and resources, as well as to view parts of the *Journal* online.

emerging adulthood is the time to break free from the assumptions of childhood and begin to establish the values and patterns that will guide and support their lives. Emerging adults engage in a unique set of developmental tasks; in JSL settings, these tasks are facilitated to highly productive ends, with emerging adults' curiosity and emotional vulnerability meeting the opportunity for discovery and the world expansion that JSL experiences offer.

In this article, I look more deeply at the intersection of emerging adulthood and JSL, providing foundational understandings of both concepts. I then outline emerging adult developmental tasks, demonstrating how JSL guides emerging adults through a central developmental charge (or, in psychological terms, a psychosocial crisis) of "responsibility v. self-protection." I offer a conceptual model for the growth of emerging adults' "service identity"—the extent to which they see themselves and initiate change as actors in the world. The model is well rooted in my own research on Jewish emerging adults and in my experience as a service-learning facilitator and Jewish educator with emerging adults; still, I close the article by noting the complexities of the model and call for its additional testing through further research.

KEY CONCEPTS: EMERGING ADULTHOOD AND JEWISH SERVICE-LEARNING

Emerging Adulthood

From their late teens through their twenties, individuals experiment with several aspects of their self-definition: sexual identity—the consideration of the kinds of partners they might want for the long term; professional identity—the consideration of the nature of the career and work-life that might suit them best; and ideological identity—an exploration of the beliefs and practices they will adopt independent of their parents. They find resources in diverse areas of employment, in varying sexual partners and relationships, in activities that they might never have tried before, and in different countries around the world (Arnett, 2004). As they experiment and make choices, they naturally face questions: What is my place in the world? What will be my contribution? Who am I in relation to others? What do I owe my family? What do I owe my future? Who will I love, and what will that mean for me? (Parks, 2000).

Superficially, there may be visible evidence of a search for a career, a partner, a lifestyle, but these searches represent only the tip of an iceberg. The rest of the iceberg is underwater, unseen; underneath is a meaning structure, a way of making sense of how the world works, of what happens to them, and, in turn, of the emotions and understandings that will frame how they will react to these happenings. Parks (2000, p. 14) writes of a "sense of connection, pattern, order, and significance"; she explains that this sense becomes executed in a series of actions. The search for this sense, this meaning, is acute during emerging adulthood. These young people are not blank slates, but are testing, retesting and affirming, adding to, and overturning previously held assumptions, as well as turning these assumptions into behavior patterns that they will execute for much of our adult lives. It is a true "age of possibilities," in which emerging adults have "an unparalleled opportunity to transform" themselves (Arnett, 2004, p. 8).

It is important to note that various communities in society facilitate developmental tasks in different ways; "individual and contextual factors ... contribute

to the unequal distribution of factors that promote optimal outcomes” (Arnett et al., 2011, p. 148). Individuals complete their developmental tasks to a greater or lesser extent depending on their context, the supports that they have, and their personalities. Only some emerging adults fully experience the process outlined here, when the right context, setting, and supports lead to deeper and facilitated question asking. With these supports in place, the statement, “I want to be a lawyer,” becomes, “My parents wanted me to go to law school, but now I’m not so sure.” “Religion has nothing to say to me” becomes, “My family invested little in its religious life, but I want to examine that.” With the right emotional safety, the assumptions that most young adults packed for college slowly shift, until many aspects of their upbringings—that they lived in suburban, urban, or rural settings; that they lived in houses or apartments; what congregation their family did or did not involve themselves in; how and if their parents voted; how and if they talked about political happenings or world events at the dinner table—are brought to light as the assumptions and values, and not facts, that they are. These choices of their parents become personal choices and within their control as they create a meaning system for ourselves, developing their own understanding of the world and its workings, reflected in their decisions and directions and particularly in their choices of profession, partner, and ideology.

Jewish Service-Learning

Some JSL settings serve as that space in which this testing, considering, and meaning-making can occur. Such Jewish-service learning involves careful mentors who can probe gently and continually, creating “productive discomfort” with participants where they can be both emotionally safe and challenged (Dorfman, 2010). It pulls participants out of their comfort zones and into a different world space, where communities exist according to rules and values with which participants are unfamiliar (see the later discussion of the “breach of worldview”).

“Service” in this kind of Jewish-service learning has particular connotations. It comes from conversations in Masechet Gittin (Babylonian Talmud) in which rabbinic writers explained a variety of mandated behaviors as important *mipnei l’taken olam*, for the sake of repairing the world. These behaviors include ensuring a widow can remarry without fear of bastard children and dictating that a slave with two masters is freed after he pays one master. These legal renderings made for the sake of repair ensure that the social order is maintained, that wives are fully married, that children are truly of these marriages, and that slaves are fully slave or free. There is a kind of equity at stake in these renderings: Will the individuals be stuck in a limbo, without the opportunities offered others, or will they be free to move onto new chances? In her analysis of these decisions, Rabbi Jill Jacobs notes that “the majority of these rabbinic cases involve the protection of a person or set of people who typically found themselves toward the bottom of the social order.” As a result, “[t]hese “*tikkun ha’olam*” fixes all ensure that those who are most vulnerable are able to live full lives, rather than be restrained by a system that favors the more powerful” (Jacobs, 2007). Masechet Gittin, then, suggests that there is a group of adjustments to the social order needed to maintain equity and opportunity for all. These adjustments are made through law; they are also made through direct service, with equity in the system as the goal. It is this understanding of an ideal society, as one that is equitable, that

Some JSL settings serve as that space in which this testing, considering, and meaning-making can occur.

shapes the definition of service in conversation here; it is also this definition that moves emerging adults to consider the existing social order and opportunities that individuals have within it.

EMERGING ADULTHOOD AS A UNIQUE LIFE-STAGE: RESPONSIBILITY V. SELF-PROTECTION

The discourse of emerging adulthood takes place within a larger empirical conversation about how adults develop their identities, about how they become who they will be, and about how that process shifts during our lifetimes. In 1950, Erik Erikson helped launch the field of constructive-developmental psychology by documenting eight stages of human development—eight “psychosocial crises” or challenges to our sense of self as we interact with others—that are each linked to a biological and sociological stage in life and that result in identity resolution in some way. Erikson theorized, and others have later affirmed, that human beings develop their identity in response to or in interaction with events that happen in their worlds. We are sent into a sort of crisis by an event or a series of events; we develop coping behaviors in response, and these are the behaviors and ways of responding that we take with us into our next years (Erikson, 1950).

The emerging adult psychosocial crisis or, in simpler terms, the life-stage challenge can be seen in examples of two individuals, Ilana and Peter, who demonstrate first that emerging adulthood does involve a unique developmental challenge and second shed light on the nature of that challenge. Both in their mid-thirties, they are still growing and changing. Nothing will prevent them from changing their lifestyles and choices.

Ilana studied creative writing in college, which provided her a great opportunity to strengthen her analytic, creative, and expressive skills, but left her with few to no obvious job prospects at the close of college. She moved from Boston to Utah and then to Los Angeles, making enough to support herself as a waitress and then as a personal assistant. She casually dated men and women and spent what she made. When we met, she was beginning to articulate questions about her career and life habits: Would she make enough money to feed a family, and did she even want a family? Where did she want to live and in what kind of house? Could she make enough money to give children the privileges she had as a child and still do something she loved? Would she choose to create roots in a community, and what kind of community would that be? In her late twenties, she chose a graduate program, gained enough intellectual credibility and contacts to begin a business as an artist, met a man on J-Date, and was ready to “settle” into what would become her lifestyle as an adult: in no particular order, a husband, community, career, children, and synagogue involvement.

Peter was studying for his MA in International Relations when I met him on a Taglit–Birthright Israel experience. He was toying with his Jewish identity, something that was given to him—in part—by his father, alongside the Christmas tree and disdain for religion passed onto him by both of his parents. In the ten years since we had traveled to Israel together, he had dropped in and out of synagogue life, dated Jewish and non-Jewish girls, and tried to stay for more than six months in a desk job in the U.S. State Department. Eventually, he abandoned

that professional task, obtained a post in Iraq, and met and married another expatriate who was similarly eager for an international lifestyle. In his mid-thirties and in a stable post in Europe, he and his wife are beginning a family.

Ilana's and Peter's thinking and feeling, their questioning and provoking themselves are highly characteristic of the life-stage of emerging adulthood. They deliberately put themselves in situations that would expand their understandings of the universe—Ilana in sexual relationships, in communities far from her hometown, and by living without thinking about the future; Peter as part of Taglit and by dating Jewish women. They were looking at who they would be as they interacted with others, what others would feed their minds and hearts, and how they would respond in kind. They were consciously rejecting or putting aside ideas of their childhoods, searching for their own voices, and they left this period of testing and seeking more resolved in their own identities.

In both cases, central to many of the experiments in which Ilana and Peter engaged was a question of how they would interact with others. For Ilana, questions about the scope of her life and about accountability—to friends, to family—resulted in her choosing a lifestyle similar to that of her parents. She spent her early twenties living without obligations and found this kind of existence lacking. Peter tried obligation by way of his Jewish exploration, wondering about the extent to which he needed to feel rooted in a tradition to interact with the larger world. Ultimately, he felt too limited in this role and chose another.

In this context, I propose a developmental model following Erikson's stages with the addition of emerging adulthood, which acknowledges the need of this life-stage to ask, explore, and, ultimately, ground the individual in interaction with others (see Table 1). In this model, the central challenge of emerging adulthood is to find a balance between obligations to others and "self-protection"—the fundamental need to cultivate oneself or attend to one's own needs, sometimes foremost over anything else.

Emerging adults are just leaving the developmental stage of adolescence, where their developmental challenge was to resolve their relationships with peers. During adolescence, individuals determine with whom they will associate and what this will mean for their personalities and self-understandings, as well as how much they will succumb to the pressure of their peers. Although individuals begin to differentiate themselves from their families of origin and their childhood settings, adolescence is marked not by this differentiation, but rather by individuals' positive associations with peer groups; at the same time, this stage prepares individuals for emerging adulthood, because it helps them understand that they can connect themselves to communities that are different from those of their childhoods. Adolescents learn that they can find power, support, and validation from those outside of their parents.

As individuals enter emerging adulthood, they begin similarly to question their relationships with these peer groups. They enter into an examination

Table 1.
Erikson's
Developmental
Stages with
Emerging
Adulthood
Acknowledged

| |
|---|
| Infancy: Trust/ Mistrust (0–2 years) |
| Toddlerhood: Autonomy/ Shame (2–4 years) |
| Early school age: Initiative/ Guilt (4–6 years) |
| Middle school age: Industry/ Inferiority (6–12 years) |
| Adolescence: Group identity/ Alienation (12–20 years) |
| Emerging adulthood: Responsibility/ Self-protection (20–30 years) |
| Adulthood: Intimacy/ Isolation (30–40 years) |
| Middle Adulthood: Generativity/ Stagnation (40–60 years) |
| Later adulthood: Ego integrity/ Despair (60–75) |
| Very old age: Immortality/ extinction (75 until death) |

Based on the Eriksonian model adapted by Newman and Newman (1991).

of those relationships and of the extent to which they will maintain ties to those from their childhoods. Even more, they begin to question their relationship to the broader world. Their questions of profession, family, and ideology are also questions of contribution to community, of obligation to a larger world, to one's own future offspring, and to a religious or ethnic subgroup. These questions tug at values of separation and boundaries, universalism, responsibility, and home. They fundamentally ask emerging adults to examine and, ideally, decide where they feel at home in the world. Sometimes they choose responsibility and accountability, entering into a set of expectations that allows others to become dependent on them. At other times, they choose self-protection, allowing their sense of calm to be undisturbed by the needs of others, maintaining their own wholeness.

This challenge of "responsibility v. self-protection" explains Peter's moving between Jewish and universal communities and his ultimate choice to engage not in a traditional American or Jewish community but in an expatriate world that helps him fulfill his intellectual and professional interests. It explains Ilana's unhappiness with a lifestyle that met her immediate needs but not her long-term desires, her testing of a "me-first" world in which she took easy-to-quit jobs that let her seize her free time, and then her choice of a career that fed her creativity while it also allowed her to care for a family in the long term. When emerging adults are exploring the kind of long-term relationships they will develop, the kinds of financial obligations they will adopt, and the responsibilities to other people they will make, in the form of roots in community and friendships, they are working through the challenge of responsibility versus self-protection. How much of themselves can they give, and when do they find their true selves soaring?

EMERGING ADULTS AND SERVICE-LEARNING

Their general stage of experimentation and potential meaning-making, their specific life challenge of responsibility v. self-protection, and their need for a safe setting in which to examine and test assumptions make emerging adults ideal students for service-learning and a service-learning setting. Great service-learning helps its participants explore ideas of meaningful community need and social challenge, of the difference (or lack thereof) between self and those who are served. It demonstrates that all currently are not viewed *b'tzelem elohim*, in the image of God, that all do not currently have equal access to dignity, and that society is not currently equitable. Moreover, it raises personal, fundamental questions for its participants to explore: How did we get here, and how can I help fix it? What do I owe those around me? To what and whom am I responsible? What and whom do I care about? In my life, what will I keep as "mine," and what can I give to others? When emerging adults explore these questions within a context of service-learning and particularly within the context of Jewish service-learning, of Jewish tradition's emphasis on responsibility to the stranger, they develop commitments not only to activism but also to empathy or to responsibility. They develop "service identities" and see themselves as engaged actors in the world.

During a service-learning experience, it is possible to almost see, palpably, their development. Participants go through a series of "responsibility challenges,"

or developmental mini-stages in which they are actively balancing, in their self-definition, self-protection with responsibility. They do this sometimes out loud, during reflection sessions with their groups or with peers and facilitators in informal conversations. They do this sometimes in exchanges with community representatives or through their actions at the service site. They are taking in data and experiences and processing them, mixing them around with the ideas they brought with them to the service-learning experience, determining who they will be on the other side.

The stages that they undergo look something like this.

1. Fairness Assumption

Many participants come into service-learning experiences with an assumption that the world, fundamentally, operates fairly. That is, although everyone might not have equal opportunities or experience true equality, everyone has equal access to opportunities, or equity in their choices and options. Participants only have experienced the small world from which they came from where, for the most part, they spent time within their own social class, without seeing the opportunities that others have or do not have. They take basic dignity and choice for granted; likewise, food and shelter, family support, communal backing and roots, and education. The idea that anyone would have the resources to reinvent one's life is a given.

2. Breach in Worldview

Many service-learning experiences facilitate a breach in participants' worldviews. Participants leave the familiar and travel to a new neighborhood, a new community, or a new country. In any of these cases, they likely encounter a new culture, whether of a South American country or of a poor or working-class neighborhood near their own. Ways of communicating and everyday activities may be different from what they know, and more than that, this may be a significant time when participants feel a break in their assumption of fairness, when they see inequity in action.

As Erikson described, leaving home and entering unfamiliar territory cause a crisis that facilitates participants' struggle with their sense of responsibility: It is precisely because participants have been pulled from their worldview that they are able to see inequity. In their day-to-day lives they have become blind to such injustices; it is only when they are removed from their natural environments and placed in environments of others that it becomes harder to close their eyes.

When they feel this breach in worldview, participants begin to examine their commitment to fairness and ask these questions:

- What are we doing here? Where are the local people, the people of this community—why aren't they helping?
- Are these people really needy? What does need look like (compared with what I thought it would look like?)
- Am I accomplishing anything by being here?
- What's with this nonprofit that we're working with? They don't seem terribly organized. Are they not good at their jobs? What else is going on?
- How did this happen in the first place? Is this kind of service the best way from preventing it from happening?

Many service-learning experiences facilitate a breach in participants' worldviews.

These questions reflect participants' former understandings of the world. They come from predetermined and well-shaped but unconscious understandings of community, need, and service. Let us examine each one in turn:

"What are we doing here? Where are the local people, the people of this community – why aren't they helping?" reflects an understanding of community that places neighbors in empathy with neighbors and suggests that individuals have a support system ready to care for them. It assumes that, if any of us are sick or in need, others already within our own network will come to our assistance.

"Are these people really needy? What does need look like (compared to what I thought it would look like?)" reflects an understanding that those in "need" look different from participants, that need can be materially understood or viewed, and that need can be immediately understood. Moreover, this question reveals their early understanding of need as being extreme. As participants consider the nature of need, they continue to unravel their assumptions about fairness, understanding that even those with enough to eat may lack opportunities for education and human growth that participants have access to; participants may come to understand this, too, as need.

"Am I accomplishing anything by being here?" and *"What's with this non-profit that we're working with? They don't seem terribly organized. Are they not good at their jobs? What else is going on?"* reflect a predetermined understanding of what service means. Many participants come to service-learning expecting that they will build a house, or be thanked endlessly for their box sorting at the food pantry, or be companions to sweet and truly good elderly community members. They are surprised when they do not have time to finish or lack the skills to construct the house they are building, or when they are just another group in a calendar of groups at the food pantry, or when the sweet older adults are grumpy or even suicidal. They have images of functioning organizations with Mother Teresa-like directors, and when the nonprofit with which they are working slips once or twice in a day full of logistics, or its service director arrives drinking an expensive cup of coffee, their straightforward ideas of those who lead service are strongly challenged.

None of these questions about the nature of service have clear answers, making the recognition of the questions truly important. That is, when participants begin to ask these questions, and begin to talk through the challenges of having and wanting, of being human—of being both needy and grumpy, of organizations that need volunteers and that are simultaneously tired of needing volunteers—that is when space opens for participants to identify their own ideas around these questions. As they ask, they reveal their unconscious assumptions and begin to make meaning of a service-learning setting, to work on the sense of responsibility that they will adopt as adults.

3. Compassion and Confusion

With their breach in worldview and their new capacity to see, to notice, participants also develop a new capacity to understand gaps in equity and that we each benefit from complex systems that account for what we have in life. They start

As participants consider the nature of need, they continue to unravel their assumptions about fairness.

to see the community with which they are working with new compassion and empathy and to imagine the various social pressures, resources, and lack of resources that created the situation in which community members find themselves.

Their questions about need, service, and accomplishment become more empathetic questions about the complexity of these ideas.

For example,

What are we doing here? Where are the local people, the people of **this community—why aren't they helping?**, leads to questions like these:

Who are the people I am working with? What is their culture and way of living? How is it different from mine?

In this community, what do I not see? What are their education levels? What is health care like? What are the gender roles? Who has power and who does not, and why?

What can we learn from each other? What values and character ideals can I learn from this environment?

What is my culture? Where do I come from? What do I take for granted in my culture? What do I want to change?

Are these people really needy? What does need look like (compared with what I thought it would look like?)

Which lead to questions like these:

What is the story of this community? How did their need develop?

What are we entitled to? What does equity look like? What is fairness?

Am I accomplishing anything by being here? *And* What's with this nonprofit that we're working with? They don't seem terribly organized. Are they not good at their jobs? What else is going on?

Which lead to questions like these:

How is the world fixed? How is need addressed?

Who works for nonprofit organizations? Why? What is their role in our society?

Participants also now begin to struggle with genuine questions about solutions. They ask, *How did this happen in the first place? Is this kind of service the best way from preventing it from happening?* They doubt that the short term of service that they are performing will create long-term change—and, they begin to wonder about what kind of service will bring about long-term change.

4. Role Decision

As they struggle with compassion and confusion, they move onto considering their own role in the system. When they question the accomplishments that they will make in their short term of service, they also wonder, *What would it take for me to accomplish something? How long would I have to be here? What would that mean for my life?* They also begin to ask questions about their own resources, about the definitions of “have” and “mine.” They wonder, *How much do I want in my life? How much can I give away?* Concretely, they imagine shifting their ideas about

what they could do in the world to include doing long-term service, either in an immersive program or in their own community. Admittedly, they will make varied choices. Some will choose to vote, when they never otherwise would have, whereas others will choose to engage in weekly volunteering of some kind. Some will read the newspaper differently, and others will give to philanthropy more and give more intentionally. Some will change their choice of career, and others will make commitments to communal leadership that they might otherwise not have considered.

In total, during service-learning, participants will have struggled with the self-protection that they practiced when they began their term of service; they will have considered what it would mean to live a life responsible to others. At this time when they are exploring for themselves the nature of relationship, community, and obligation, service-learning experiences take them on a journey of self-discovery that makes questions of responsibility acute and real.

IN PRACTICE: ANYTHING BUT STRAIGHTFORWARD

I have argued that emerging adults engage in a core life challenge of identity resolution, of responsibility v. self-protection. Further, when participating in service-learning experiences, emerging adults engage in a series of developmental mini-stages or tasks that help them resolve this challenge. They begin their service-learning work with an assumption of fairness, they experience a breach in their worldview, they begin to develop compassion and approach fairness with confusion, and, finally they begin to make decisions about their ongoing roles as actors in the world.

Although some participants—even many service-learning participants—follow exactly this journey, some do not, for a variety of reasons. Some begin service-learning experiences with a more complicated view of fairness than that described here. They may have been raised without the resources of their peers. They may be the first in their families to go to college or come from a community like that with which they are working. Or, they may have been raised in environments that privileged service. They may have already developed ideas about responsibility and equity before their service-learning experiences as emerging adults.

Earlier, I noted the importance of having a safe space in which to ask big questions. Some service-learning settings cultivate these questions more than others. The curricula of the experiences and the facilitators hold tremendous potential as tools that can facilitate such exploration, but in some cases, participants may not feel safe articulating their growing ideas and questions.

Others stop asking questions, mid-experience. They begin their service-learning experience with their eyes open, and they ask the same questions about definition of need and about community responsibility. Yet, at some point before engaging in compassion and confusion, they stop wondering about service, community, systems, and need. It seems possible that particularly in response to these great questions that have few clear or straightforward answers, participants shut down, choosing self-protection over responsibility. They still may redefine their roles somewhat, because their service-learning experience has had an impact on them. They will likely have a strong affinity for the community with which they were working, and they may engage in other service projects if asked

by their peers. However, their development in this area, for whatever reasons, ceases for the time being.

Moreover, like all developmental projects, this path is just not linear. Participants ask questions and then retreat from hard emotional work. They step forward into and back from responsibility. Significantly more research on emerging adults in service-learning settings will benefit the field, because it will help us understand why and how this happens and will also shed light on the ideas that participants begin service-learning experiences with, explaining why some ask more questions than others.

Emerging adults are in the process of establishing how they will understand the world and what their life will be about. During this time, service-learning has much to offer them. At the same time, as they bring their questions and world-views to service-learning settings, the field of Jewish service-learning has much to learn from them. Here lies a synergy that well explains the significant investment in service-learning experiences for this population and an opportunity, in the leadership and contributions of emerging adults, that could reshape our world.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

In crafting this article, I am grateful to Rabbi Josh Feigelson and to Michelle Lackie, director of Weinberg *Tzedek* Hillel, for their insights; their ideas are reflected throughout. In addition, the American Jewish World Service curriculum was highly informative to this discussion, and I appreciate assistance from Aaron Dorfman, AJWS Vice President of Programs, in walking me through the curriculum and the educational process that it reflects.

REFERENCES

- Arnett, J. J. (2004). *Emerging adulthood: The winding road from the late teens through the twenties*. New York: Oxford University Press.
- Arnett, J. J., Kloep, M., Hendry, L. B., & Tanner, J. L. (2011). *Debating emerging adulthood: Stage or process?* New York: Oxford University Press.
- Dorfman, A. (2010). Beyond good intentions: A values proposition for Jewish service-learning. *Zeek*. Retrieved October 9, 2011, from <http://zeek.forward.com/articles/117067/>.
- Erikson, E. (1950). *Childhood and society*. New York: Norton.
- Jacobs, J. (2007). The history of tikkun olam. *Zeek*. Retrieved October 9, 2011, from <http://www.zeek.net/print/706tohu>.
- Newman, B. M., & Newman, P. R. (1991). *Development through life: A psycho-social approach*. California: Brooks/Cole Publishing.
- Parks, S. (2000). *Big questions: Worthy dreams: Mentoring young adults in their search for meaning, purpose, and faith*. San Francisco: Jossey Bass.