

The reading for this chapter is Rosie Evans's final synthesis essay, which developed out of the exploratory writing and thinking steps described earlier. The specifics of Rosie's assignment are provided on pages 289–290.

Rosie Evans (student)

Boomerang Kids: What Are the Causes of Generation Y's Growing Pains?

My older sister always seemed to succeed easily—that is, until she graduated from college. She went from high school valedictorian and university academic leader to perpetual volunteer and wandering world traveler. When the economy collapsed during the Great Recession, she returned home to live with our parents and work a retail job, confounding the many adults who expected great accomplishments from her. As it turns out, my sister's experience is not isolated but rather represents the experience of a larger cohort, those born roughly between 1980 and 2000. This generation is delaying life choices that traditionally signaled adulthood—like marriage, parenthood, or establishing a career—choosing instead to travel and experiment with different jobs. Many from this generation end up returning to live at home and/or relying on their parents for financial support, putting stress on their family relationships and their own mental health. The numerous labels attached to this generation—Millennials, Generation Y, the Lost Generation, boomerang kids, the Peter Pan generation, emerging adults, accordion families—show that our society is struggling to name and define exactly what is happening and what to do about it. What are the causes of the delayed-adulthood trends we see within Generation Y and how should society respond?

One point of view on this question comes from Robin Marantz Henig's 2010 *New York Times Magazine* article "What Is It About 20-Somethings?" Henig, a science writer, explores possible psychological and neurological explanations for Generation Y's delayed adulthood. She examines psychology professor Jeffrey Arnett's claim that twentysomethings are experiencing a new life stage called "emerging adulthood" in which they explore their possibilities and identities while also dealing with the instability, uncertainty, and fear that exploration brings. Rather than seeing Millennials as lazy and directionless, Arnett sees them as having meaningful experiences leading to better decisions about the kinds of lives they want to lead as adults. Henig links Arnett's claims to scientific findings that brains are not fully developed until the mid-twenties and suggests that immature brains might contribute to Millennials' delaying of adulthood. She also wonders if changing cultural norms about traditional signs of adulthood have removed pressure on twentysomething brains to achieve adult functioning earlier in life. If these claims are true, Henig suggests that our social institutions, like education and health care, should change to offer better support to Millennials as they transition to adulthood.

In response to Henig's article, blogger Scammed Hard! argues in his post "What's Wrong with 20-Somethings?" that the economy is to blame for Generation Y's

Opens with writer's investment and introduces the context for the issue, showing why it is problematic, and leads into the synthesis question.

States the synthesis question.

Introduces the first text and summarizes it.

Introduces the second text and summarizes it.