**[1] EMERGING ADULTHOOD[[1]](#footnote-1)**

Emerging Adulthood is defined primarily by its demographic outline. Longer and more widespread education, later entry into marriage and parenthood, and a prolonged and erratic transition to stable work have opened up a space for a new life stage in between adolescence and young adulthood… It is best to think of it as one stage, with distinctive demographic characteristics, but with many possible paths through that stage, in terms of how emerging adults experience their education, work, beliefs, sled-development and relationships.

The five features presented here… are proposed as *distinctive* to emerging adulthood but not *unique* to it. That is, they may be experiences in other life stages as well, but I propose that they are more prevalent and prominent in emerging adulthood than in other stages… There are five main features:

**1. Identity explorations: answering the question “who am I?” and trying out various life options, especially in love and work.**

“During this interval of years when they are neither beholden to their parents nor committed to an assortment of adult roles, they have exceptional opportunity to try out different ways of living and different possible choices for love and work"

“… Erikson also commented on the "prolonged adolescence” typical if industrialized societies, and the *psychological 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… [currently, ST] most identity exploration takes place in emerging adulthood rather than adolescence.

“With regards to love, [for] adolescents… the implicit question is ‘Who would I enjoy being with, here and now?’ In contrast… in emerging adulthood. the implicit question is more identity-focused ‘What kind of person am I, and what kind of person would better suit me best as a partner though life?’… in exploring work options, and in exploring the educational paths that will prepare them for work, emerging adults explore identity issues as well: ‘what kind of work am I good at? What kind of work would I find satisfying for the long term? What are my chances of getting a job in the field that seems to suit me best?’

“Many of the identity explorations of the emerging adult years are simply for fun, a kind of play, part of gaining a broad range of life experiences before ’settling down’ and taking on the responsibilities of adult life… [this has] earned a popular acronym, YOLO: you only live once.

**2. Instability, in love, work, and place of residence.**

“The identity explorations of emerging adults and their shifting choices... make this life stage not only full and intense, but also exceptionally unstable. Emerging adults know they are supposed to have a Plan with a capital ‘P,’… for almost all of them, their Plan is subject to numerous revisions… a natural consequence of their explorations…"

“With each revision in the Plan, they learn something about themselves and take a step towards clarifying the kind of future they want. But even if they succeed in doing so, this does not mean that the instability of emerging adulthood is easy… the insecurities of adolescence diminish, but instantly replaces them as a new source of disruption…. Exploration and instability go hand in hand"

**3. Self-focus, as obligations to others reach a life span low-point.**

“It is only… during emerging adulthood, that there are few ties that entail daily obligations and commitments to others… daily life is much more self-focused. What to have for dinner? You decide. When to do the laundry… when (or whether) to come home at night… Go to college? Work full time? try to combine… ? Switch majors?… colleges?… jobs?… apartments?… break up…? … Move in….? … Many of these decisions mean clarifying in their own mind what they want, and no one else can really tell them what they want."

“To be self focused is not really to be selfish, and to say that emerging adulthood is a self-focused time is not meant pejoratively. There is nothing wrong with being self-focused during emerging adulthood; it is normal, healthy and temporary… The goal id their self-focusing is to learn to stand alone as a self-sufficient person, but they do not see self-sufficiency as a permanent state. Rather, they view it as a necessary step before committing themselves to enduring relationships with others, in love and work."

**4. Feeling in-between, in transition, neither adolescent nor adult;** and

"The reason why so many emerging adults feel in between is evident from the criteria they consider to be moist important for becoming an adult. Their top criteria are gradual, so their feelings of becoming an adult is gradual, too:

a. Accept responsibility for yourself

b. Make independent decisions.

c. Become financially independent.

The “Big Three’ criteria are gradual, incremental, rather than all at once… While they are in the process of developing these those qualities, they feel in between adolescence and full adulthood."

**5. Possibilities/ optimism, when hopes flourish and people have an unparalleled opportunity to transform their lives**.

"Emerging adulthood is the age of possibilities, when so many different futures are possible, when little about a person’s direction in life has been decided for certain, It tends to be an age of high hopes and great expectations, in part because few of their dreams have been tested in the fires of real life. Emerging adults look to the future and envision well-paying satisfying job, a loving, lifelong marriage to their ‘soul mate’ and happy children who are above the average…"

“Another aspect of emerging adulthood that makes it the age of possibilities is that it offers the potential for changing dramatically the directions of one’s life… This is especially important for young people who have grown up in difficult conditions… Even for those who [are] relatively happy and healthy, emerging adulthood is an opportunity to transform themselves so they are not merely made in their parents’ image but have made independent decisions about what kind of person they wish to be and how they wish to live. During emerging adulthood, they have an exceptionally wide scope for making their own decisions… while emerging adulthood lasts, they have a chance to change their lives in profound ways."

“For this limited window of time - seven, perhaps ten years - the fulfilment of all their hopes seem possible, because for most people the range of their choice for how to live is greater that it has ever been before, and greater than it will ever be again."

**[2] IDENTITY DEVELOPMENT**

“Most investigations of identity formation conducted during the past two decades have employed Marcia’s (1966) identity-status paradigm. Within Marcia’s scheme identity status is operationalized by simultaneously considering two dimensions, **crisis** and **commitment**. A crisis involves self-reported exploration and active examination of identity issues. Commitment pertains to personal involvements in the beliefs, aspirations and values that one professes to hold…”

(Berzonsky, M. D. "Identity Style: Conceptualization and Measurement." Journal of Adolescent Research 4.3 (1989)

“Exploration is defined as examining different identity alternatives to which one might commit, and commitment is defined as having assumed an identity—including ideologies and roles in different domains. Four statuses can be derived from the combinations of exploration and commitment, with the most advanced being identity achievement—those who have explored their potential ideological options and have subsequently chosen ideologies. Those who have not yet reached commitment and are still exploring are in the moratorium status, whereas those who commit to ideals without a process of exploration are in foreclosure. Finally, those who have neither explored nor committed, and are therefore not engaged in the process of identity formation, are in diffusion.”

**(**Kate C. McLean & Monisha Pasupathi (2012) Processes of Identity Development: Where I Am and How I Got There, Identity: An International Journal of Theory and Research, 12:1)

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | **diffused identity**  | **foreclosed identity** | **moratorium identity** | **achieved identity** |
| **definition** | low levels of past choice making; little commitment to present or future roles | low levels of past choice, high levels of commitment  | active choice making, unformed commitments  | committed to present and future roles as a result of conscious choice making  |
| **example** | “i don't give religion much thought; and it doesn't bother me one way or the other” | “i guess i’m pretty much like my parents when it comes to politics; i follow what they do in terms of voting and such” | “i’m still trying to decide how capable i am as a person and what jobs will be right for me” | “based on past experiences, i’ve chosen the type of dating relationships i want now” |

**(**Examples are taken from the Extended Objective Measure of Ego Identity Status; Bennion, Layne D., and Gerald R. Adams. "Extended Objective Measure of Ego Identity Status--Revised Version”)

**Freedom requires a great deal from people**, placing pressures on them that they may not be personally equipped to handle adequately... These pressures include the need to: continually reflect on relationships with others; constantly plan ahead; make life-altering choices; take responsibility for personal failings and limitations; and overcome any structural obstacles affecting them, such as barriers related to social class, race, gender, and age... In other words, fully benefitting from this freedom requires high levels of psychosocial functioning and an astute self-discipline in dealing with one’s self and one’s society, often in the absence of collective supports…

Late-modern normative pressures seem to be pushing people to engage in more management of their social identities, more projection of situationally appropriate images, and a greater need for flexibility so as not to diminish future options... Young people affected by these pressures can go to great lengths to be ‘‘non-judgmental’’ and avoid closure on the gamut of identity issues they feel are thrust upon them (occupation, values, beliefs, and so forth). While this stance of ‘‘relativistic commitment suspension’’ may gain acceptance in ‘‘postmodern youth cultures’’… it may be taken at the expense of building… personality strengths…\_

(Côté, James E., and Seth J. Schwartz. "Comparing Psychological and Sociological Approaches to Identity: Identity Status, Identity Capital, and the Individualization Process." Journal of Adolescence 25.6 (2002)

**Self Determination\_**

The presumption in modern society is that self-determination is a good thing, both psychologically and morally. Freedom and autonomy are words that come to mind as rough synonyms… From trivial things like choices of ice cream flavors, television shows, clothing styles, and objectives in softball games to crucial things like choices of careers, places to live, friends, and lovers, there is simply no such thing as too much freedom… Thus, the fully self-determined self is one that is completely unconstrained--by habit, by social convention, or by biology. Operating without constraint, the self-determining self makes choices in the world to maximize his or her preferences, in keeping with the principles of rational choice… When self- determination is carried to extremes, it leads not to freedom of choice but to tyranny of choice…

Cultural institutions go a long way toward telling people where they can choose and where they cannot, and within the domains where choice is allowed, these institutions determine what the possibilities are. These constraints on choice help solve the information problem. They solve the problem of to having compare things that are seemingly incomparable. In addition, and perhaps more significant, traditional constraints on choice may tell people in which domains of their lives the principles of rational choice are allowed to operate. They may protect patterns of behavior that are especially important to the functioning of the culture by removing them from the domain of choice altogether. Cultural traditions invest certain practices with a great deal of moral significance so that people will be discouraged from regarding them as matters of individual choice at all. Traditional morality serves as a kind of preventive medicine, protecting people from themselves)…

… The emphasis on individual autonomy and control may be undermining a crucial vaccine against depression: deep commitment and belonging to social groups and institutions--families, civic associations, faith communities, and the like. There is an inherent tension between being one' s own person, or determining one' s own self, and meaningful involvement in social groups. Doing the latter properly requires submerging one's self. Therefore, the more people focus on themselves--with respect both to goals and to the means of achieving those goals--the more their connections to others will be weakened…

(Schwartz, Barry. "Self-determination: The Tyranny of Freedom." American Psychologist 55.1 (2000))

**[3] KOLB LEARNNG CYCLE**

CONCRETE EXPERIENCE: Describes feelings, emotions and direct experience with the world. Concrete experience involves generating new ideas and experiences. These experiences serve as the basis for learning.

REFLECTIVE OBSERVATION: Involves looking back on an initial experience and gathering new information and ideas about the experience. Reflective observation requires looking at the experience from different view points and gathering new data to make sense of the experience.

ABSTRACT CONCEPTUALIZATION: Requires organizing the initial experience into a coherent and meaningful context. Abstract conceptualization requires abstract thinkers and creates a plan to guide future actions.

ACTIVE EXPERIMENTATION: Draws on the newly formed understanding, and attempts to test it out in new realities and contexts. Active experimentation requires taking action in new and / or additional environments.

[4] GIFTS AND SKILLS

“In my experience, more people suffer from a sense of incompetence or impotence than enjoy feelings of superiority about their powers of creation. In a world where so many people feel unable to do masterwork, the story of the master carver can seem utterly irrelevant: “I have no special skills. I am the master of nothing…”

… Every human being is born with some sort of gift, an inclination or an instinct that can become a full-blown mastery. We may not see our gift for what it is. Having seen it we may choose not to accept the gift and its consequences for our lives. Or, having claimed our gift, we may not be willing to do the hard work necessary to nurture it. But none of these evasions can alter the fact that the gift is ours. Each of us is a master at something, and part of becoming fully alive is to discover and develop our birthright competence…

… The most subtle barrier to the discernment of our native gifts is in the gifts themselves: They are so central to us, so integral to who are, that we take them for granted and are often utterly unaware of the mastery they give us.

The skills we are most aware of possessing are often those we have acquired through long hours of study and practice, at considerable financial and personal cost. Precisely because these skills once cost us an effort to acquire, and still cost us effort to employ, we are acutely aware of owning them. Ironically, these self-conscious skills are often not our leading strengths; if they were, they would not be so effortful. But they are the strengths upon which we sometimes build our identities and our careers – though we build on an anxious, uncertain foundation. Meanwhile, our native, instinctive gifts either languish unused and unappreciated or get used unconsciously without being named and claimed.

Our tendency to identity ourselves with our acquired skills rather than our natural gifts is one of the less desirable habits of the ego. It is the ego that decides what skills it prizes, the ego that exerts the effort to develop those skills, and the ego that manipulates and markets those skills once it acquires them. Because the ego’s identity is so heavily invested in these acquired skills, it does not want to acknowledge the natural, untrained, effortless gifts over which the ego has no ownership or control. Indeed, the very fact that we have gifts that the ego did nothing to earn is threatening to the ego, which desperately needs to believe that nothing comes into being without its own authorization or agency. In fact, the ego can sometimes be so insistent on its status that it would sooner diminish us than be humbled by our gifts. If we have no formal training, no acquired skills, the ego may insist that we have no competence at all rather than honor our native gifts.

We need ego-strength to live and live fruitfully. But it is a paradoxical truth that in order to gain the strength that comes from knowing our gifts we may have to fight the ego’s drive to dominate our lives…

So when we seek our own birthright gifts, it is important not to equate them with the techniques our society names as skills. Our gifts may be as simple as a real interest in other people, a quite and caring manner, an eye for beauty, a love of rhythm and sound. But in those simple personal gifts the seeds of vocation are often found, if we are willing to do the inner and outer work necessary to cultivate our mastery.”

\* \* \*

“Over the past decade a new approach to vocation seeking has emerged that draws on the insights of depth psychology. In this approach, people are encouraged to begin, not with their credentials, but with the question “What are my leading gifts and abilities?” There are various ways to answer this question, but many of the new career counselors urge people to start by writing a childhood autobiography. Some job-seekers find it odd to be asked to explore their earliest childhood memories of how they spent time, what brought them pleasure, what they could not abide. How could this information possibly help one identify marketable adult skills?

What the exercise does, of course, is to circumvent the ego, to take us back to those days when we acted more from natural inclination than from the ego’s images and demands. Some of the most powerful clues to our true gifts are buried deep in childhood, when we said and did and felt things without censoring them through external values or expectations. As we grow older, various social pressures may divert us from our native gifts, and we may experience much personal and vocational frustration as a result. But by recalling the activities that evoked our energies during childhood’s innocence, we can get in touch with our own version of the woodcarver’s mastery.”

\* \* \*

In this exercise, we want you to create a personal ‘resume’ – one that is based on your life’s junctures, your values, gifts and skills. Focus on those that are innate – not acquired.

Those that make you unique – a *Chiddush*.

In creating this resume, please feel free to be creative. You will share the resume – or parts of it – in your group.

Here are some guiding questions and resources that may help you:

* Recall activities you have experienced that evoked your energies in a pleasurable, unself-conscious way. What kinds of experiences do you remember?
* Consider your experiences and accomplishments. What are your innate gifts, the gifts you bring to the world by simply being who you are?
* Are your innate gifts being utilized? What senses of doubt and clarity surround how they are or are not being manifested and shared?

Birthright gifts may be ‘simple’ ones that define who we are, and can become the seeds of our vocation. Below are some additional examples of ‘innate gifts’ that may prompt you in articulating your own:

Being with people

Loving and being loved

Taking care of others

Having a close family

Having good friends

Appreciating and being appreciated

Treating and being treated fairly

Being independent

Being courageous

Having things in control

Having self-control

Having self-acceptance

Having pride or dignity

Being well-organized

Being competent

Learning and knowing a lot

Achieving highly

Being productively busy

Striving for perfection

Making a contribution to the world

Fighting injustice

Living ethically

Being a good parent or child

Being a spiritual person

Having a relationship with God

Having peace and quiet

Making a home

Preserving your roots

Holding on to what you have

Having fun

Enjoying sensual pleasures

Looking good

Being physically fit

Being healthy

Having prized possessions

Being a creative person

Having deep feelings

Growing as a person

Living fully

"Smelling the flowers"

Having a purpose

**[4] PERSONAL STATEMENT**

Prepare a personal statement describing what you have gained and learned from the Community Cohort. You will share your statement with the rest of the group at the closing session.

The personal statement should focus on ‘Conceptualization,’ describing concrete ideas, concepts and understandings based on the subject matter taught in the Community Cohort. Please focus on learnings that you are taking with you, and not reflections from the actual experience.

This statement should communicate your mission as an experiential Jewish educator and should focus on the values that you would like to impart.

Be sure to reflect on each of the three seminars as you prepare your statement.

Please use your cohort members to practice sharing your personal statement.

You will have no longer than two minutes. Please time yourself accordingly.

1. Arnett, Jeffrey Jensen. Emerging Adulthood: The Winding Road from the Late Teens through the Twenties. New York: Oxford UP, 2015. Print. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)