

Engaging Emerging Adults

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In his influential book *Bowling Alone*, political scientist Robert Putnam points to Americans' declining levels of civic engagement. Older, more engaged Americans, he argues, are being replaced by younger people who are less aware and civically engaged. Sociologist Robert Wuthnow sees it differently. It isn't that civic engagement is declining, but it is changing. Rather than being members of groups that meet on regular schedules, Americans—including younger Americans—are forming "loose connections" with one another through which they participate in American civic life in more flexible ways that better meet the economic and political realities of their lives.¹

Emerging adults play important roles in these debates. Scholars see them both as people who are not participating in civic life and those who are engaged in flexible new ways. Politicians on both the left and the right urge them to take more active roles in serving their communities and participating in public life. With President Obama's recent reauthorization and expansion of national service programs, emerging adults are at the center of widespread policy discussion about the ways in which service may bind us "to each other and to our community in a way nothing else can."²

We focus on the experiences of emerging adults here, laying out how people ages 18 to 29 volunteer and participate in the civic life of their communities. We define volunteering as formal public work that takes place primarily through organizations rather than informal assistance people provide for neighbors and friends.³ Volunteering

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is one form of civic engagement through which young adults work with others, usually without pay, especially through religious organizations, children’s educational, sports, or recreational organizations, and social and community service organizations that contribute to the public good. Like Robert Wuthnow, we find that emerging adults—especially white women from higher socioeconomic backgrounds who went to college—are involved in American civic life in a range of meaningful ways. We also find that young adults see their involvement in civic life differently than older Americans do, describing participation as a choice rather than a duty or obligation.

We first consider which emerging adults volunteer and participate in community service in this report and what factors lead them to do so. We then examine how they participate by describing the organizations through which they engage. We pay particular attention to the role religion plays in these processes, both as a factor that leads some young adults to be civically engaged and as a set of organizations through which people volunteer. We conclude with brief recommendations for civic and religious leaders.

Are Emerging Adults Engaged?

High school students generally have high rates of volunteering and civic participation that dip in their early 20s and begin to rise during their late 20s.⁵ These patterns are likely related to the mobility, transition, and focus on self-development that are increasingly common for emerging adults. Table 1 shows that 44% of young adults volunteered with nonreligious organizations and 38% with religious organizations,

Table 1: Percentage of Americans who volunteered in the past 12 months by type of organization

	Nonreligious Organizations	Religious Organizations
Ages 18–29	44	38
Ages 30–49	60	44
Ages 50–64	49	42
Ages 65+	35	42

Source: Gallup (2008).⁴

according to 2008 Gallup Poll data. Emerging adults volunteered less frequently and for fewer hours than older adults, but still in large numbers—these percentages represent an estimated 21.5 million young adult volunteers.

What about High School Seniors?

Many young adults are exposed to volunteer and community service opportunities in high school. A nationally representative study showed that 43% of high school seniors volunteer occasionally and 22% volunteer on a monthly basis or more.⁶ This involvement may lay the groundwork for individuals' civic participation in the next decade of their life. One study suggests that volunteering in high school, but not college, has a direct effect on whether or not individuals volunteer as adults. It is in high school that individuals are exposed to socially active young adults and develop a sense of social solidarity and the ability to connect and bond with others through volunteering.⁷

Volunteering among high school students has been encouraged by programs that make service hours a requirement for graduation. Studies suggest that these programs have lasting effects, as youth who participate in community service during high school are more likely to volunteer later in life. Even when this service is a school requirement, those who participate are more involved in civic life in the future. When volunteering is not required, studies suggest that high school seniors who are involved in school-based extracurricular activities and who work part time are more likely to take advantage of high school service opportunities than others.⁸ Young adults who see religion as an important part of their lives are also more likely to volunteer. Early family socialization is also important, as students from households where they see adult role models volunteering are more likely to be civically engaged during high school.

Shifts for College-Age Adults (Ages 19–25)

After high school graduation, additional gaps emerge between young adults who do and do not volunteer. Attending college is the single most important factor that leads some young adults to volunteer. Emerging adults who attend college are much more likely to be engaged, perhaps because they have a greater number of accessible opportunities. In a longitudinal study of incoming freshmen conducted by the Higher Education Research Institute at UCLA, the percentage of freshmen who report volunteering reached an all-time high (61%) in 2007. According to a study by the Center for Information and Research on Civic Learning and Engagement (CIRCLE), just under 25% of emerging

adults ages 19–25 with college experience volunteered in 2006, as compared to 8% of young adults without college experience. The amount of time emerging adults spent volunteering was relatively equal, at about 30 hours per year, regardless of education.

Like high school seniors, college-age volunteers are more likely to be female, white, and from households with higher socioeconomic status, according to the National Center for Education Statistics. Family and extracurricular involvement continue to play influential roles. Emerging adults ages 18 and 21 are more likely to be involved in volunteering if another member of their family volunteers or if they belong to an organization that encourages social interaction, such as a school club or interest group. A recent study by CIRCLE shows that emerging adults without college experience are more likely to start volunteering through their relatives' connections to an organization and are most likely to volunteer with a religious group.

Some emerging adults make more intensive commitments to service while in college. In a small qualitative study, college students who spent 10–20 hours a week volunteering in social service roles reported that the example of others, like service-oriented parents or role models, was influential, as were their own experiences of hardship or strong religious faith. Most described a “triggering event” that catalyzed their commitment to service. For three quarters of these students, this event was a single academic experience that shaped their worldview, such as a university course, Bible study, independent reading, or participation in freshmen orientation.⁹

Substantial evidence also suggests that religious practices and beliefs influence whether high-school-age and college-age emerging adults volunteer. As Robert Putnam argues with David Campbell in their forthcoming book, *American Grace: How Religion Is Reshaping Our Civic and Political Lives*, religious individuals are much more likely to work on community projects, belong to voluntary associations, attend public meetings, vote in local elections, attend protest demonstrations and political rallies, and donate time and money to religious and secular causes. This is because they belong to social networks or “moral communities” that encourage these types of behavior. These findings have important implications for emerging adults, who, according to Putnam and Campbell, are increasingly secular and much less likely than older adults to attend religious services or claim religious affiliation.

In his newest book, *Souls in Transition: The Religious and Spiritual Lives of American Teenagers*, sociologist Christian Smith finds that emerging adults ages 18–23 who are involved in some type of religious practice are more likely to volunteer for community service or offer informal help to individuals in need than those who are disengaged from religion entirely. Similarly, in the National Youth Survey, 15- to 25-year-olds who attended religious services regularly reported more civic and political activity, including volunteering.¹⁰

Young adults who are religious may volunteer either because of their beliefs and values or because their religious organizations provide easily accessible opportunities. They often have close friends who volunteer and are part of strong social networks that encourage community service. Religious practices seem particularly influential for emerging adults who don't attend college, according to a recent CIRCLE report. Individuals who did not go to college but who attend religious services at least once a month are more than twice as likely to volunteer as are their peers. For these young adults, religious congregations and family are the most important pathways to service and community engagement.

When asked about volunteering, many emerging adults talk about helping others as a personal and individual choice rather than as a responsibility. Only a minority of college-age adults ages 18–23 believe they have a responsibility to help others, according to sociologist Christian Smith. A few young adults emphasize the importance of mutual responsibility, making moral arguments for helping others and drawing on theological notions of loving your neighbor. Others offer a more instrumental perspective of “generalized reciprocity” in which helping someone in need is part of a cycle of giving and receiving assistance through which everyone is eventually helped.

Later Trends (Ages 26–29)

Volunteering among emerging adults in their late 20s remains higher among those who attended college. Though volunteering begins to rise when emerging adults reach their late 20s, it does not return to high school levels of participation.¹¹ Those who participated in student government, community service, or political activism during high school or college are still more likely to join community organizations later in life.

Women and individuals from households with high socioeconomic status also remain more likely to volunteer, as do emerging adults who volunteered during high school—consistent with earlier patterns.

People are involved in religious, environmental, civic, community, and youth work out of their desire to help others. Emerging adults are less likely than older adults to describe their motivations in terms of active or positive obligations related to citizenship. Instead, they see making a contribution to the collective good or being civically and politically involved as a choice, not a duty. In other words, fewer young adults say that good citizenship *requires* participation and action such as voting, paying attention to government decisions and political events, or contacting legislative officials about issues that matter to them. Some, though not most, embrace a passive view of citizenship that frames involvement as an individual decision and need more persuasion than older adults to get involved.¹²

How and Where Are Emerging Adults Engaged?

Young adults volunteer through a wide range of organizations that connect them to others who share common concerns. These organizations provide the institutional means to address problems at the local and national levels, encouraging and facilitating community service and engagement. They also provide opportunities to work collaboratively for the benefit of others, develop and exercise public voice, and learn how to problem-solve with people from different backgrounds. The most systematic classification of voluntary groups is based on the work of Lester Salamon and Helmut Anheier, who divide the nonprofit sector into the following 12 fields of activity: culture, education, health, social services, environment, development, civic and advocacy, philanthropy, international, religious, business and professional, and unions. Groups in these areas range from local congregations to branches of national organizations to direct membership in national organizations themselves.

Through this range of organizations, emerging adults perform multiple types of volunteer work. Some of this work is *change-directed* or social-cause service, in which volunteers work directly with people or causes in need. Volunteers in these organizations tend to be involved in projects such as raising awareness to end racism or

campaigning for a particular political candidate. Other volunteer work is more *service oriented*, such as tutoring, mentoring, coaching, administrative work, or general manual labor. The few studies that compare individuals involved in different types of volunteer activities suggest patterns. Young volunteers who participate in change-directed efforts show greater awareness of social issues. They are more likely to volunteer later in life and express a greater interest in becoming politically involved in the future—outcomes that may result from the same factors that led them to volunteer with change-directed efforts in the first place.¹³

Overall, a higher percentage of emerging adults report volunteering for a nonreligious rather than religious organization (Table 1). When asked more specifically about the types of organizations through which they engage in either change-directed or service-directed activities, young adults are most likely to say they volunteer with groups connected to religious, educational, or social-service efforts. According to a study by CIRCLE, emerging adults in 2006 and 2007 were most likely to volunteer in religious organizations; children’s educational, sports, or recreational organizations; and social- and community-service organizations. Within these organizational contexts, emerging adults are overall more likely to tutor or teach. In addition to tutoring and teaching, those who attend college are more likely to mentor, while those who did not attend college were more likely to perform general labor and supply transportation for people.

In addition to those who volunteer with local organizations, some emerging adults commit one to two years after high school or college to serving full time in a domestic volunteer corps in exchange for a small living stipend. They participate in a growing number of national service opportunities through AmeriCorps or Teach for America. Others join religiously based programs such as the Jesuit Volunteer Corps, Mennonite Voluntary Service, and Lutheran Volunteer Corps. National service programs are often framed explicitly as fostering citizenship, while religiously based volunteer corps frame their mission theologically, emphasizing social justice, spirituality, or solidarity with the poor. These programs challenge emerging adults to dedicate at least a year to serving a wider community, while introducing them to formative models of community engagement and social change.

Recent research by the Corporation for National and Community Service

compares individuals who participated in AmeriCorps programs to a comparison group of individuals who applied but did not participate. The researchers identified significant differences in civic behavior between the groups. Eight years after participating in AmeriCorps, members were more likely to express commitment to their communities, be aware of community social issues, and express confidence in their ability to work with local governments or lead a successful community-based movement. They also scored higher than their peers on various measures of overall life satisfaction related to work/career, physical health, religion/spirituality, and leisure activities.¹⁴

None of the religiously based volunteer corps compare to AmeriCorps in size or scope. A small study of the Jesuit Volunteer Corps (JVC), the largest lay Catholic organization in the United States, suggests that after a year in JVC, volunteers have been socialized into the program's view of social justice and concern for the poor. Sociologist Paul Perl finds that volunteers are less likely to see self-help as the solution to poverty, are more likely to be concerned with systemic or structural causes of economic inequality, and show less support for restrictions on welfare. Participants do not seem to change the extent to which their political opinions are shaped by religious belief or practice, despite the program's emphasis on faith-based social justice. Volunteers are also significantly more likely to see themselves working in a job related to social service after their JVC year. Perl concludes that interactions with co-workers and neighbors who live in poverty, more than interactions with other volunteers, lead participants' political and religious attitudes to shift.¹⁵

Implications for Civic and Religious Leaders

Pathways to volunteering and community service for emerging adults, like the activities they engage in, are many and varied. Although often in transition, many emerging adults find ways to volunteer, if not regularly, episodically. Thus, civic and religious leaders who wish to encourage young adults to participate in volunteer work and community service should continue to develop flexible opportunities that enable young adults to volunteer. The majority of emerging adults who volunteer say they were asked by someone to do so. Those who discuss their volunteering experience with others are twice as likely to volunteer regularly. With this in mind, civic and religious leaders might consider developing online and face-to-face partnerships between local, national, and

global organizations that do service work, with the goal of encouraging emerging adults to think about how their engagement connects to larger social and political problems. Leaders might also provide and support forums through which emerging adults can discuss controversial political and social issues that relate to their own service and community-engagement experiences.

We know that emerging adults who volunteer are most likely to be white, female, have high socioeconomic status, and pursue postsecondary education. We also know that these individuals are more likely to be *asked* to volunteer. Civic and religious leaders should continue to target programs to this demographic, but should also consider how to include more young men, people of color, and economically disadvantaged youth in their work. Many emerging adults won't get involved unless they are invited directly. In addition, special efforts are needed to engage emerging adults without college experience. Because those who do not attend college have fewer formal opportunities to get involved in their communities, families, high schools, religious congregations, and other social institutions are especially important in engaging this underserved population. Civic and religious leaders should make youth who don't attend college a greater priority in their outreach efforts. They need to reach beyond college campuses to engage this population and confront growing inequalities in civic participation and community engagement.

¹ This argument is developed in Robert Wuthnow (1998), *Loose connections: Joining together in America's fragmented communities* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press).

² Associated Press (2009), Obama urges people to serve communities, National Public Radio, www.npr.org/templates/story/story.php?storyId=113856335&sc=emaf.

³ We do not consider mandatory court-ordered service here, but do address school-based and assigned volunteering among high school students. We consider social activism to be one form of volunteering, because it requires organized collective action to achieve a shared good. See also Marc A. Musick and John Wilson (2008), *Volunteers: A social profile* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press); John Wilson (2000), Volunteering, *Annual Review of Sociology*, 26, 215–240; and James Youniss and Hugh McIntosh (2010), Trends in political and civic behavior in emerging adults, ChangingSEA.org.

⁴ Lydia Saad (2008, December 19), Despite economy, charitable donors, volunteers keep giving: Most Americans gave financial support to a charity in past year,

www.gallup.com/poll/113497/Despite-Economy-Charitable-Donors-Volunteers-Keep-Giving.aspx.

⁵ Cliff Zukin, Scott Keeter, Molly Andolina, Krista Jenkins, and Michael X. Delli Carpini (2006), *A new engagement? Political participation, civic life, and the changing American citizen* (New York: Oxford University Press); Mike Planty, Robert Bozick, Michael Regnier (2006), Helping because you have to or helping because you want to? Sustaining participation in service work from adolescence through young adulthood, *Youth & Society*, 38, 177–202.

⁶ Musick and Wilson (2008).

⁷ James Youniss, Jeffrey A. McLellan, and Miranda Yates (1999), Religion, community service, and identity in American youth, *Journal of Adolescence*, 22, 243–253.

⁸ James Youniss, Jeffrey A. McLellan, Yang Su, and Miranda Yates (1999), The role of community service in identity development: Normative, unconventional, and deviant orientations, *Journal of Adolescent Research*, 14, 248–261; Youniss, McLellan, and Yates (1999).

⁹ Scott Seider (2007), Catalyzing a commitment to community service in emerging adults, *Journal of Adolescent Research*, 22, 612–639.

¹⁰ Zukin et al. (2006).

¹¹ Zukin et al. (2006).

¹² Zukin et al. (2006).

¹³ Musick and Wilson (2008); Edward Metz, Jeffrey McLellan, and James Youniss (2003), Types of voluntary service and adolescents' civic development, *Journal of Adolescent Research*, 18, 188–203.

¹⁴ Corporation for National and Community Service, Office of Research and Policy Development (2008), *Still serving: Measuring the eight-year impact of AmeriCorps on alumni* (Washington, DC).

¹⁵ Paul Perl (2005), *Social justice attitudes and religious commitment among participants in the Jesuit Volunteer Corps*, working paper (Washington, DC: Center for Applied Research in the Apostolate).

Annotated Bibliography

Clydesdale, Tim. (2007). *The first year out: Understanding American teens after high school*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Tim Clydesdale explores the experiences of American teens in their first year after high school graduation, which he calls the “first year out,” through 125 in-depth interviews and a year of field research at a public high school. Clydesdale finds that during the first year out, most teens are preoccupied with “daily life management” as they prioritize personal relationships and gratifications, meeting educational requirements, and their own finances, rather than focusing on the longer-term direction of their lives. Instead of taking advantage of the opportunity to broaden their intellectual or social horizons, they keep their core religious, political, and other identities in an “identity lockbox” during the first year out and risk “neglecting their interdependence with community, civic life, national politics, and global issues.”

Corporation for National and Community Service, Office of Research and Policy Development. (2008, May). Still serving: Measuring the eight-year impact of AmeriCorps on alumni. Washington, DC., www.americorps.gov/pdf/08_0513_longstudy_report.pdf.

This longitudinal study analyzes the outcomes of participation in two AmeriCorps programs eight years after enrollment, comparing a nationally representative sample of individuals who participated in AmeriCorps State and National programs or AmeriCorps National Civilian Community Corps (NCCC) to a comparison group of individuals who applied but did not participate. Researchers focus on the effects of AmeriCorps on levels of civic engagement and volunteering, employment and career choices, educational attainment, and life satisfaction among members. Eight years after participating in AmeriCorps, members of State and National or NCCC were more likely to express commitment to their communities, awareness of community social issues, and confidence in their ability to work with local governments or lead a

successful community-based movement. They also scored higher than their peers on various measures of overall life satisfaction related to work/career, physical health, religious/spiritual lives, and leisure activities.

Liu, Amy, Jessica Sharkness, and John H. Pryor. (2008). Findings from the 2007 administration of Your First College Year (YFCY): National aggregates. Los Angeles: Higher Education Research Institute, UCLA.

The Your First College Year survey is administered by the Higher Education Research Institute and the Policy Center on the First Year of College at Brevard College with the goal of improving local and national assessment of students' first year of college. The survey measures students' curricular and cocurricular experiences and gathers data on college environments and student outcomes during the first year of college. It includes several measures related to student adjustment to college, satisfaction with college, feelings of success, academic experiences, faculty and staff contacts, personal challenges and social networks, financial concerns, social networks and peer interactions, interaction with family, religious and spiritual issues, and social awareness and racially diverse interaction.

Marcelo, Karlo Barrios. (2007). Volunteering among high school students. Fact Sheet. College Park, MD: Center for Information and Research on Civic Learning and Engagement.

This publication is part of a larger research program on volunteering and community service among youth at the Center for Information and Research on Civic Learning and Engagement (CIRCLE). Based on data from the 2006 September (Volunteering) Supplement of the Census Bureau's Current Population Survey, this fact sheet explores volunteering among high school students ages 16–18. It provides information on regional variation in volunteering, the types of organizations with which students volunteer, the types of volunteer activities they perform, how they became involved in volunteering, and longitudinal trends in volunteering among high school students.

Marcelo, Karlo Barrios. (2007). College experience and volunteering. Fact Sheet. College Park, MD: Center for Information and Research on Civic Learning and Engagement.

This fact sheet describes volunteering among youth ages 19–25 with college experience, using data for volunteer rates from the 2006 September (Volunteering) Supplement of the Census Bureau's Current Population Survey. It includes information regarding volunteer rates, regional variation in volunteering, median volunteer hours, the types of organizations with which these youth volunteer, the volunteer activities they perform, and how college youth became involved in volunteering.

Marcelo, Karlo Barrios. (2007). Volunteering among non-college youth. College Park, MD: Center for Information and Research on Civic Learning and Engagement.

This fact sheet provides information on volunteering among youth ages 19–25 without college experience, using data from the 2006 September (Volunteering) Supplement of the Census Bureau's Current Population Survey. It explores volunteer rates, regional variation in volunteering, median volunteer hours, the types of organizations with which these youth volunteer, the types of volunteer activities they perform, and how youth without college experience became involved in volunteering.

Perl, Paul. (2005). Social justice attitudes and religious commitment among participants in the Jesuit Volunteer Corps. Working Paper. Washington, DC: Center for Applied Research in the Apostolate.

In this working paper for the Center for Applied Research in the Apostolate, Paul Perl analyzes two written surveys of Jesuit Volunteers conducted in 1996 and 1997. He examines changes in attitudes toward social justice issues, religious commitment, religious beliefs, and interest in future social service work or involvement in the Catholic Church among 95 volunteers who served in three regions of the country. Perl finds that after a year in JVC, volunteers are generally socialized into the program's view of social justice and concern for the poor. However, the program does not increase religious commitment among volunteers, who show greater interest in future social service work than in the Catholic Church. Interactions with

co-workers or neighbors who live in poverty appear to be especially influential in shifting political or religious attitudes and commitments among volunteers.

Musick, Marc, and John Wilson. (2008). *Volunteers: A social profile*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press.

In this six-part volume, sociologists Marc Musick and John Wilson provide a comprehensive review of the current research on volunteering, relying primarily on survey research. Musick and Wilson draw attention to the renewed interest in the study of volunteering and address the complexities of both defining and identifying volunteer work. In their review of the existing literature in the field, they focus their analysis on the areas of subjective dispositions, individual resources, the social context of volunteering, the organization of volunteer work, and the consequences of volunteering. First, they focus on the subjective dispositions of volunteers, both how volunteers interpret the volunteer act and how they imagine themselves doing it. Specifically, they pay attention to issues of personality, motives, and values, norms and attitudes. Second, they examine how individual resources shape volunteer behavior in a discussion of socioeconomic resources, time and health, and gender and race. They then provide a closer look at the social context of volunteering, with special attention to the life course, volunteer recruitment, schools and congregations, locations, and trends in volunteering. In the final sections, they address the organization of volunteer work in terms of volunteer tasks and the volunteer role and then move to a discussion of the consequences of volunteering, with attention to citizenship, prosocial behavior, occupation, income, and health.

Planty, Mike, and Michael Regnier. (2003). *Volunteer service by young people from high school through early adulthood*. Washington, DC: National Center for Education Statistics.

With data from the National Education Longitudinal Study of 1988, this report looks at involvement in community service from high school through young adulthood. Specifically, it examines the characteristics of young adults who volunteer, where they volunteered, and for which types of organizations they volunteered at three

points in time. Data were collected during students' senior year of high school and then two and eight years after high school graduation.

Smith, Christian, with Patricia Snell. (2009). *Souls in transition*. New York: Oxford University Press.

In the follow-up study to *Soul Searching: The Religious and Spiritual Lives of American Teenagers*, Smith and Snell analyze data collected in the third wave of the National Study of Youth and Religion. Looking at the shifting religious and spiritual lives of American youth ages 18–23, they describe the contemporary changes that characterize “emerging adulthood” and examine how these changes influence this demographic’s religious beliefs and practices. While there are fewer social supports for being seriously religious during emerging adulthood, a little over half of emerging adults do maintain stable religious commitments and practices during this phase of life, and parents and other nonparent adults continue to influence emerging adults’ religious beliefs and practices during these years. According to Smith and Snell, most emerging adults see religion as a personal matter, place more stock in empirical evidence than religious tradition, and believe that no one really knows what is truly right or good. The authors see relatively little involvement in public life or commitment to social gospel or the common good among emerging adults, and a solid majority of emerging adults are not interested in religious or spiritual matters. Overall, Smith and Snell find that involvement in religion among emerging adults makes a positive difference when considering relationships to family members, giving and volunteering, engaging in risky behaviors, mental and physical health, educational attainment, and life satisfaction.

Wuthnow, Robert. (2007). *After the baby boomers: How twenty- and thirty-somethings are shaping the future of American religion*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.

Drawing evidence from in-depth qualitative interviews and large national surveys such as the National Young Adults and Religion Study and the Civic Involvement Study, Robert Wuthnow explores the changing circumstances of young adulthood. He shows how changes in education, marriage, children, work, and finances are

affecting young adults' religious participation and argues that religious leaders need to pay more attention to the needs of young adults. According to Wuthnow, this demographic is often overlooked by religious leaders and lacks important forms of institutional support. He argues that congregations can play an important role in reengaging young adults and providing them with resources to navigate complex decisions regarding careers, finances, families, and parenting.

Youniss, James, and Peter Levine (Eds.). (2009). *Engaging young people in civic life*. Nashville, TN: Vanderbilt University Press.

The 10 chapters of this book are a culmination of current research on how to prepare American youth for active citizenship. Researchers offer constructive strategies and policies for engaging youth in American civic and political life based on their own work in the field. The book focuses primarily on civic education in schools and in other political settings where young people engage in civic life. It also examines civic education programs in Canada and Western Europe. In the conclusion, editors Youniss and Levine provide several policy recommendations targeted at schools, teachers, local and national governments, and political parties. They advocate for providing youth with increased opportunities for challenging democratic experiences such as discussions of controversial issues in the classroom and community service linked to academic study. They also support strengthening civic education and emphasizing its political and economic goals, as well as forming partnerships between civic educators/organizations and political movements.

Zukin, Cliff, Scott Keeter, Molly Andolina, Krista Jenkins, and Michael X. Delli Carpini. (2006). *A new engagement? Political participation, civic life, and the changing American citizen*. New York: Oxford University Press.

This book examines the civic and political engagement of young citizens, with particular attention to generational differences and differences associated with various stages of the life cycle. Most of the data analyzed in the book were collected by the authors through the National Youth Civic Engagement Index Project, which included focus groups, a Web-based probability survey of 1,200 15- to 25-year-olds,

and the National Civic Engagement Survey, a nationwide telephone survey of 3,200 respondents ages 15 and older. The authors find that young citizens are engaged in many aspects of civic life but are participating in different types of activities than in the past and are less politically involved. They emphasize that, regardless of age, people are more likely to participate in public life if they have the motivations, skills, resources, and opportunities that enable them to do so.