ABSTRACT

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MAKING THE PAST PRESENT: HISTORIC PRESERVATIONISTS SHIFTING PRACTICE TO ENGAGE YOUNG CITIZENS AS STAKEHOLDERS

Kathleen Seay

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Lauren Schiszik

Welch Center for Graduate Studies

Goucher College

Historic preservation has long ignored the needs of young people as stakeholders, which seems contrary to the field’s sustainable, intergenerational nature. Preservationists must invest in bringing children and youth to the table, which requires understanding them. It is wise to make a collective conscious effort as a field to spend time now evaluating and considering transgenerational equity and the needs of future generations. This requires continually spending time and effort in becoming aware and mindful of trends, needs and preferences through generational analysis.

This treatise will consider why the preservation field must make itself appealing to younger generations, and how this effort will allow for continuous relevancy of preservation as generations age and eventually become future policy makers, investors and stewards. This work specifically looks at how we should engage with our current youngest generations, Gen Z (Born ~1997-2009) and Gen Alpha (born 2010-Present). This treatise offers tangible solutions for engaging with children and youth and proposes practical implementation.

This treatise is organized in a case study format and makes use of interviews with representatives of organizations, both within the discipline of historic preservation and outside it, who offer an accurate depiction of our current landscape. The results of compiling such information offer solutions that can be effectively applied within the field through the proposed tool-kit.

Subject Headings: Generational analysis, American children and youth, learning development, Gen Z, Gen Alpha, transgenerational equity, digital native, stewardship, cultural heritage, socio-cultural sustainability

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Kathleen Seay

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Advisory Committee:

Lauren Schiszik, Director

Tim Frye

Lori Arguelles

This work is dedicated to my main source of inspiration – my son, Dominic – as well as my family who has supported me every step of the way.

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

LIST OF TABLES v

CHAPTER I: "THE ROAD TO THE FUTURE LEADS THROUGH THE PAST" - DISTINGUISHING OUR YOUNGEST CITIZENS 1

The Current State of the Preservation Field's Engagement With Children and Youth 4

Children 9

Youth 12

Connecting Preservationists to Learning Development 13

Who Are Our Children and Youth Today? 15

Conclusion 21

CHAPTER II: SETTING THE FRAMEWORK 22

Defining the Focus 24

Generational Trend Analysis for Children and Youth 27

Effective Civic Engagement with Children and Youth 29

Using the Cyber-Space Cultural Landscape and Its Ability to Empower Youth 39

Conclusion 40

CHAPTER III: CURRENT LANDSCAPE OF ENGAGEMENT 41

The "7 P's" of Marketing 44

Established Groundwork 48

Case Examples from Preservation-Adjacent Fields 50

Case Examples from the Preservation Field 57

Conclusion 63

CHAPTER IV: TOOL-KIT 66

Current Elements of Learning 67

Lessons Learned From Case-Study Interviews 71

Tool-Kit Propositions 74

Social-Constructivism 82

Conclusion 84

CHAPTER V: CONCLUSION 86

Opportunities for Further Research 92

Conclusion 93

Endnotes 94

Bibliography 102

LIST OF TABLES

Figure 1: Ages and Corresponding Age Group 9

CHAPTER I:

“The Road To The Future Leads Through The Past”[[1]](#endnote-1) – Distinguishing Our Youngest Citizens

Historic preservation as a field is not strong in engaging young people. This is evident by how the field, both formally and informally, refers to “youth” in an extremely relative manner. This is a huge detriment to not only the field, but also youth development as civic citizens, as well as our civic commons. I theorize that the field’s current generalized approach to “youth” limits opportunity for both preservation professionals and those with whom they could be engaging.[[2]](#endnote-2) The resulting lack of age-appropriate generational engagement further dilutes both opportunity and impact for the field and its future.

This generalized approach to “youth” is demonstrated by how preservationists commonly classify youth as those ranging from children to thirty-year-old professionals. Despite this accepted wide range, the ages are represented in actual practice. This is reflective of preservation, still being of a young age as a field. Hegemony is a by-product of the infancy of the field’s age and professionalization.[[3]](#endnote-3) Preservation includes a workforce in which many of those who helped found the discipline are still either working in or are a part of the field; bringing about equity in opportunities between generations is a key issue in this chapter. It also should be noted that a shift from a grassroots-based movement to one regulated by government severely curbed the amount and diversity of voices presented due to regulated hierarchy.[[4]](#endnote-4)

While historic preservation is not broadly understood as an activist movement, it is one of the oldest in the United States and offers avenues to which change and social fairness can take place moving forward.[[5]](#endnote-5) Children and youth can be a part of this movement as integral contributors, invigorating the field and bringing new perspectives! This thesis will stay true to the field’s culture of being relative when speaking about engagement with youth, but at appropriate times will specifically address the needs of our current youngest generations, Gen Z (Born ~1997-2009[[6]](#endnote-6)) and Gen Alpha (born 2010-Present[[7]](#endnote-7)). The emphasis of this work will focus on elementary school-aged children, who currently include the two previously mentioned generations, and will elaborate on why children aged 5-11 are at the prime age for preservationists to engage with.

To integrate children and youth, the field must engage in supporting a vision in which the children and youth have outlets for developing creative solutions for their own local historic resources and community. Further, preservationists need to learn how to properly engage children at various developmental stages. This thesis will describe how experiential learning for children under the age of 12 can provide a deeper understanding and appreciation for the work of a preservationist, especially as children reach an age where they can begin to express their own complex ideas and feelings regarding cultural identity. This vision must also employ more meaningful public discourse that includes both youth and children. Inter-disciplinary professionals, alongside preservationists, are required to be able to create this vision for the future. In this thesis, I will examine how various actors in a child’s life create opportunities for developing a strong preservation ethic at a young age, and, at the conclusion of this study, I will provide recommendations for ways to better foster this ethic.

The thesis will also highlight some of the disparities between preservation and other fields as well as recognize examples of other fields, such as environmental and technology organizations, that are investing civic-mindedly in our youth and children. These initiatives many times overlap in promoting appreciation of historic resources, but they should not stand-alone without similar effort put forth from preservation professionals, as each field offers its own tools and perspectives in allowing for knowledge on historic preservation to be more equally handed to each generation and offering modes of activism. As Noa Gafni, Co-Managing Director of the World Economic Forum writes,

This type of thinking impacts all aspects of society, from governments to corporations to not-for-profits. Forward-looking organizations will harness these expectations and place social purpose, transparency and authenticity at their core. Navigating this changing consciousness will enable organizations to survive and thrive in the 21st Century.[[8]](#endnote-8)

Young people, including youth *and* children, historically have propelled social movements and civic participation across the world spanning each generation: from the U.S. Civil Rights Movement in the mid-20th century to fighting for basic rights in Tiananmen Square, China; from the recent Arab Spring where frustrated youth spoke out against police corruption to human right violations to the environmental justice movement around the Dakota Access Pipeline (DAPL) and the recent gun-control advocacy from the student survivors at Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School. They also historically are the most prone age-bracket to believe they can shape the world into a better place. This is largely due to the fact that young people tend to be pioneers of generational transformations socially, politically, etc. The reasons that youth are successful in social movements, particularly in the 21st century, include being prone to taking more risks, being more innovative in using technology to garner visibility, being empowered via cyberspace to transmit ideas globally, and having larger social circles than adults to marshal ideas more easily and diversely.[[9]](#endnote-9) Hence, understanding why young people invest in a certain field or cause is paramount, especially for the field of historic preservation whose origins began in grass-root efforts and which needs future stewards to up-keep prior work.

Children and youth can wield significant political power even when they are too young to vote. As cliché as it sounds, youth are our future. But what many forget is that they also are constantly shaping the world around us *now* – not just that they will in the *future*. Today, most young people find creative means to help shape and influence their surroundings. Generally, this revolves solely around topics important to their own lives. For example, our youngest generations are highly effective in digital communication, which allows for a broader range of voices to be heard, and if one closely observes, there are abundant examples of our youth engaging and taking the lead in terms of civic duty that flood social media and the news, although this is primarily hosted through online platforms such as Facebook, Youtube and TikTok, instead of traditional media outlets such as newspapers or tv news. Take, for example, the Arab Spring in 2010. Social media helped youth organize a revolution that spread from Tunisia to many Middle Eastern countries. Protests were formed and organized from social media, speaking to the power youth are connecting to the digital cultural landscape.[[10]](#endnote-10)

The Current State of the Preservation Field’s Engagement with Children and Youth

Our field’s national-level governmental and advocacy organizations set the platform for youth engagement in preservation. The current state of preservation’s engagement with children and youth in the United States is generally focused in historical events, which limits the creative abilities of young individuals as they feel confined to the past and are not able to fully express themselves. Our current models must be evaluated to consider whether they inhibit engagement with both youth and children. Considering a more fine-tuned analysis of discourse with audiences of various ages may also offer the historic preservation field a better way to connect “a concern for places with a commitment for people” as Timothy McClimon puts it.[[11]](#endnote-11)

When the National Park Service defines historic preservation as a “conversation with our past about our future, they indirectly highlight that our youth profoundly shape the work of a preservationist.”[[12]](#endnote-12) This is critical because it provides the groundwork for inspiring potential stewards when conversations about practice are holistically conducted. This can help current practitioners in finding ways to host and initiate intergenerational dialogue. Preservationists must constantly ask relevant questions as a valuable way to “transmit our understanding of the past to future generations.”[[13]](#endnote-13)

In another example, the National Trust for Historic Preservation (NTHP) published a white paper in May 2017 by Stephanie Meeks titled, “*Preservation for People: A Vision for the Future.”*[[14]](#endnote-14) This paper was intended to serve as a catalyst for the field in promoting solutions to sustain and ground our work in citizen’s lives in a way that ensures relevancy and connection to our community members, yet there is not a single mention of youth or children in its discussion of field sustainability. While this paper was well-meaning, it is representative of many other preservation examples that overlook and misunderstand the youth’s potential as stakeholders.

Although it is less common to see youth or children considered within formal preservation publications, Alaska’s “*State Historic Preservation Plan: 2018-2023,*” flags education as their priority“Issue 1.”[[15]](#endnote-15) Within this document, the authors support this thesis’ hypothesis in recognizing the importance of investing in the youth at an early age to foster their engagement in the field’s missions. Upon closer examination of the strategies to employ this objective, the plan offers opportunities to use place-based service learning, digital interpretive media and increased public participation. The intent of the document is commendable, but unsurprisingly the document also reinforces generic discourse in advocating for engagement to all age levels by only referring to one age group – “youth.” Upon closer examination, the difference in this document compared to others broadly using “youth” is that through context it seems the authors’ intent was to use the term “youth” in reference to *all* young ages (not just to refer to teenagers or young professionals) by clarifying within the document that they are aiming for “every age group.” This is demonstrated in numerous areas throughout the plan but is best highlighted in the following passage:

The biggest ally and advocate for the preservation and protection of cultural resources are an informed public. Educating Alaska’s youth about the importance of the state’s cultural resources. Maintaining a lifelong dialogue between professionals and the public, and involving people in their own histories are essential approaches to developing a sense of heritage stewardship. Targeted education initiatives should focus on engaging every age group and demographic to increase appreciation of Alaska’s heritage.[[16]](#endnote-16)

The above statements promote holistic development among the younger generations. It appears that in the field of historic preservation, the fluid use of the term “youth” has led to the exclusion of the younger age group of “children” from being targeted for engagement.[[17]](#endnote-17)

An example demonstrating this disparity between youth representation and children representation within the field of preservation is one of the only Federal preservation youth programs, which is offered through the National Park Service: Teaching with Historic Places (TwHP).[[18]](#endnote-18) The program’s purpose is to increase educational outreach and is designed for classroom application of using historic places as learning material. Yet, as the website states, “Although designed for middle school students…TwHP lessons are easily adaptable from upper elementary through high school, and even for college courses.”[[19]](#endnote-19) Even in this example, the programming and discourse used when working towards engaging the youth spans such a vast age-range that it fails to distinguish between generational and developmental needs. The content and language also favors engagement with older age ranges, excluding part of the children’s age group of lower and pre-elementary grades. Both youth and children-aged audiences need to be recognized and distinguished as distinctive stakeholders and should be represented in programming efforts. Proposed solutions to accomplish this will be discussed in detail in subsequent chapters of this thesis.

Another example of curtailing the visibility of child engagement due to the relative use of the label “youth,” is found in a statement by the Advisory Council on Historic Preservation (ACHP). The “Advisory Council on Historic Preservation Engaging Youth Strategic Plan” supports the central hypothesis of this thesis regarding why youth must be engaged, but also unequally refers to that mission being pertinent to those of a younger age bracket. Adopted in 2016, the plan’s mission statement states:

The ACHP promotes active engagement of youth into the national historic preservation movement. Doing so will create a stronger preservation ethic among all Americans and promote more widespread appreciation of the importance and benefits of historic preservation as well as offering more opportunities to young people.[[20]](#endnote-20)

Preservation work holds unlimited opportunities for children to work symbiotically with adults, learning and growing together. This idea very much supports the goal of being able to “boost children’s sense of responsibility for the world around them.”[[21]](#endnote-21) As preservation professionals, we have the opportunity to encourage children and youth by recognizing that we are all a part of cultural heritage and history and offering children and youth more ways of considering their own acuities of this.

It is vital to note that the recognition of developmental ages between children and youth is even more important for Gen Z and Gen Alpha. Maturity is proven to be taking place for these generations at earlier ages and is expected to extend longer than previous generations due to current social norms.[[22]](#endnote-22)

Developmental ages help us understand that there is early development in areas such as education and socialization. Modeling and letting youth and children explore their rights as citizens help form habits of civic engagement. This fact is essential for preservationists to know, because capturing the attention of a child during their early development will enable preservation to resonate more profoundly into adulthood, especially since that cognitive development occurs at younger ages and has lasting effects into young professionals in their late-20s.

By being conscious in differentiating between the development states of youth versus children, the field can start developing content to engage at age-appropriate levels. The lack of effort into engaging both age brackets is detrimental to the advancement of the field’s missions. Age is the easiest way to define differences between generations. Education and engagement techniques directly follow this notion: “Every skill and every ability we have is refined by how we engage our brain in the world.”[[23]](#endnote-23) Interrelationships between developing skills and exploring abilities and interests contribute to both children and youth.

Metacognitive experiences are extremely relevant for preservationists responsible for engaging youth and children (especially the latter due to age-appropriate development milestones). It is essential for both children and youth to acquire cognitive strong abilities. This often results from groups of experiences and opportunities to engage in every way, including civically. The core of this process is referred to as metacognition, which is the aptitude to control, reflect and change how one thinks and learns.

As a reference, below is a basic table of ages spanning early childhood to youth and the corresponding age groups:

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Ages 2 Months – 1 | Infant |
| Ages 1 – 4 | Early Childhood (Toddler) |
| Ages 5 – 8 | Early Childhood (Child) |
| Ages 9 – 11 | Middle Childhood (Child) |
| Ages 12 – 14 | Early Adolescence (Youth) |
| Ages 15 – 18 | Middle Adolescence (Youth) |

Table 1: Ages and Corresponding Age Group (*Source:* Sharon Query and Judy Levings "How Kids Develop." Iowa State University. December 2006. Accessed November 20, 2018. https://www.extension.iastate.edu/4hfiles/VI950902FAgesStages.PDF)

Children

The term “child” refers to a young person who is “between infancy and youth.”[[24]](#endnote-24) This period of development is when individuals are beginning to explore their environment, learning to socialize, building cognitive skills and coming into their own personalities and independence from family. This age span of development is proven through brain research to be the most formative years in a person’s lifetime development. Reasoning and learning are fully functioning and most rapidly blossoming from birth to ages 4 to 5. It has also been proven through research that children develop how to distinguish between the past, present and future somewhere between the ages of 4 and 10. It is around the age of 8 that children consistently judge time and are able to harness the concepts of future time and impacts.[[25]](#endnote-25) Children’s understanding of time is important for preservationists to understand when crafting ways to include children as stakeholders of the future.

The “child” age-stage offers a window of opportunity for preservationists to engage with children and to spark their interest. As children interact with their environment (including exposure to historic/cultural resources of both tangible and intangible significance), their brains are constantly trying to understand and perceive all of the connections between people and objects around them. This constant effort of forming such connections is fundamental to understanding their environments and taking control of their own experiences. It incorporates forming relationships with others and understanding cause and effects. Children, especially the younger ages, fundamentally need personal experiences to foster their knowledge of the structure of their world.[[26]](#endnote-26) According to developmental research, if that catalyst is well-received by the child, it has the ability to best take root during this age bracket and create a life-long interest for that child. Thus, introduction to preservation, history or shaping the world around them during this developmental stage can be paramount.

It is during the ages 6 to 8 that developmentally most children will begin planning ahead and asking endless questions about the world around them. They will also begin becoming more aware of “adults as individuals” and their daily impacts through their work and recreation. Initial cognitive processes during early childhood include imitation and induction. “Imitation” promotes observation and creativity, whereas “induction” promotes identifying experiences through patterns and lending that into understanding of space. These processes promote development in learning ability as well as learning about specific environments and beyond.[[27]](#endnote-27) It is these processes, which should take place in early childhood, that shape self-awareness into self-control. Self-control can be practiced through problem-solving and memory activities.

Inductive learning, or “learning by watching,” versus learning through instruction, promotes these developmental milestones. Thinking at this age is “tangible” and learning is increased by being physically active. Through experiences, children are able to make sense of everyday events and learn from adults describing objects and actions along the way. The elements not yet understandable to the child help also to facilitate growth of imagination and past versus future thinking.[[28]](#endnote-28) This age group is eager to use this energy in interpreting their world via exploration to make sense of things, which lends itself well to preservation applications of physical historic resources and the highly intractable elements of a preservationist’s vocation.

As a child becomes exposed to and learns more about a topic, evolving cognitive skills are also being formed and knowledge is being advanced. This extends even to infants who explore through their senses and calls upon fostering parent/child interactions to investigate together, offering a bonding experience that can be fostered and desirable for programming even in an adult-driven field.

In asking preservation professionals to value children as a part of the preservation process, it is important to recognize that the young are not inactive bystanders in defining importance of our environments. Not recognizing the capability of our children in interpreting and directly shaping information generally results in oversimplifying children programming, which produces the potential of negative receptiveness from the audience. As stated in one study, conducted by the Institute of Medicine and National Research Council of the National Academies, “as early as the first year of life, babies are developing incipient theories about how the work of people, other living things, objects, and numbers operates…these foundational theories are not simply isolated forms of knowledge, but play a profound role in children’s everyday lives and subsequent education.”[[29]](#endnote-29)

While preservationists should not be expected to fully understand developmental stages theories about children, considering their effects is imperative to successfully engaging children and guiding them to a more complex understanding and involvement. Children use implicit theories to informally form their understandings and, in doing so, equip themselves with ways of analyzing, predicting and, if possible, working to change what is happening around them. Preservation education as a whole, especially in higher academia, should require the understanding of age-appropriate engagement techniques. The current lack of acquisition of such knowledge is detrimental and highly visible throughout the preservation field as a whole. Preservation education should highlight the importance of, and how to consider, connecting preservation work to all phases of age-development.

Youth

It is generally accepted that the “youth” in American culture are adolescent.[[30]](#endnote-30) The United Nations Educational, Scientific Cultural Organization (UNESCO) has defined the term “youth” as the “period of transition from the dependence of childhood to adulthood’s independence and awareness of our interdependence as members of a community.”[[31]](#endnote-31) This definition fluctuates internationally due to cultural policy differences, traditions and contexts. For uniformity in data, UNESCO uses the term “youth” for ages 15 to 24.

The needs and developmental stages of youth are extremely different than those of children. Youth is the age of development when people are coming into their own as individuals and exploring personal philosophies, as well as thinking of their relationship to a larger community and developing concern about societal issues. Engagement with civic activities rooted in community resources helps further build upon youth developmental milestones via critical thinking, communication, etc., all with real-world contextual meaning. These developmental milestones are ideal for preservationists to focus their efforts on so they can offer avenues in which youth can assist in planning civic endeavors as well as making decisions and expressing their own philosophies based on their life experiences.

Connecting Preservationists To Learning Development – Who Are Relevant Influencers And Their Roles?

Studies have proven that diversely represented communities succeed at higher rates and last longer than those that are not diverse.[[32]](#endnote-32) Communities as a whole are more informed and equitable when all ages are contributing in some fashion or another.[[33]](#endnote-33) The ability to incorporate our young people into the community fabric is a way to develop diversity in preservation. It is also a way to connect to communities proactively, to engage both young people and parents, before a valuable resource is threatened. While this mode of engagement is one that requires long-term planning and adaptability, it can change, educate and encourage participation on how the field is construed and the processes of development and preservation.

It is imperative to recognize that child, adolescent and youth development is understood as “stage-like in some ways, and not stage-like in other ways…making it possible to sketch a general portrait of the stages in the development of children.”[[34]](#endnote-34) Developmental stages are informative and useful to best assess meaningful engagement. For preservationists, whose primary civic purpose is not formal education, stages must also be understood to be somewhat incongruous, but flexible enough to access all of our young people. Collaboration and individually understanding communities can best help preservationists apply evidence from developmental stages. Processes that are fostered through cognitive development are imperative to each young citizen growing holistically in their emotional, social and behavioral capabilities.[[35]](#endnote-35)

Preservationists

Preservationists have a window of opportunity to collaborate frequently with the public in helping youth find ways to participate in civic issues and to create contextual experiences with historic and cultural resource management. Angela Park, Executive Director of Mission Critical, states that “In free societies that hold that all people are equal…planning is a collective exercise, an ongoing demonstration of democratic principles at the community level.”[[36]](#endnote-36) Children and youth must be afforded opportunities to find a sense of purpose within their communities. Their engagement at a young age helps professional adults broaden their own perspectives to methods and solutions previously not thought of.

Too often, children and youth are quickly labeled as not being civically engaged or interested in community issues, but, in some cases, this stems from professionals’ failure to provide relevant opportunities for them. This is important because not all children and youth have equal access to school or extra-curricular activities that usually serve as a primary way to engage in their community. This is especially true for children and youth of low-income families, who are statistically proven to have unequal access to such developmental programs.[[37]](#endnote-37) Park further states, “Economists, politicians, researchers, and business leaders are calling attention to rising income inequality and growing disparities among demographic groups, especially based on race and class.”[[38]](#endnote-38) Disparity in access to opportunity or engagement can inherently hinder the prospect of a young person engaging in civic life later in adulthood.[[39]](#endnote-39)

Parents

While this thesis focuses on understanding our youth and children in relation to the potential impact of a preservationist, it is also important to recognize the significant role of parents. It is parenting choices made while a child is in young childhood, such as interaction levels, reading, exploration, etc., that are found to most impact the breadth of their children’s activities and thus cognitive growth.[[40]](#endnote-40) If one is trying to invest in the youth, simultaneously considering parents is also impactful. Investment flows through a parent-child relationship thereby profoundly impacting, for example, what activities parents prefer their children to attend.

Who are our children and youth today?

Understanding both our current youngest generations is key in being able to meaningfully engage them into preservation efforts and decisions. We currently have Gen Z (Born ~1997-2009) and Gen Alpha (born 2010-Present) as our youngest generations. These classifications are solely applied to children and youth in the United States, but I believe that Gen Z and Alpha are also larger international generational trends. The former generation, Gen Z, has both youth and child-aged generation members. If preservationists want to reach Gen Z and Gen Alpha, we must learn more about their world.

These two generations are digital natives; they have grown up with technology integrated into their everyday lives. Growing up in this way means that their relationship to technology is different than any prior generation. Gen Z and Gen Alpha have been born within a complexly interconnected landscape that merges both physical and digital spatial dimensions. Heightened access and speed to technology has also changed expectations of our physical space and recreation. According to Hotwire Global Communications, an international communications and marketing firm: “The world’s leading neuroscientists, educators and cultural commentators, have already uncovered how technology is affecting brain development of these youngsters, the trends that will define this generation and how brands will be able to reach them in the future.”[[41]](#endnote-41)

Being digital natives has influenced these two generations in terms of different ways of engaging and thinking. In a 2016 report published by Ofcom, a telecommunications company, titled “Children and parents: media use and attitudes report,” statistics reveal that 41% of American children have a smartphone and 44% have their own tablet.[[42]](#endnote-42) A 2017 study completed by MIT’s Media Lab reported that children are engaging with in-home artificial intelligence (AI) such as Amazon Echo, Dot and Google Home the way they do with fellow humans. The study also found that children view the AI as having human characteristics including being honest, smart and welcoming.[[43]](#endnote-43) The prolific use of technology extends to in-home AI, sometimes also referred to as “digital assistants.” Marketer, a consumer research firm, found that the most popular consumer of such products is between 25 and 34 years old and that 60.5 million people in the U.S. use in-home AI.[[44]](#endnote-44) This correlates well with the discussion of this theses’ purview given that the majority of Gen Z and Gen Alpha’s parents are a part of this age range.[[45]](#endnote-45)

Digital technology provides youth and children both high accessibility to “local information that may affect their communities and can give them a role in helping to solve them.”[[46]](#endnote-46) For preservationists, this fact must be translated into connecting heritage and historic resources to digital and physical sensibilities. Our youngest generations should not be overlooked. There are Gen Alpha children who are already “self-made” multi-millionaires due to their roles as social media influencers via their YouTube channels. It is estimated that one in three global internet users are children and adolescents.[[47]](#endnote-47) The phenomenon of young Youtubers is a prime example of a parent’s role in children being a part of the digital cultural landscape; these parents essentially serve as the managers for their children’s stardom. There is a popular trend of parents filming their families and posting “diaries” of their lives for the world to see. This can range from just playing to reviewing toys to going shopping. Without the parents filming, managing and negotiating sponsorships, children would not be able to be the influencers they are through digital media such as Youtube, Facebook, Twitter and Instagram.

In 2017, Forbes published a “10 Top Kid Influencers” list that highlighted the vast range of Gen Z and Gen Alpha’s influence. Among all 10 influencers listed, Forbes calculated that the combined total reach of Instagram followers, Twitter followers, Facebook likes and Youtube subscribers is 77.4 million![[48]](#endnote-48) An example that demonstrates child and youth impacts on current generations and social influence includes YouTube’s Gen Alpha-aged star, Ryan of “Ryan ToysReview.” Ryan is one of YouTube’s highest paid stars, earning $22 million in revenue through sponsorships and paid partnerships.[[49]](#endnote-49) Worldwide, YouTube stars’ revenues rose 80% in 2017 and according to Forbes was heavily supplemented by Ryan’s views, which reached more than 16.5 trillion viewers.[[50]](#endnote-50) Another example is YouTube baking experts, Charli and Ashlee, also of Gen Alpha, whose audience is mostly children. They receive an average of 29 million views each month.[[51]](#endnote-51)

Gen Z and Gen Alpha children have access to a large audience through social media and can persuade others through their authenticity. They bridge relationships within the cyberspace cultural landscape in unprecedented and fluid ways. The landscape is considered hyper-present.[[52]](#endnote-52) This means that the landscape is extremely personalized and in real time. Data procured through website analytics and social media activity helps create an individualized digital experience for each person, which results in custom recommendations in media, as well as targeted advertising. Thus, the digital landscape always seems one step ahead.

For Gen Z and Gen Alpha, digital influencers fulfill a greater role than just being advertisers – they are peers that feel much more authentic and personal. In a study by First Choice, a travel company, more than 50% of those surveyed under the age of 17 have aspirations to, in some capacity, be a professional vlogger (that is, a video blogger) or YouTuber.[[53]](#endnote-53)

It is primarily the cyberspace cultural landscape that defines our youth’s cultural heritage today and this must be considered as we think about how to tailor programming. Gen Z and Gen Alpha members are both found to:

1. Require further understanding and application of intangible heritage and qualities with so much time and identity formed within the “digital native” landscape[[54]](#endnote-54)
2. Be more diverse than any prior generation[[55]](#endnote-55)
3. Be more comfortable addressing “hard” topics such as race, climate change, etc.[[56]](#endnote-56)
4. Necessitate others to practice inclusion to garner their support[[57]](#endnote-57)

Gen Z (1997-2009)

Gen Z have surpassed any prior generation with their knowledge in technology and how well they are using it as a way of earning income. By 2020, this generation will account for 40% of the population.[[58]](#endnote-58) The sheer size of this generation makes understanding them essential for future success. When one considers the presence that such a large generation can have if invested in our field’s cause, it is critical that preservationists figure out how to engage with them. In potential, they are comparable to those in the Baby Boomer generation who have played an outsized role in the preservation field as the creators and leaders of the modern preservation movement.

Gen Z is very receptive to social trends and while market research companies have characterized them as “screen addicts,” a research-based study has found that this generic label does not reflect the true picture of this generation. While research has shown that 45% of Gen Z are “almost constantly connected” in some form, there is so much more to the digital landscape that we can learn from about this generation.[[59]](#endnote-59)

Through market-research studies regarding current issues, Gen Z has been found to hold social views that are significantly different than previous generations, which denotes that engagement tactics must also mirror these tastes. Their media consumption habits are different compared to previous generations. They are known to be the most frequent users of technology as compared to other generations. Garnering attention through different engagement techniques is so important to understand for preservationists because Gen Z is the first digital native generation to grow up “in a world where options are immeasurable, but time is not…making grabbing their attention more valuable.”[[60]](#endnote-60)

Gen Alpha (2010 – present)

“These kids are marketing's newest power brokers. Barely out of diapers, are they already playing an outsize role in household buying decisions...”[[61]](#endnote-61)

Gen Alpha is the first generation entirely born in the 21st century. This means that technology has taken on a different and perhaps outsized role to this generation via communication, engagement, expression and learning. Gen Alpha began the same year that the iPad publicly debuted, Instagram was created, and digital applications (referred to as apps) were becoming prolific tools for everyday life in business, communication, etc. They have grown up interacting with technology in a heightened-kinesthetic way. Mark McCrindle, a social researcher, says that Gen Alpha are “part of an unintentional global experiment where screens are placed in front of them from the youngest age as pacifiers, entertainers and education aids.”[[62]](#endnote-62) They are expected to be “the most formally educated generation…most technology supplied generation ever, and globally the wealthiest generation ever.”[[63]](#endnote-63) Researchers predict that Gen Alpha will outsmart their parents in being able to use technology by the age of 8.[[64]](#endnote-64) This potential trend is one that can already be considered by preservationists and tested as a way to pioneer the use of trend forecasting in preservation work. All of this information makes this generation crucial, despite their young age, for people who are interested in appealing to both the child and their parent. Brands such as Walgreens, Crest and Fitbit have reported putting focus onto understanding and engaging Gen Alpha.[[65]](#endnote-65)

Hotwire Global Communications published a short video in 2018 titled “What Generation Alpha Has To Say About Technology – US”[[66]](#endnote-66) that engaged with Generation Alpha and invited them to express their opinions on how often they use technological devices. The video highlights how children use technology as an integral part of their day-to-day lives and how it is part of their identity. All of the children interviewed frequently had access to technological devices. The video reveals that children in Generation Alpha are prone to be interested in subject matters that harness technological means. This video fully supports the work of this thesis and successfully has been able to explain the intent of this work (where as other modes of explanation had not been working) to members of Gen Alpha.

Vaaju, a Mexican news agency, has made the following predictions about Generation Alpha, who trend toward:

- Supporting user-friendly trends such as AI and voice

- Fostering most communication between human and technology itself

- Using gestural interfaces/ “hyper-reality” to express oneself and integrate people with objects/machine

- Making hyper-informed consumer decisions

- Being highly demanding to catch attention and having need for immediateness and diversity

- Desiring “novelty” and “authenticity” in physical realm to juxtapose digital landscape

- Having deterioration of social networks, but uptick in use of video platforms

- Seeing erosion of traditional advertising methods

- Having higher sensitivity over personal privacy[[67]](#endnote-67)

In 2025, there will be an estimated 2 billion Gen Alpha globally.[[68]](#endnote-68) It is important to recognize that Gen Alpha has grown up immersed in technological advancements. Researchers are trying to prepare for this generation because of their capabilities as individuals in shaping our markets.

Conclusion

By using generational groupings and understanding child and youth development, preservationists can gain a solid footing in taking new steps forward through projects and engagement techniques with young people. Why waste energy and funding engaging in formats that will not resonate? Preservationists can use the statistics and data available about Gen Z, Gen Alpha and their parents to change the game and create proactive channels of communication. For instance, Gen Z and Gen Alpha are proven to not be interested in memorizing facts.[[69]](#endnote-69) Therefore, historic and cultural resources must reflect this in offering dimensions of involvement that meet these new generations where they are in terms of engagement strategies and interest levels.

Preservationists need to focus on ever-evolving targeted strategies that are reactive to local community needs. If successful in doing so, Gen Z and Gen Alpha can be persuasive in propelling sites, organizations, etc., into high visibility via digital modes. Digital natives are our future, thus we must put even more importance into integrating more technology into our work, but the important thing to remember is that it is not the technology itself that creates success, but how it is used.

CHAPTER 2:

Setting the Framework

This chapter is devoted to defining the framework that is our current landscape of youth engagement in the preservation field, and evaluating whether children and youth are being engaged in preservation work specifically. This chapter will explore why it is important to engage with youth in terms of their developmental needs, and discusses the socio-political power of youth in the forms of children’s activism and civic engagement. This will take shape through consideration of education models of civic engagement, advocacy and youth-led initiatives. Generational analysis will be offered as a tool to apply to planning so that work done by prior generations does not propel any disconnect to the next generation of visitors and preservation professionals. Another tool that will be discussed is the role of technology integration and how using the cyber-space cultural landscape can empower our youngest generation. References and studies used include global literature, but focused on relevant information pertinent to use in the United States regarding this subject.

Preservationists can invest more deeply into communities by working to forge clearer pathways for civic engagement. This chapter will explore this issue of civic engagement in four parts. Section 1 will define the focus, or process, of civic engagement and the necessities for broadening the range of child and youth activism in the U.S. Section 2 will consider how generational trend analysis can be utilized and translated into preservationists’ work. Section 3 will look at how to be most effective with civic engagement efforts with children and youth. Finally, Section 4 will briefly address how using the cyber-space cultural landscape can empower our children and youth.

Defining the focus

This section is intended to highlight the challenges and impacts of existing age disparity within the field, and to emphasize the fact that youth are not currently engaged in historic preservation. This section will outline the absence of youth in historic preservation, why it is important to engage youth early from a developmental standpoint, and how preservationists can tap into youth’s current engagement in activism and civic discourse regarding related fields.

A literature search for publications on “child and youth preservation” endeavors uncovers a preponderance of results that refer strictly to teenagers or young professionals. The terms “child,” “children” and “adolescent” are uncommonly found and are dominated by broad references to young professionals as youth. This creates a disproportionate “look” to the field in regards to age-representation.

The focus of this treatise is on engaging the interest of elementary school-aged children, because these ages ares best for sparking life-long engagement with preservation and corresponding preservation with milestones of growth. Research has proven that the level of engagement in young children’s minds does not visibly appear in their behaviors, but that age is key to when life-long interests are developed.[[70]](#endnote-70) This may discourage some professionals from either funding or placing a larger effort into engaging and creating programming for this age demographic. However, there is quantitative evidence that shows this is the prime age range in developing life-long interests and habits, which is the desired result in trying to help youth find resonance and treasure preservation-based work. Brown University published a study establishing that customs and routines are likely to never change past the age of nine, thus making it an critical time to inspire life-long interests.[[71]](#endnote-71) Engagement efforts for children provide a dual-fold mission: one is to foster intellectual development, while the second is to create a stimulus that incites curiosity and offers an opportunity for discovery.

People get fired up about things that impact them and children are no different. Children are taking the lead on issues like climate change and racial equity, because these are issues that impact them. Civic engagement is an avenue for these connections to take place and spark curiosity. Children’s civic engagement is largely based in “action for social justice.” Social justice is a term that means equal “distribution of wealth, opportunities, and privileges within a society.”[[72]](#endnote-72) This is important because social justice can act as a driving force for preservationists to better promote equity for marginalized young children and increase our ways of tying together civic engagement opportunities to a wider audience. However, by continuing to limit age-involvement, preservationists are rejecting age differences between adults and children/youth, and the partnering contextual fabrics.

A primary issue presents itself here, which is that American society as a whole, including preservationists, are perpetuating seeing children and youth as less capable of civic engagement. While, there is no hard and fast evidence of this, conclusions can be drawn from the lack of civic engagement opportunities for children and youth. While children and youth may have different experience levels than adults, Linda Camino, from the Youth Policy organization, states that “low expectations, in turn, impede the creation of broader and multiple pathways for civic engagement, and the involvement of youth as partners in building civil society. The cycle is self-reinforcing—isolation and low expectations feed off each other—with the consequence that pathways for youth civic engagement remain truncated.”[[73]](#endnote-73)

A relevant example of activism by diverse children and youth from across the nation, affirming their perspectives and generational equity, is the federal, *Juliana v. United States* legal case. At the initial time of filing, the 21 plaintiffs ranged from an age 7 to 18, which spans the age categories of both children and youth. While the case grounds itself on climate change, it does so via speaking broadly about “public trust” resources and how the government must uphold our youngest generations “constitutional rights to life, liberty, and property…”[[74]](#endnote-74) Through this case, the plaintiffs hope to raise awareness that it is our youngest generations that will feel the worst impacts of decisions made today about our resources. While this case is still pending, it has garnered support in the Oregon state court, as well as the U.S. Supreme Court.

Youth activism can extend to handling historic resources and cultural stewardship. This is because our youngest generations will inherit our historical and cultural resources. The *Juliana v. United States* case is mentioned within the purview of this thesis as a broader reference to recognition on local, state and Federal levels that children and youth involvement (not just education, but also participation) is part of citizen’s rights in helping define resource management. *Juliana v. United States* is an inspiring example of children and youth working alongside professional environmentalists in advocating for trans-generational equity, as well as the plaintiffs investing themselves into environmental advocacy. Thus, despite the preservation field’s age biases, children and youth should be engaged in decision-making processes regarding historic preservation.

This youth engagement notion works towards supporting efforts that uphold passing on our environment and resources in a quality form for future generations to inherit, and in a way that considers all.[[75]](#endnote-75) This extends to the label of “young people,” which is also commonly found in preservation discourse. While definitions may vary depending on the application, studies and references to “young people” in the United States generally refer to those between 15 to 25 years old.[[76]](#endnote-76) This wide-ranging definition of youth poses a vital concern when such a large age span is combined together under the one term. This is especially concerning for a field that historically has put minimal efforts into engaging young people.

The majority of preservation programming marketed for younger ages is designed for youth, not children. This may be because it is based on the assumption that youth programming is far-reaching enough, despite the exclusion of the younger age group of children both in content development and participants. For example, in a literature search for “children in historic preservation,” a 2014 article entitled, “Getting Detroit kids to care about historic preservation in their neighborhood” is one of the top search results. The article covers an event that is highly commendable which promoted "… exploration and discussion of shared heritage through the eyes of young people to inform and influence contemporary community decision-making.”[[77]](#endnote-77) It is noteworthy that the article explains that the project was created “in an effort to foster a stronger sense of place in young people.”[[78]](#endnote-78) However, this interactive event, hosted by Michigan Historic Preservation Network, was open only to those between the ages of 12 and 18. This resulted in a missed opportunity for engaging children when they are developmentally the most malleable in terms of their interests, especially when one considers that preservation programming, such as this initiative, is still currently relatively sparse overall.

Generational Trend Analysis for Children and Youth

This section will aim to introduce and define generational analysis and its application to preservation. This work suggests that generational analysis is important for many reasons, but, in a novel way, it proposes that it is a “vehicle” to which older generations can participate and interact with the transformations of younger generations. How can our youngest generations find their place within their communities? How can preservationists help them find their voice within this? I believe that by using generational analysis we can better answer these questions.

According to the Pew Research Center’s approach to generational analysis, generational analysis involves tracking the same age range of people on “a range of issues, behaviors and characteristics.”[[79]](#endnote-79) In our case, a large percentage of these qualifiers for Gen Z and Gen Alpha directly relate to their sense of being digital natives and what that has done to shape their identity and way of interacting with the world. It is imperative that we understand our youngest generations’ views of their world and looking at age by generation is a way to do this. The Pew Research Center finds that “age cohorts give…a way to understand how different formative experiences interact with the life-cycle and aging process to shape people’s view of the world.”[[80]](#endnote-80) It is through grouping by age that researchers can see changes in views over time. Understanding these generational views of our children and youth is very important to preservationists for maintaining relevancy. By being able to understand what drives generational trends, we can create more formative experiences. It is my belief that these experiences can be best shaped through employing civic engagement, especially through the educational system.

It is important to keep in mind the generational characteristics of Gen Z and Gen Alpha because one must be cognizant of the way in which these individuals involve themselves with their community. This section highlights that civic engagement through the school system is an ideal fit because of the age groups we are targeting. One of their main primary ties to their community comes through opportunities in school, where they spend a majority of their time. Thus, it is important to consider the modes in which these generations interact with their surroundings inside and outside of school, the connotations they put behind such relationships, and the cultural landscape that exists around these parameters. This will enable preservationists to develop effective engagement techniques.

Effective Civic Engagement with Children and Youth

”Civic engagement” can be a complicated term to appreciate, especially when applied to children and youth. There are various definitions of what it means to be civically involved, and specific fields have their own ways of applying this concept. Each individual definition grounds itself in research, habits of its respective field and applicable demands. For the purposes of this paper, I utilize the definitions of civic engagement most relevant to preservationists by drawing from the American Planning Association (APA), United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) and the National Park Service (NPS) specifically “Director’s Order #75A: Civic Engagement and Public Involvement.”

The APA lists ”teaching young people” under its discussion of civic engagement. The APA uses broad enough language to refer both to children and youth and states that teaching can encourage “a future generation of planners and inspire civic engagement.”[[81]](#endnote-81) While teaching is not the only solution, it is a prime way to encourage such topics and this paper sees it as an integral component to consider when looking at our targeted age range.

UNESCO focuses on guiding young people in building relationships and empowerment to feel that they have equal rights in shaping their communities. UNESCO is a strong advocate for youth-led initiatives and cite the following benefit-areas as their goal outcomes: “inclusion, dialogue, democratic engagement, the eradication of poverty, violence/conflict prevention, and reconciliation.”[[82]](#endnote-82)

On the other hand, the NPS has expressed its commitment to civic engagement without connecting these same motivations directly to children and youth. Effective August 2007, the NPS released the ”Director’s Order #75A: Civic Engagement and Public Involvement”. The intention behind this Director’s Order (DO), is to “Institutionalize a civic engagement philosophy and vision that will help ensure the relevance of NPS resources and programs to people, as well as ensure NPS responsiveness to diverse public viewpoints, values, and concerns.”[[83]](#endnote-83) This NPS document supports this work’s hypothesis in recognizing the value of civic engagement, but fails to connect its merit with trans-generational equity. Neither children nor youth are considered in this DO and offering applicable considerations that bear in mind citizen’s age and opportunity levels to be involved.

In consolidating a definition from these organizations, I found it appropriate to define preservation-driven civic engagement as a philosophy and application of practices that encourage continual dialogue between preservationists, young people and community partners. It is important to understand the depth that civic engagement entails. For the purposes of this paper, we will look at civic engagement for children and youth, and how civics ties into the education system, where our target age range in most easily accessible. Civic education has been defined by Alex Lin, social researcher and author thus: Citizenship education entails instructional practices that represent a wide range of learning activities that aim at promoting democratic thinking. Citizenship education also involves the use of role plays and debates. This ensures that the youth are fully engaged thus improving their understanding of democracy. Citizenship education can also include service learning programs where the youth can indulge developing solutions for community needs through designing and implementing service programs.[[84]](#endnote-84)

Citizen involvement can be facilitated by the preservation field in endless forms, with popular ways including hosting volunteers, partnering with local organizations, holding social functions, diverse uses of media outlets, and open decision-making processes by governments and organizations. The intention behind such stewardship is involvement of citizens and community members. By tailoring programs towards children and youth, preservationists will also enable for that fairness to have the possibility of extending to trans-generational equity. The problem is that there is disconnect between such above examples of citizen involvement and tying in children and youth. This paper identifies the fact that youth and children are missing from civic engagement opportunities as a prime reason for this disconnect. A better understanding of how civic education can play a role in bridging this gap is critical for this thesis.

According to Linda Camino, a professor in early-childhood education at the University of Wisconsin-Madison, five “pathways” of civic engagement are recognized as widely accepted methods for professionals in the United States to engage with children and youth: “public policy/consultation, community coalition involvement, youth in organizational decision making, youth organizing and activism, and school-based service learning.”[[85]](#endnote-85) These five pathways support the concept previously discussed in this paper of Positive Youth Development as well as promoting equity within communities. The mission and work of preservationists aligns with any of these five pathways. The first two pathways are already firmly implanted into the way the preservation field operates nationwide. There are opportunities for exercising civic involvement for children and youth through the last three pathways, though the opportunities may be slight and involve, in Dr. Camino’s words, “limited spaces, both physical and metaphorical, in which youth can exercise civic responsibilities.”[[86]](#endnote-86)

In order to partner with the educational system, we must first understand what information has already been garnered that fits to our needs as preservationists. One applicable study found that ties together civics education and community outreach is through the avenue of volunteering.[[87]](#endnote-87) While, it is not a direct correlation to preservation, the connection can be made that it is through volunteer activities that children and youth can be exposed to historic and cultural resources in their communities.

The Corporation for National and Community Service and the U.S. Census Bureau performed a youth specific federal survey regarding civic service through volunteering in 2005. The survey only researched youth aged 12 to 18 years old. While this is a limited age range, the findings are relevant. Twelve percent of all school-based service civic engagement happens in social studies courses – arguably the most opportune school-based course naturally suited to introduce historic preservation concepts.[[88]](#endnote-88) While twelve percent may seem small, it shows that there is opportunity for engagement. In this study, the gap was found to be in accessibility to options for engagement. This is where preservationists can make an impact and be more proactive about pairing their resources to volunteer and civics education opportunities. This demonstrates a strong correlation between volunteering and greater investment into civic activities, as well as senses of empowerment within their community.[[89]](#endnote-89) The survey data also helped better show the vital role that the host organizations played in impacted youth’s interests and future endeavors.[[90]](#endnote-90)

Professionals in various disciplines have offered improved civics education as a solution of engaging children and youth with their communities.[[91]](#endnote-91) The UNESCO applies the term more loosely and leans towards the youth age range, while promoting innovation and democracy through encouragement of civic engagement.

The section further provides research committed to considering methods of engagement relative to child and youth involvement directed towards aiding collective action, otherwise referred to as, civic action. This paper will not formally address influence of government policy as a channel of civic action, due to the focus age group of children and youth who cannot vote. Yet, as a study conducted by D. Campbell titled “What You Do Depends on Where You Are: Community Heterogeneity and Participation” supports, preservationists can’t draw hard and fast lines as to whom, and how, a citizen participates in their community, or at what age.[[92]](#endnote-92) To this same effect, Linda Camino, a professor for the University of Wisconsin-Madison, states that “Inclusive participation is a primary component of civil society. The assumption of inclusive participation is that all citizens have legitimate opportunities to influence decisions concerning the identification, leveraging, and mobilization of community resources.”[[93]](#endnote-93) This quote reminds preservationists that we must provide opportunities for involvement and inclusivity.

The preservation field has grappled with how to involve the public in civic engagement. In 2014, the National Council on Public History (NCPH) held a “Sustaining Historic Preservation through Community Engagement” roundtable discussion. The topics centered on civic commitment (though this term was never explicitly mentioned in the discussion reports) and predominantly involved questions of a similar vein about how professionals can get more young people interested in our work and gain their investment. One of the participants at this discussion was Dr. K. Deathridge, a professor at Appalachian State University, who encouraged long-term investment of preservation endeavors be thought of in terms of “cultural success,” defined as measures of community investment effectively being in place for a historic or cultural resource to where “ongoing rescue attempts are not needed when changes take place.”[[94]](#endnote-94) Notably, graduate students at the discussion, Kim Connelly Hicks and Rachel Boyle, also presented their work on a National Register nomination for Chicago’s Chrysler Village and were left with asking “What’s Next?” and “How does the story of Chrysler Village’s historic development remain relevant to the current and future residents?”[[95]](#endnote-95) Both Dr. Deathridge’s conceptual understandings of sustainable community investment, and the two graduate students, generally addressed “future generations” in the abstract, without considering the needs, ideas, concerns and values of the immediate next generations.

The NCPH issued this statement upon the conclusion of the event, “With many people still unaware of the positive impact of preservation, strong public relations emphasizing economic benefits remain key to sustainability.”[[96]](#endnote-96) While this is true, it is also a very limiting statement, and misses promoting an equally respected benefit – civic engagement. The statement also focuses on financial stability, but civic engagement could be a tool to lead to longevity and thus long-term financial benefits. Professionals across the field are not seeing more increases in thinking of how to implant this work as more meaningful to broader audiences from a younger age. It is this paper’s assertion that if a more public presentation of the issues at hand were presented under promoting civic engagement, preservationists could have more visibility and investment from community members.

Dr. Deathridge’s ideas of cultural success parallel the heart of this thesis in promoting engagement of children and youth in their communities – namely honing in, as preservationists, on harnessing historic and cultural resources to achieve “cultural successes.” In this discussion and paper, education is the recommended route to encourage engagement or achieve life-long investments. Understanding what is being done by educators can better inform preservationists of how to fill voids in promoting children and youth’s connections to preservation work.

Understanding the drivers of civic engagement is essential before preservationists can employ tool-kit solutions. While individual motivations vary as to why people participate in civic engagement, children and youth truly are one of a community’s most valuable tools. The preservation field is akin to a legacy business model, and requires younger generation members to be interested in continuing and maintaining resources. A legacy business model refers to a business owned by the same owners for a long-standing time. If there is no interest in “accepting a passing of the baton” or someone younger to take on the management of the business, the legacy cannot continue.

This metaphor extends to intangible and tangible resources or “legacies.” Abigail Gautreau, PhD candidate from Middle Tennessee State University, has addressed how preservation has so many opportunities for encouraging alternative narratives. Those alternative narratives can be conditioned on many elements including age. For children and youth experiencing historic preservation and cultural assets, their understandings of the resource must be supported by preservationists being open to the following question: “How does this project become their project without me here?”[[97]](#endnote-97)

As trite as it sounds, youth are our future. But what many may not realize is that they also are constantly shaping the world around us *now* – not just in the *future*. Our youngest generation finds ways, many times in techniques not captured by traditional means, to help shape and advise their surroundings. They use techniques that aren’t captured because they are designed to be transient such as posts, videos, likes, etc. These techniques directly shape and advise our digital natives’ surroundings because it changes the way they look at the world and how they interact with one another. They are looking to put their stamp on the world generally in a technology-rooted way and one that may come in endless forms.

It is also important to remember that the term “civic engagement” holds different meaning to each generation. It is still unclear what meaning our digital natives feel best serves this term. Offering opportunities and platforms that speak to digital natives is vital. It is important for preservationists, whose work is mainly rooted in the past, to find ways to bridge change in community values.

For example, this includes considering the involvement of more children and youth into our work as a requirement of professionals. Currently, changes in American cultural values have resulted in an erosion of family and community ties, which has led to a rise in interest of authentic experiences.[[98]](#endnote-98) It is important to highlight the shift in traditional social ties because this directly correlates to considering the digital cultural landscape that is so important to our youngest generations and how the virtual world has created new ways of engaging and interacting that can be done remotely and instantly such as Facebook, Instagram and TikTok. This has created the avenue for so many more “niche” communities to exist and grow outside of physical proximity. These factors directly play into digital natives’ cultural fabric and connection to civic opportunities.

It is imperative to understand Gen Z and Gen Alpha in order to effectively communicate with them. This is because Gen Alpha will be the most technologically literate among all other generations. It is therefore essential to develop effective ways of communicating with them. Michael Fisher and Elizabeth Fisher of Hack Learning, a teacher’s resource website, present a discussion on how teachers can meet the needs of Gen Alpha. To further gain insight to this topic, Michael Fisher and Elizabeth Fisher ask this question, “Are you teaching Generation Alpha with Baby Boomer content?”[[99]](#endnote-99) This is just as viable of a question for educators as it is preservationists. Solutions to meeting the needs of Gen Z and Gen Alpha, as well as future generations, must consider changes in generational and cultural values.

Preservationists are in a position professionally to prepare students for the world they will inherit. Preservationists often fill roles within the community that are public-service positions, so this is a natural relationship. Individuals in Generation Alpha will also have specific distinct needs; therefore, it is essential for preservationists to bridge this gap. According to Hack Learning, “Generation Alpha will increasingly need to see a high degree of equilibrium between their worlds outside of school and how they interact and learn inside of school.”[[100]](#endnote-100) This stems from the fact that our youngest population are digitally hyper-connected and “inside” and “outside” the classrooms are now blurred together more than ever. Learning no longer is limited via previous constraints of solely a classroom thanks to the fluid use of technology, alternate reality and varied concepts of digital natives’ cultural landscape. Digital natives have a sense of community that is vastly larger and more globalized than any previous generation and this is important to consider when thinking of how to engage locally.

Gen Z and Gen Alpha are on the forefront of this type of “seeing the world” through a digital experience, and thus are the most suitable generations to have preservationists reaching out to them through hands-on and digital or physical and non-physical platforms – both in and outside of the classroom. In “Meet Generation Alpha: 3 Things Educators should know,” Derrick Vargason, a content manager at NWEA, an educational assessment non-profit organization indicates, “many members of Gen Alpha have had a screen in their hand since before they could even talk. It’s more natural to them than paper.”[[101]](#endnote-101) Thus, it is imperative to engage using both hands-on learning and digital techniques to engage members of Gen Alpha.

Preservationists who design or facilitate child/youth engagement are able to provide and guide new experiences, strategies and solutions.[[102]](#endnote-102) When the efforts of preservationists on young children are supported, historic resources, architecture and design can offer topics to which children and youth can creatively grow as individual community members.

Martin Roll, a preeminent global business strategist and advisor for Fortune 500 companies recommends that youth and children should be involved with their communities through design, architecture and preservation.[[103]](#endnote-103) He believes that, “The experiences we have as children of how towns and cities are laid out and how people live…we carry with us and they eventually evolve into a kind of responsibility. Supposing, for example, that one day you became a member of your local town council – those experiences can affect how you act in that capacity…it matters that you have absorbed such experiences.”[[104]](#endnote-104)

These same experiences mentioned by Mr. Roll nurture skills that can help promote higher academic success, and participation in the community and school as well as self-development of thoughts.[[105]](#endnote-105) Meaningful engagement will benefit our children and youth as well by offering a dedicated platform to which they can learn how one person, no matter what age, can influence their environment. This can relate to design and space all the way to politics and social justice efforts. Especially for our children due to their phase of growth development, these contributions can most profoundly lay the foundation to which participation and self-growth can occur. For this reason, current programming and implementation standards recognizes that the youth and young children are not involved in historical preservation.

Using the Cyber-Space Cultural Landscape and Its Ability to Empower Youth

As stated before, Gen Z and Gen Alpha are digital natives. They are deeply embedded into the cyber-space cultural landscape and this is ideally where we can meet them to educate and spark interest with the goal of empowering them to be stewards of their communities. As highlighted, our digital natives have grown up immersed in an altered sense of community one that includes online bonding through virtual gaming, video-platforms for sharing, instant communication, etc.

Cyber space has become an extension of the physical reality as it offers a platform for various activities in our daily lives, including economics, cultural, educational among other activities. Cyber space, unlike other forms of communication such as telephone, has become a destination on its own. Today many activities are conducted in cyber space such as shopping and it also provides a source of entertainment. As the cyber space continues to evolve, it is essential to design it into a place instead of a space. Place refers to the physical world that is filled with tools and the representation of our works. It represents the physical world. As the cyberspace continues to evolve it is essential to incorporate more aspects of our cultural, social and economic activities. The cyberspace should be designed in a way that can accommodate the cultural and social aspects of the real world.

Preservationists and educators must come together to identify local community identifiers of place that symbolize local landscapes (both tangible and intangible) which helps link the cyberspace cultural landscape back to a local community origin. In better understanding this relationship between the physical and digital world, we can better engage with our digital natives and learn how they want to preserve their cultural and historical resources.

Conclusion

Historic preservation can be an important and underserved element of civics education. While preservation many times is indirectly mentioned or raised through curriculums, it is an underserved subject resource for helping to teach our future stewards and young generations. Historic preservation educational components within civics education are gaining relevancy as our youngest generations are demanding the need for more hands-on and digital learning approaches. While this is not a mainstream movement yet, preservation of both the intangible and tangible world are only gaining more importance to our digital natives. Focusing our efforts on engaging with Gen Z and Gen Alpha could be just what the field of preservation needs to best incorporate itself into mainstream education curriculum. Preservationists hold the responsibility of proving these ties and representing them in dynamic and functional ways.

CHAPTER 3:

Current Landscape of Engagement

The engagement of children and youth is important for the future of historic preservation, but what does that look like in practice? As Chapter 2 described in depth, civic engagement is at the heart of the most opportune ways to engage with young individuals. But to best understand this, we must look at the issues under a greater scope. We must understand that digital natives are looking for certain type of experiences. For example, Saskia Schippers and Meike Mak, in their survey of digital natives, learned that digital natives are looking for certain types of dynamic and fluid experiences. These include having the attributes of fast services and to socially interact with others at ease.[[106]](#endnote-106)

I believe that the field of preservation needs to learn how to market itself in an appealing way to digital natives. This chapter will comprise of an analysis of youth engagement practices, comparing and contrasting engagement strategies in both historic preservation and comparable fields such as environmental advocacy, archaeology and cultural resource management. This analysis will include considerations of how marketing strategies interact with the work. It is important to recognize that these comparable fields are not understood as “competitors,” but rather partners. Yet, there is value in objectively comparing and contrasting products and services offered in and out of the preservation field. Other fields are achieving success in child and youth engagement, whereas preservation is not; thus, we must identify elements to sparking their interest that we could better harness. Once those are identified in relation to preservation and children and youth, then developing upon those invaluable assets is imperative. Understanding the elements of successful engagement is a way to better position this work for future relevancy.

The field of marketing already studies Gen Z and Gen Alpha closely in order to determine how to appeal to them as consumers. The marketing firm Provoke Insights states: “It is key that marketers start researching possible…strategies to grab the attention of Alpha’s now so that they are prepared for the future.”[[107]](#endnote-107) Marketing analysis is a well-suited tool for preservationists to utilize in order to understand the wants and needs of children and youth – and then produce meaningful programming that addresses those wants and needs.[[108]](#endnote-108) Thus, the preservation field can better appeal to youth and draw them in as potential partners and stewards of our built and intangible heritage.

By looking at examples of child and youth outreach in both historic preservation and preservation-adjacent fields, I will identify successful engagement strategies in each case example. These will then be used to develop a tool-kit of engagement strategies for preservationists in Chapter 4. Case studies in this chapter include both one-time events and recurring events. This variety has been selected to highlight that duration of program length does not necessarily equate with effective practice.

The effectiveness of the strategies will be assessed in the context of marketing principles within this discussion. This analytical tool will help to determine effective engagement strategies so that this thesis can objectively assess what is working and what is not when bridging preservation to children and youth. We must form the habit of recognizing that community engagement opportunities offered by the preservation field should occur through the lens of marketing analysis, a service-oriented “product,” and that we need to ask ourselves the question posed by marketing analyst Brian Tracy, "Are these the right products or services for our customers today?”[[109]](#endnote-109)

In order to put this question into context within this paper, one must consider how members of Gen Z and Gen Alpha, as digital natives, experience a sense of place and connect to cultural landscapes. A better understanding of this can inform how to best engage youth. This paper is interested in further understanding the relationship between engagement and digital natives’ perceptions of a place within a historic preservation context. If we can better understand collective identity of specific generations, we can market better ourselves to them. Thus, marketing strategies are evaluated for each case example to better grasp bridges made for grabbing the attention of digital natives. However, grasping the bridges requires taking into account cultural considerations and creating different solutions for different places. There cannot be a one-size-fits-all answer to engaging children or youth.

Creating a sense of place and community through our engagement strategies can be a guiding principle in designing high-quality engagement opportunities for children and youth. If we can understand how digital natives evaluate experiences, then we can better match their needs to our offerings. Understanding digital natives’ definitions of authenticity is paramount to this conversation.[[110]](#endnote-110) It is so important because in a culture where replication of experiences is so easily done and rapidly at that, authentic experiences have become immersive and not rigid to conventional definitions. A good example is Disneyland, which is both a simulacrum and hyperreal. Jean Baudrillard explains that simulations today involve generating models of real scenarios without reality such that it becomes hard to distinguish between realities from a simulation of reality. Baudrillard also explains that simulacrum is replacing the reality with a representation.[[111]](#endnote-111)

One experiences life through both intangible and tangible experiences. Digital natives are used to hyper-real experiences through modes such as apps and virtual reality. We must reach our digital natives where they are and that means harnessing technology. Our digital natives live within the cyberspace cultural landscape; they exist within online space, apps, geofilters, virtual reality, etc.[[112]](#endnote-112)

The goal of meeting people where they are works in favor of preservation work because a tangible product is generally not the end goal of preservation work. Rather, the intangible interaction and participation of people can be recognized as the “product.” Our field does indeed produce “services” which are considered equal under the chosen marketing analysis strategy. If we can understand how to best serve our youngest generation, we can maximize our potential as a field.

The “7 Ps”of Marketing

This thesis will utilize the marketing concept of the “7 Ps of Marketing” as the analytical tool to assess the impacts of various preservation engagement strategies. This tool helps bridge together our ”products” as a field alongside evolving techniques for how we can engage digital natives. It was important to look outside the field to marketing for an analytical tool because it is through the marketing realm that we can learn effective new ways of communication. Originally known as the “4 Ps”, the idea of “Ps” of marketing was first was proposed in 1960 by E. McCarthy. At that time, this approach covered product, promotion, price and place.[[113]](#endnote-113) Today, the field recognizes an expanded version of the “4 Ps”, now referred to as the “7 Ps of Marketing.” This concept includes the original four approaches but adds packaging, positioning and people. An analysis of how the “7 Ps” can be applied to the preservation field is given below:

Product: Preservationist’s “product” is the services offered to our communities. This consists of an endless variety of forms, yet the missions are generally very similar in concept. When considering this work’s hypothesis, one must see our work as an evolving market that needs to continually meet the demands of communities today versus solely fostering connections to the past. By looking at our work as a product, preservationists can better ask, “What do consumers need from us today?” The current market has not developed at all in being able to meet the demands of Gen Z and Gen Alpha.

Promotion: This principle relates to all of the ways that preservationists communicate our services and how this is received by community members. This is one of the most evolutionary principles as it requires constant change to remain relevant and interesting. It has been proven that by changing wording in promotional material, advertising impact can increase by 500%.[[114]](#endnote-114) For example, preservationists have the ability to simply shift response rates by using different words when referring to programming, such as using “children and youth” instead of solely “youth” to broaden the audience base. This strategy also extends to the implementation of promotional strategies. If we use appropriate wording in the right places, transformations can take place! We must hone in on the right place for promotion and the right audience base.

Price: There are indirect costs that should be kept in mind. One must “make sure they're still appropriate to the realities of the current market.”[[115]](#endnote-115) When considering staff time, venue costs, materials costs, etc., price is essential to sustaining an organization’s mission. If an organization is charging for an event, it is essential for it to be aware of the average admission prices for comparable events in the local area.[[116]](#endnote-116) Community-based family events especially, as this thesis is interested in engagement with children, generally include low cost models.

Place: This element of the 7 Ps is essential to understanding preservation work. Place-based collective identity and belonging is an underpinning premise for connecting to community members, regardless of age. While some preservation organizations represent a specific site, others can consider where a targeted audience would best receive our service. For example, a presentation designed for Pre-K may be better hosted at a living farm versus a velvet-roped historic house museum, because the setting is more conducive to the engagement style of the audience. While it may seem inherent in preservation work to use the same site or the main historic site centered around the work branching out to community partners, a change in location could potentially lead to a more equitable offering of services. For example, to connect to our digital natives, thinking outside the box of usual cultural sites may offer an expanded palette of ways to represent preservation initiatives. For instance, we could host pop-up events to meet our audience where they are or use technology such as virtual reality apps that use geo-filters to engage participants. This can take place, for example, at local libraries, community festivals or during a farmer’s market fair.

Packaging: According to marketing executive Brian Tracy, “people form their first impression about you within the first 30 seconds of seeing…some element of your [organization]… Packaging refers to the way your product or service appears from the outside.”[[117]](#endnote-117) While this is a harder concept for preservationists to directly apply to their work, it is extremely important especially when considering Gen Z and Gen Alpha. Our consumers today are overwhelmed with options and in order to capture their interest we must “package” and “present” our work in a compelling way. Reiterating a change in discourse by using both children and youth when we speak about promoting events could allow for more flexibility within the field when discussing engagement techniques and ways of presenting preservation work. Strategies from other fields demonstrate that preservation-adjacent work is successfully being presented in other ways to children and youth and different marketing (compared to the status quo within the preservation field) is a large part of that success.

Positioning: How does preservation present itself and come off to community members? According to the 7 Ps, “Attribution theory says that most customers think of you in terms of a single attribute, either positive or negative.”[[118]](#endnote-118) In many cases that answer still includes the prevailing stigma of “old ladies in tennis shoes,” as Daniel Bluestone puts it, which is not a positive attribute.[[119]](#endnote-119) Why? The field as a whole is future-driven. Preservationists need to position ourselves, especially for the children and youth, in a way that lets them create connection to our mission and so they can see themselves as current and future stewards. One example of creative positioning in the preservation field is “heart-bombing,” originally developed by the Young Buffalo Preservationists. Members of the group identified endangered buildings and covered them with paper hearts.[[120]](#endnote-120) Another is the creation of the free coloring books that identify historic sites around the state, such as the book, “Exploring Arkansas’s Wonder: An Adventure in Historic Preservation.”[[121]](#endnote-121)

People: This relates to the people performing preservation work as well as the ones interacting with the work through community engagement. Sometimes in our work these two coincide and sometimes they are separate. Regardless, it is the people that drive preservation and should be remembered as such when marketing. If we are able to harness the knowledge about generational trends, we can better match those needs to our offerings.

Established Groundwork

In September 2018, Forbes published an article titled, “The Future of the Historic Preservation Movement: Connecting People with Places.” In this article, the author calls out the fact that “…the historic preservation movement has failed to connect a concern for *places* with a commitment to *people* and highlights that there are very few preservation organizations doing anything about this predicament.”[[122]](#endnote-122) I believe that this issue is compounded by the preservation field’s general lack of engagement with children and youth.

Very few articles can be found regarding the engagement (and lack thereof) of children and youth in historic preservation work. Where can they be found? NPS, ACHP and the NTHP, all tasked with engaging the American public in historic preservation, have published articles about youth engagement, but they still fail to include children in this discussion. Following a through literature review, I have concluded that the preservation field’s current groundwork and discourse is excluding children from engagement, and that this is detrimental to the field.

Yet, groundwork in child and youth engagement has been established in related disciplines to historic preservation. There are lessons to be learned from similar work being conducted in other fields working for the inclusion of children and youth such as environmental science sector and museum studies. In both fields, children and youth are being engaged in the work of historic preservation, but under the names of other related disciplines, as there is very little educational programming currently in the field itself. By using other fields’ accomplishments as a guide, this thesis will define factors that provide relevant top historic resources among children and youth.

Following are successful examples of preservation work engaging children and youth. Examples were chosen for their implementation of success in engaging young children and youth through a variety of means but with one similar purpose: to foster young community stewards who are aware of cultural and historic resources. There are two sections of case studies. The first section highlights cases from preservation organizations, and the other highlights cases from preservation-adjacent fields, which have been chosen based on their exemplary nature of representing preservation work simply under different discourse. All of these examples examine what strategies are being employed for engagement. One should bear in mind that the related fields utilize comparable content to the preservation organizations, yet with drastically different approaches and results.

The purpose of collecting these examples is to understand strategies in creating children and youth programming and how they can be harnessed for preservation programming. These events and organizations were analyzed for program components that stood out as exceptionally encouraging to young stewards. I identified successes through pictures, social media posts, news articles, etc., thereby showing that the community was receptive and participated. A large majority of organizations highlighted in these case studies have “education” within their mission statement but find different ways to tie in historic preservation work. Organizations were chosen on a nationwide scale in an effort to represent a broad scale of the engagement offerings being used in the U.S. These organizations were found online by utilizing keywords searches with terms such as “preservation programs for children and youth,” “cultural resources for kids,” and ”community history events for children and youth.” I gathered more information about these organizations through their websites and personal communication.

It is notable to mention that there are no examples from the National Trust for Historic Preservation. While this is the national preservation advocacy organization, they don’t do much engagement with children and youth and have published only a few articles on children and youth engagement.[[123]](#endnote-123) They do have an excellent job-training program for youth through their Hands-On Preservation Experience (HOPE) Crew, but this program strictly engages people in their late teens and older, and does not include children.

Case Examples from Preservation-Adjacent Fields

Example 1: Archaeology in the Community

Website: <http://www.archaeologyincommunity.com/>

Primary Region Served: Washington D.C. Metropolitan Area

Organizations Discipline: Archaeology

Event: Ongoing

Type of Activities Offered: Archaeology in the Community partners with local educational institutions and community partners to offer in-school and extra-curricular programming to students of all ages. One of the mottos they advocate for through programming is: “Understanding our past is essential to making better decisions about our future.”[[124]](#endnote-124) This organization provides a wide variety of offerings. Programs offered include community events, professional development opportunities and in-school and extra-curricular activities including a free “Young Archaeologist Club,” camps and field schools.

Of note, this organization has a partnership with the Montpelier Foundation for grade school teachers to attend a “LEARN Archaeology Expedition Program.” Through this 5-day event at James Madison’s Montpelier in central Virginia, teachers participate in excavations and learn how to incorporate archeology concepts into different curriculums for students. Part of this event includes developing lesson plans to be directly applied within classrooms.

How They Relate to Preservation: Archaeology in the Community engages children, youth and teachers in not only archeology, but also in cultural resource management, preservation and environmental affairs. Thus, through promoting archeology to children and youth, Archeology in the Community is also promoting the constructs of preservation.

Strategies Employed for Engagement: Free community events and a club for children and youth, hands on demonstrations/events, in-school and out-of-school events, teacher training.

Predominant 7 Ps represented: Product and promotion are strong strategies behind this organization. A variety of engagement strategies are offered to a variety of ages all of which have a strong tie to the organization’s mission. Diversity is key to this example in that location, type, age and content vary between offerings. The organization has a strong promotional strategy within their community through in-person, print and digital means.

Types of strategies or tools they use in that achieving that broad reach: This organization uses tools available to them within the community. They build upon what existing framework is available by integrating themselves within established groups such as clubs and schools. This allows for a broad reach because they purposefully seek out diverse community pockets to work with as a mission of this organization.

How they engage: Through hands-on working with community partners, this organization makes a difference in their local community. They engage by being dynamic and using every medium possible to spread their message via social media, word of mouth, etc.

Example 2: Earth Guardians

Website: <https://www.earthguardians.org/>

Primary Region Served: International (Boulder, Colorado-Headquarters)

Organizations Discipline: Environmentalism

Event: Ongoing

Type of Activities Offered: Earth Guardians is a highly interactive crowd-sourced organization which inspires and trains “diverse youth to be effective leaders in the environmental, climate and social justice movements. Through the power of art, music, storytelling, civic engagement and legal action, they’re creating impactful solutions to some of the most critical issues we face as a global community.”[[125]](#endnote-125)

Their engagement happens on local levels with an international cyber-space landscape connecting them all together. This fosters youth leadership and empowerment because it gives a vehicle to which civic engagement can take place and inspire fellow peers across the globe. There is an emphasis on making projects inter-generationally equitable, as well as promoting cultural change. Engagement includes child/youth-led strikes, lawsuits and leadership trainings. The organization offers free educational resources to children and youth on how to “start a crew” for local leaders, how to engage with political campaigns, opportunities for mentors and collective actions, how to perform a school environmental audit and lesson plans for classrooms.

How They Relate to Preservation: The connection between Earth Guardians and preservation work is strong in that the organization promotes social movements, in my view, through cultural heritage. The mission statement of this organization directly refers to art, music and storytelling – all aspects of cultural heritage. Cultural heritage includes protecting the legacy of both tangible and intangible features of a community that, according to UNESCO, “are inherited from past generations, maintained in the present and bestowed for the benefit of future generations…The catalyst for preserving cultural heritage ranges from proactive efforts to reactive responses.”[[126]](#endnote-126) Earth Guardians is excellent in offering localized effort strategies to any child, youth or mentor interested in participating and connecting all efforts into a larger, more broad picture of sustainability.

Strategies Employed for Engagement: Community engagement, platform for cyber-space relationships to form, free resources, social media engagement, legal actions

Predominant 7 Ps represented: Dominant strategies behind this organization are positioning and people. This organization prides itself on its followers and makes sure through postings and events that its supporters are highlighted. It positions itself in communities strictly as an environmental organization but does also take into account intangible assets to propel their mission.

Types of strategies or tools they use in that achieving that broad reach: This organization uses crowd-sourcing as their main tool to achieving the broad international reach that they have. By crowd-sourcing, this organization creates a “community” within the larger cyberspace cultural landscape.

How they engage: By harnessing a place within the cyberspace cultural landscape, Earth Guardians has created an identity to connect with when one becomes an advocate for their mission. They engage by using technology directly through video feed, posts, group sessions, etc.

Example 3: Growing Up Boulder

Website: <http://www.growingupboulder.org/>

Primary Region Served: Colorado

Organizations Discipline: Urban Planning

Event: Ongoing

Type of Activities Offered: Growing Up Boulder (GUB) offers hands-on planning experience for children and youth. The organization clearly identifies both “children” and “youth” as their core audience. Growing Up Boulder was founded in 2009. Boulder was the first city to integrate child and youth participation in civic matters. Susan Glarion, a Community Engagement Design and Research (CEDaR) communications specialist states that “Boulder recognizes that young people’s ideas are often innovative, people-friendly and playful, and that implementing their ideas adds to the city’s character.”[[127]](#endnote-127)

This organization offers six project areas in which children and youth can get involved. These areas include transportation, parks and nature, planning housing and sustainability, arts, general youth voice and parents. The mission of these activities is to “empower Boulder's young people with opportunities for inclusion, influence, and deliberation on local issues that affect their lives.”[[128]](#endnote-128) Of note, one of the projects this organization has hosted was a “Child-Friendly Community Assessment in 2010.” For this project the organization worked with UNICEF and ChildWatch International to serve as a model of transgenerational equity through urban planning. They helped find holes within local planning ordinances that did not propel equity through age, race, economic status, etc. The organization also has piloted a child-friendly map of Boulder, which included child and youth-led project management.

It also seems relevant to share the organization’s goals when considering the impact of this organization on this thesis’ hypothesis. These goals epitomize equity amongst age when considering the potential of planning and preservation’s impacts. The goals read as follows:

1.  Ensure meaningful opportunities for young people’s participation in Boulder decision-making.  
2.  Make Boulder a more inclusive place for children and youth of all income levels, ethnicities ​and abilities.  
3.  Give GUB partners a voice in setting the direction of GUB projects.  
4.  Disseminate lessons learned from GUB to the community (Boulder-at-large, youth, academics, ​GUB partners, other child-friendly city communities).**[​​](http://www.growingupboulder.org/partners--funders.html" \t "_blank)**[[129]](#endnote-129)

How They Relate to Preservation: This organization does not once use the word “preservation” in their work, but highlights core values of the field, such as resource recognition, cultural stewardship and historic awareness. This organization directly connects children and youth to planning methods and interactive ways of designing space (including historic and modern resources). Preservation strives to accomplish the same impact on design and planning and seamlessly merging the past and present.

Strategies Employed for Engagement: School partnerships, social media presence, cultural landscape of community engagement, hands-on activities, parent interaction

Predominant 7 Ps represented: Place and people are key to this organization’s strategy. Identifying the cultural situation of Boulder is integral to connecting children and youth to their larger world in both tangible and intangible aspects. The organization attracts people from the community by advertising in a wide variety of places and ways, such as social media posts, video feed, in-person demonstrations and pop-up events.

Types of strategies or tools they use in that achieving that broad reach: Growing Up Boulder uses a lot of community partnerships to achieve their broad reach. They make use of community assets and highlight them within their activities offered. This allows for a diverse offering.

How they engage: Growing Up Boulder specifically engages by being present in the moment and offering what community members want. For example, there was interest in a community park so the organization highlighted that need and centered a campaign around it. Technology was used heavily in social media promotion.

Case Examples from the Preservation Field

Example 4: City of San Antonio Historic Preservation Office

Event: The Amazing Preservation Race: Kids

Website: <https://www.sanantonio.gov/historic/Events/EventsCalendar/ArtMID/13984/ArticleID/13027/Amazing-Preservation-Race-for-Kids>

Primary Area Served: San Antonio, TX

Organization’s Discipline: Historic Preservation

Event: Annual recurring event

Type of Activity Offered: This is an annual event taking place in June. The City of San Antonio’s Office of Historic Preservation presents this event as a way for children to participate in a scavenger hunt. This is not an ordinary scavenger hunt, as the hidden objects are features of historic architecture. The event is located at a local historic site, Hemisfair, and encourages local partnerships by offering slots for local vendors and community partners to attend and set up pop-up tents.

How They Promote Preservation: This event not only encourages child engagement but also the appreciation and highlighting of local historical architecture by children and adults. By learning to “read” the landscape, both children and adults alike gain a greater appreciation for the built environment around them.

Strategies Employed for Engagement: Parent/child participation, free play, social media coverage, storytelling, placemaking, people-centered public space

Predominant 7 Ps represented: Product and promotion are key to this event. Promotion is done mainly online, including day-of social media postings. Marketing images and promotional material are child-friendly because of the simple graphic design and easy-to-read font. Product is very well used in this event by packaging something existing into a new “experience.” This is very on trend with the needs of Gen Z and Gen Alpha, because it made use mostly of social media and online platforms, which speaks directly to digital natives.

Types of strategies or tools do they use in that achieving that broad reach: The City of San Antonio Historic Preservation Office uses the tool of community engagement to achieve their broad reach. This event, in particular, is a community event designed to engage all walks of life. This is a smart strategy as any promotion done is accessible to a wide audience.

How they engage: By creating unique opportunities through this event, the City of San Antonio Historic Preservation Office has created an avenue of connecting to historic preservation in a fun and dynamic way. Technology was used heavily in social media promotion.

Example 5: Puyallup Main Street Association

Event: “Meeker Days”

Website: <https://www.puyallupmainstreet.com/>

Organizations Discipline: Community Development/Historic Preservation

Primary Region Served: Tacoma, WA

Type of Activities Offered: This organization offers a robust palette of events and strategies to help promote their mission to “represent and support a vital downtown by promoting economic growth.”[[130]](#endnote-130) Specifically this paper is looking at this organization’s “Meeker Days” event, which successfully encourages exploration of the past and future for children and youth.

This event occurs annually in June, with the next event being held June 19-21, 2020. It has been a local tradition for 80 years.[[131]](#endnote-131) While the event’s main draws are live music and local vendors, the organizers have put a lot of thought into engaging children and youth: “We tried to include…more hands-on activities for kids that would help maintain the historical stories of the area.”[[132]](#endnote-132) Two highlights are the “living history” tents as well as a “time capsule” tent. The living history tents are set up with re-enactors living on the grounds for the entirety of the event. These tents encourage hands on exploration of the snapshots in history and foster conversation between the children and re-enactors. The time capsule tent helps encourage children and youth to use their knowledge of past and present to “add something from their year as they dreamed about the future.”[[133]](#endnote-133)

How They Promote Preservation: Meeker Days promote preservation in a number of ways, foremost by being a continuation of a long-standing community event. “Meeker Days” are one strategy this organization uses to uphold revitalization of their historic commercial district. “Meeker Days” promote considering local past while still dreaming of how to improve it for the future, which is preservation at its finest.

Strategies Employed for Engagement: Celebrating local tradition, fostering people-centered space, local partnerships, buy-local experience, strong social-media coverage and crowd-sourcing promotion

Predominant 7 Ps represented: Place and packaging are key elements to this event’s strategy. This is a long-standing historical event that takes pride in its physical location and that was honored here. It was accentuated by the fact that old elements were brought to life in new ways via interpretations and live demonstrations and packaged as family activities.

Types of strategies or tools do they use in that achieving that broad reach: Puyallup Main Street Association uses the strategy of community engagement. By offering a community event, they give a vehicle to be able to then promote historic preservation in creative formats.

How they engage: This organization engages through hands-on experiences. This is very fitting for digital natives as senses of authenticity are so important for tangible experiences.

Example 6: We Are the Next

Event: n/a

Website: <http://www.wearethenext.org/>

Organizations Discipline: Historic Preservation/Placemaking

Primary Area Served: California

Type of Activities Offered: During the course of writing this thesis, this organization was put out of commission by the creator Katie Rispoli Keaotamai who is also the founder and CEO of a new organization, TICCO.[[134]](#endnote-134) However, it was such an exemplary example, that it was retained as a case study. This organization offered a variety of community programming for youth. Their main annual event was a “Youth Heritage Summit” program. This program was designed in a summer camp format and took students to historic sites and offered hands-on activities relating to preservation. The organization also offered a “Proud of Where You Came From” program that invited the youth to serve as consultants on historic sites. The youth actually developed new marketing strategies for these sites and offered their opinions on what could draw more youth to the site.

How They Promote Preservation: This organization directly advocated for historic sites and the interests of younger citizens. We Are the Next’s former Executive Director, Katie Rispoli Keaotamai, says that “Helping young people become active members of our communities…is key to helping historic places thrive.”[[135]](#endnote-135)

Preservation was interwoven into each program and activity in a fun-filled and dynamic way to make it feel fresh. The founder of this organization is an advocate of making preservation work as a career path for youth and trying to give opportunities for all to experience the work of a preservationist.

Strategies Employed for Engagement: Local partnerships, social media campaigns, hands-on activities, extra-curricular events, placemaking opportunities

Predominant 7 Ps represented: Product and positioning were used heavily in this organization’s work. Product is seen in the high number of activities this organization created to engage local youth. It is these “products” that served as the driver for this organization’s mission. Positioning is also very important because this organization is trying to use their products to make an impact on local community members about the preservation field. It was through their events that the organization was positioned in the mind and hearts of local youth as a potential avenue of interest for them to pursue as a career or for recreation.

Types of strategies or tools they use in that achieving that broad reach: We Are the Next used many tools to achieve their broad reach, but the main tool was the in-person gathering experience. By gathering groups of students, the organization then had the opportunity to expose them to preservation concepts and locations.

How they engage: They engaged through hands-on experiences and heavy use of technology. Social media and virtual reality were used by We Are The Next to best connect to digital natives through placemaking exercises.

Analysis: What Can Be Learned from these Organizations?

The primary purpose of highlighting these case studies is to see what is working best for organizations currently performing educational outreach with youth, whether in preservation or adjacent to it. By comparing and contrasting the examples found, this paper can start to draw conclusions of what strategies of engagement may work best for a tool-kit.

The most common thread seen through the six examples is extra-curricular programming opportunities. It is the recreational programs that best conveyed each organization’s mission. All six examples found ways to encourage children and youth to consider historic and cultural resources within the past *and* future. Each organization made the past relevant to the present rather than focusing on historical importance only. All the organizations built that past-present-future bridge instead of relying on solely historical references.

A primary difference between the six organizations was their level of participation with community partners such as teachers, parents and other organizations. This varying level of interaction with other community stakeholders seemed to greatly impact the breadth of work and the number of children and youth involved. It appears through this analysis that the more varied the stakeholders involved within the community, the more support children and youth have for being involved in preservation holistically via policy, advocacy, hands-on, education, etc.

Two of these examples, Archeology in the Community and Earth Guardians, involve schools and teachers into their outreach. Both organizations have lesson plans and audits available for teachers to use. While one, Growing Up Boulder and Earth Guardians, provides lesson plans with a government and policy slant. While We Are the Next also worked under a similar premise, the organization solely worked with youth and preservationists, not parents, teachers or local officials, which limited their scope and potential area of impact compared to the other examples.

Conclusion

While these examples are wonderful organizations that contribute to their communities, they also highlight the lack available programming by preservationists themselves. Our programming is insufficient if children and youth need to have more access to understanding their current and future impact on historic and cultural resources and how this plays a role in their ability to participate in local community civic engagement. Louise Chawla in the article “Children’s involvement in shaping their communities,” states that,

“Growing up” means gaining the freedom to move beyond the home into the community. It’s essential that cities and communities provide the resources that children need to develop their capabilities.  We need cities with people who know and love their city and invest in caring for it, and children and youth are an important part of that group.[[136]](#endnote-136)

Furthermore, one of the assets of utilizing the “7 Ps of Marketing” as a tool for analyzing preservation outreach activities is the way preservationists can continuously adapt and respond to the changing needs of different generations.[[137]](#endnote-137) By better strategizing through marketing, children and youth can be fostered as stakeholders. In a field that traditionally resists change, work performed by prior generations sometimes causes disconnect to the next generation of visitors and preservation professionals. By using introducing the marketing analysis tools, the “7 Ps,” this paper aims to provide preservationists with a tool that lets them assess the successfulness of their strategies regarding public awareness, investment and engagement. It demonstrates operational and conceptual implementation methods that could aid preservationistsin engaging children and youth. Engagement does not need to be triggered only by a threat to a community resource; it must be proactive, sustained and targeted to different audiences.

The way preservationists present our work is paramount to the impact to future generation’s ability to grow and respect preservation work. The preservation field needs to continue harnessing successful engagement strategies represented in this chapter’s case studies in order to break away from its predominantly archaic modes of marketing and truly connect with the youth that will be inheriting the sites that generations of historic preservationists have worked to save.

CHAPTER 4:

Tool-Kit

The historic preservation field needs to bring children and youth in as vested stakeholders. Involving individuals of all ages is essential in emphasizing the concept of preservation for community engagement to be designed for the target market of today. This chapter will focus on ways to “better situate” the preservation field (on a national scale with local solutions) to meet the needs of children and youth of today, as well as ways to be flexible and adaptive to the needs of future generations. Built in “wiggle room” is necessary when addressing Gen Z and Gen Alpha because their needs and desires change rapidly due to their growing minds and attitudes. This chapter will provide a “tool-kit” format of five propositions of way in which the preservation field can better engage youth.

Chapter 3 compared different examples of youth engagement both within the preservation field and in preservation-adjacent fields and identified successful strategies. These strategies will be investigated more in-depth in this chapter, and will supplement the discussion with segments of interviews conducted with staff members from those same case study organizations in order to flesh out some of these strategies and insights.

The tool-kit is designed as a variety of engagement strategies to be used with flexibility in their implementation from community to community. Each community is as unique as the proposition. Each proposition also will vary in regards to its length of “engagement” time. This paper’s position is that length of time does not correlate with the success of overall value of the engagement. It is also very important to highlight that this tool-kit is specifically designed to support the increase in engagement with children and youth.

The complete tool-kit is presented as a vehicle of this paper’s argument that children and youth must be viewed as stakeholders and preservationists must be mindful of these stakeholders’ evolving needs and preferences. Particular focus will be on elementary school-aged children since, as previously established, this is the prime age range for developing life-long interests and habits.[[138]](#endnote-138) As such, these proposed tools are designed specifically for our current youngest generations, Gen Z (Born ~1997-2009[[139]](#endnote-139)) and Gen Alpha (born 2010-Present[[140]](#endnote-140)). As stated by Allison Zmuda, Marie Alcock, and Michael Fisher in “Meet Generation Alpha: Teaching the Newest Generation of Students,”: “In many schools, we’re just now considering Generation Z’s needs, while using Generation X’s resources, and Baby Boomers’ content.”[[141]](#endnote-141) Preservationists can learn from educators on the cutting edge of this discussion and apply the same strategies to our tool-kit (and understand their pitfalls).

According to Kevin Loria and Samantha Lee in “Here’s which Generation Based on Your Birth Year and why those Distinctions Exist,” generational groups can be considered abridged labels, but the groups act on average as “a lens through which to understand societal change.”[[142]](#endnote-142) Hence, one will see that each strategy presented in the tool-kit will address why the tool could be effective in engaging youth, what children are losing without this, why the proposed strategy is age-appropriate, and which developmental stage is addressed in each strategy.

Current Elements of Learning

What do you do with a learner who is used to making and gaming and prototyping and wanting to create products of value? What will we do with those learners who already thrive with online learning opportunities? And what will we do with those learners who are perfectly comfortable with virtual connections but don’t necessarily do well with physical human interactions?[[143]](#endnote-143)

The above quote from the article “Meet Generation Alpha: Teaching the Newest Generation of Students” asks important questions about Gen Alpha that impact the way solutions in this section are presented. I think that bridges must be created across generations to enhance the preservation of a learning opportunity and life-long interest. Preservationists must be able to, as the above quote states, identify characteristics of each generation. They must then be able to identify any potential impacts generational traits have on a learning experience. Those same generational traits can be used to structure experience in order to facilitate learning.

Before delving into propositions, it is essential to understand current elements of learning for Gen Z and Gen Alpha in order to determine effective strategies to include in the tool-kit. Every generation is influenced by cultural norms and traditions and thus ways of learning differ as a result. For example, “Millennials were taught using multisensory and multi-modal methodologies, while Generation Z has moved into learner-centered approaches with kinesthetic opportunities and interactive furniture and spaces.”[[144]](#endnote-144)

I argue that there are elements that are vital to connect Gen Z and Gen Alpha community members to learning opportunities. These strategies are used to back-up the tool-kit strategies proposed in this chapter because it aids in bridging the divide of engagement for our digital natives.

The strategies employed should be:

Technology-based

Interactive

Personalized

Product-producing

The five “pathways” of civic engagement and Positive Youth Development are also used here when considering how to engage with children and youth. As mentioned in Chapter 2, these pathways are public policy/consultation, community coalition involvement, youth in organizational decision making, youth organizing and activism, and school-based service learning.[[145]](#endnote-145) One or more of these categories should be considered in some regard to best connect the dots of engagement. Each strategy can be seen somewhere within one of the five propositions.

Each of the strategies listed are important to engagement with Gen Z and Gen Alpha both individually and as a group. It is also important to understand how to apply these strategies. Thus the “Five Key Elements of Teaching” developed by educator Carol Tomlison, should also be used to best inform the tool-kit propositions.[[146]](#endnote-146) The use of education principles is critical if the preservation field is going to engage school children. The “Five Key Elements of Teaching”[[147]](#endnote-147) are as follows:

1. Learning Environment
2. Curriculum
3. Assessments
4. Instruction
5. Classroom Management

One may ask why these elements are relevant to this tool-kit? All but element three listed above provide direction regarding how to engage children in a productive and meaningful way. While there is very little research conducted on preservation education, there is endless data compiled within the education sector. This information must be used to gain advantage when considering the hypothesis of this paper. Here are some ways that preservationists can apply these concepts:

Learning Environment – Preservationists can consider all the built environment as a “learning environment,” as any resource can be presented in endless ways and as a learning opportunity. The challenge is how can preservationists create these learning environments? How can we harness our resources as engaging tools? This will be addressed in the tool-kit.

Curriculum – Preservationists should not be frightened by this term. While creating lesson plans and curriculum-based activities are presented as an option in this tool-kit, it is not the only way to spread the messages of preservation work. If historic sites want to engage children and youth, they have to provide educators with information about how programs meet specific learning objectives. We must learn how to package our learning experience opportunities in a way that meets curriculum requirements.

Assessments – If preservationists think of this element in terms of assessing ourselves, then we can better equip ourselves to stay relevant to each individual generation appropriately and effectively individually. This paper offers generational trend analysis as the route to take in assessing our credibility and fluidity in meeting each generation’s needs. While this is not the typical take on this element, it has been revised here to best help preservationists be able to see themselves within this framework. Thinking of assessing children and youth on their historic preservation fluency is not of help at this point in the game, when we are still trying to cultivate a presence.

Instruction – Preservationists are stewards of resources and there is a need that preservation offices and organizations create built-in instructional operations. The key to this element for specifically addressing youth and children is age-appropriateness. Thus, each proposition considers this alongside its proposal.

Classroom Management – This element is two-fold for the purposes of this tool-kit. First, preservationists should make use of partnerships with local school systems and “be in the classroom” to some capacity through civics education and/or Positive Youth Development. Second, it relates to management of our resources as learning opportunities to serve as “living classrooms.” We have the opportunity, for example, through local historic preservation commission or organizations, to create areas of learning that are hands-on, dynamic and age-appropriate.

Preservationists have the benefit of being a people- and place-oriented field. As such, we have the opportunity to create safe and dynamic spaces that spark young minds, while also catering to their own cultural heritage and social connections. Our goal is to expand their knowledge about their cultural heritage. How preservationists present content is the main tool to understand what is needed to help children and youth find meaning in our work. It is through finding meaning in what is being shared that children will connect to the content and possibly create life-long connections to the subject area.

Tomlison addresses a key aspect of learning in which historic preservation has an opportunity in which to engage youth and children:

We know from brain research that kids have to do two things in order to learn: they need to make sense of new information and they need to make meaning of it. And “sense” means, “I can actually explain to you how it works. Not just that ‘I memorized it—or tried to.’ And ‘meaning’ means, ‘I can connect it to my own life in some way.’[[148]](#endnote-148)

It is the goal of this thesis treatise to equip preservationists with enhanced understanding and tools for engaging children and youth so as to help them make connections to the places around them. Without making connections, the personal investment component this paper strives to attain for each individual will not be achievable.

Lessons Learned from Case-Study Interviews

I conducted interviews through email and phone conversations with leaders from the organizations that serve as case studies for this thesis treatise. The data is being used within this context for qualitative research. The research method of interviews was chosen with the intent to collect a healthy source of in-the-field information from relevant sources. The interview questions were kept identical for each interviewee (and written to be open-ended), to draw the best conclusions for this chapter’s tool-kit of successful strategies to engage children and youth. The following categories were considered within the interviews: attributes, attitudes, opinions and knowledge. These categories were considered because they help take into account how to apply concepts in different settings. All were taken into account through the questions asked to best explain and to explore experiences of engaging children and youth in preservation-related events.[[149]](#endnote-149) The most surprising result of the interviews was that all of the “out-of-field” interviewees responded “no” to the question of whether they saw their work as preservation work. This thesis concludes otherwise but recognizes the negative responses as one of the challenges in our current field framework and discourse. There is so much to learn from others doing similar work to have a common goal to better serve children as future stewards is the perfect place to start making these connections!

The following people were interviewed:

Mara Mintzer – Growing Up Boulder, Program Director

Jill Starks – Puyallup Main Street Association, Event Coordinator

Dr. Alexandra Jones – Archeology in the Community, Inc., Executive Director

Jenny Hay – City of San Antonio, ScoutsSA, Program Manager

These were the interview questions:

* What was the driving force behind why your organization/event was founded?
* If applicable, what made you think to partner with “educational institutions” and can you talk a little about the relationship you have with schools?
* Do you see your work as preservation work?
* In this paper, I propose that to keep up with trans-generational equity and our youngest generation, we must understand marketing strategies to bridge preservation and youth and ask "Are these the right products or services for our customers today?[[150]](#endnote-150) To do so…I talk about the 7 Ps of Marketing which are approaches to marketing.

(Product, promotion, price, place, packaging, positioning, people)

Which of the 7 Ps best addresses your organizations marketing strategy?

* Are there any recommendations you have to preservationists to better engage children and youth?

Here are highlights of each interview conducted in relation to this chapter’s tool-kit:

Dr. Jones, Executive Director of Archaeology in the Community, Inc., knew that engaging youth and children holistically was important to the Washington D.C. community, which meant involving schools. Dr. Jones stated that “Investing in educators is the way to go for impact of a holistic community.”[[151]](#endnote-151) She called this a “two-prong” approach where both the teachers and parents must be involved with the child because both inform and teach each other simultaneously. Dr. Jones’ method for doing so is by showing them “real-world professionals” and getting everyone’s hands “dirty” to truly learn about what archeologists do. Her best advice was to go to teachers specifically and present them with lesson plans and ways of applying content to different subjects of what preservationists do.

While Ms. Starks, event coordinator of the Puyallup Main Street Association, does not directly partner with schools for the “Meeker Day” event, she stated that she is “constantly working on ways to connect with schools.”[[152]](#endnote-152) She also said that it is a challenge to incorporate historic resources into their events, but they do so by adding in small learning and hands-on activities. The Puyallup Main Street Association has found that by making the activities kid friendly, engagement increases between parents and young stewards.

Ms. Hay, Program Coordinator of the Scouts SA program for the City of San Antonio, stated that her event was created specifically to target the underserved audience of children. It grew out of a desire from her office to connect to a wider audience base. She said that promotion is one of the most important elements when trying to engage children because the parents’ interest must first be piqued to actually bring them to an event.[[153]](#endnote-153) So in order to engage children, one must think of a two-step process of first engaging children and then thinking of ways to entice parents to bring their children to the event.

Mrs. Mitzner, Program Director of Growing Up Boulder, offered valuable advice as to the need to establish relationships with local schools. She stated that “out-of-school youth events were too shallow, and after-school programs had low turn-out rates. However, if you went in a classroom, especially one already working with underprivileged students, and getting their voice that is where you can find success.”[[154]](#endnote-154) She said that it makes sense to work with a program already in place through partnering with schools. Mrs. Mitzner also made the justification that using and understanding developmental stages as defense for why engaging with children and youth matters is so important. She said that the two “are so intertwined it just makes sense to talk about them together.”[[155]](#endnote-155) Mrs. Mitzner eloquently said that one must see “kids as experts but understand they have limited experience, so as professionals we allow them to expand their knowledge and let them synthesize it in their own way.”[[156]](#endnote-156)

Tool-Kit Propositions

Taking into account all the previous research on development, civic engagement, case studies and interviews, the following propositions have been developed to best propel this paper’s hypothesis. Each proposition is outlined in the same structure by answering why it would be effective, what is lost without the opportunity, what developmental stage it enhances, and how it is age-appropriate. Each proposition also includes who may be the best suited within the preservation community to actually accomplish each proposition. With the preservation community having so many facets, this element is paramount to consider when reading through each proposition. While each only lists one group within the community, it is important to consider that many stakeholders and partners may also be to best accomplish the proposition.

Toolkit Proposition #1: State Historic Preservation Offices (SHPOs) build in a requirement to have one annual contract market-researcher position and one educator, per state office (for localized results), with the main objective to disseminate to local communities what current trends and needs are for engagement of children and youth and also how to apply the concepts to education.

Why the tool could offer effectiveness: SHPOs play a critical role in bridging preservation work to local communities statewide. In many ways, they advise communities and steer the direction of preservation advocacy commitments. If SHPOs were to dedicate enough resources and time to hire a contracted market-researcher with the main mission to stay abreast of relevant trends and needs of our youngest generation, engagement with Gen Z and Gen Alpha as well as future generations would increase. The information found annually by the researcher would then be available for local communities, non-profits, local governments, etc. to use in their own engagement of children and youth. This would serve as a reputable and field-specific source of information for preservationists to use. At the present time, there is no such resource.

What children are losing without this: Children are currently being underserved due to the lack of information available to preservationists on engaging children.

Why and how age-appropriateness is fulfilled through the proposal: This position would solely be to consider children and youth’s needs. Thus, this solution is age-appropriate and meets the needs of honoring our children and youth as stakeholders with trans-generational equity.

Which developmental stage is employed: All developmental stages would be subject to analysis and better understanding by this proposition.

Best purveyor of this proposition within the preservation community: SHPOs

Which organizations I interviewed that employ it (if any): Archeology in the Community works with SHPOs and local agencies to spread their message as a testament to the value that can come with such collaboration. SHPOs can learn from such current connections as ways to branch further into communities.

Quote from an interview that backs up the proposition: In the interview with Archeology in the Community’s Director, she stated that “Education is at the forefront of being able to reach diverse pockets of ages and backgrounds.”[[157]](#endnote-157)

Toolkit Proposition #2: Bolster engagement by creating avenues for children and youth to actively participate in preservation via a student member non-voting position on local Historic Preservation Commissions (HPCs). It is recommended that this be open to high schoolers and up. A good model to look at is the City of Florence, Colorado’s Historic Preservation Commission, which includes one non-voting youth member.[[158]](#endnote-158)

Why the tool could offer effectiveness: This tool would be extremely effective in offering a rare opportunity for youth to get real-world experience in preservation. As Earth Guardians proves as an organization, age is not a restrictor to civic duty and participation. By having local HPCs create student positions, doors would open up for participation.

What children are losing without this: For the majority of the HPCs nationwide, there are no student positions. Children are losing opportunities to become involved in preservation without having a student position. They are also losing a learning opportunity to engage civically due to age restriction.

Why and how age-appropriateness is fulfilled through the proposal: While some may not agree that high schoolers should be included in HPCs, psychological studies have shown that by this age, predictions of consequences are developed, argument skills are blossoming, and they are grasping how things are connected.[[159]](#endnote-159) High schoolers are also able to build the skills needed to add fresh perspective to HPCs, and in a non-voting member capacity, their input would be purely supplemental and a learning opportunity.

Which developmental stage is employed: Generally high school students range between the age of 14 and 18.[[160]](#endnote-160) At this age bracket, individuals believe that they are able to shape the world into a better place. They are considered as pioneers of change due to their confidence in taking risks.[[161]](#endnote-161) They also possess creative technological skills that could be adopted to enhance the delivery of HPC programs.

Best purveyor of this proposition within the preservation community: Local planning offices on city or county levels.

Which organizations I interviewed that employ it (if any): None.

Quote from an interview that backs up the proposition: We Are the Next’s Director stated that, “High schoolers, especially due to their age, have a vibrancy to change and empower their local communities. This should be harnessed.”[[162]](#endnote-162)

Toolkit Proposition #3: Enlist advocates at all levels (national, state and local) to lobby for civic education/engagement and Positive Youth Development in schools nationwide working at a national level to make preservation known as an avenue of civic engagement. If preservationists could be advocates on these subjects it would help our presence within education system content. We must prove our relevancy to curriculum, and one way to ensure this is by being advocates for civic education/Positive Youth Development. As our case example analysis revealed, the most common thread seen through the six examples was the importance of extra-curricular programming opportunities. Recreational programs tied to the schools were what best conveyed each organization’s mission. One current recommendation to teachers for Gen Alpha especially is to cultivate “soft skills.” This refers to boosting activities which can easily be done through extra-curricular and in-school activities that sharpened skills revolving around behavior and physical interaction with others. [Allison Zmuda](https://www.learningpersonalized.com/category/authors/allison-zmuda/) et al. in “Meet Generation Alpha: Teaching the Newest Generation of Students” states that “Teachers will need to engage students in opportunities for building human capital, social capital, and decisional capital, as well as a variety of habits of mind.”[[163]](#endnote-163) Historic and cultural resources can meet this need by getting children and youth interacting with each other through hands-on activities or technology based virtual reality simulations. Preservation can fit this niche inside civics education by using hands-on learning opportunities within communities and local organizations looking for stewards of historic resources.

Why the tool could offer effectiveness: To prepare our future generations and youngest population, preservationists have an opportunity to start partnerships with local educational systems. This paper recognizes this as the most effective way to engage with children and youth.

What children are losing without this: Young children are losing equity in opportunity to learn what preservation is all about because it is not found anywhere within civics education or educational curriculum in general.

Why and how age-appropriateness is fulfilled through the proposal: Working to engage children and youth must be conducted within learning parameters, and advocating for integration into civics education/PYD models ensures age appropriate curriculum to be developed and administered.

Which developmental stage is employed: All developmental stages would be subject to analysis and better understanding by this proposition.

Best purveyor of this proposition within the preservation community: National non-profits such as the National Trust for Historic Preservation.

Which organizations I interviewed that employ it (if any): Archeology in the Community directly employs this tool-kit solution by engaging teachers and community members directly. Growing Up Boulder also employs this solution by directly stepping into classrooms with partner opportunities.

Quote from an interview that backs up the proposition: Growing Up Boulders Director offered that “Working within the schools has offered the opportunity to broaden our horizons as planners and involve more than the usual set of individuals.”[[164]](#endnote-164)

Toolkit Proposition #4: Have local preservation offices and local organizations offer “teacher clinics” to educate and prepare teachers on lesson plans involving preservation, especially promoting involvement of early education teachers.

Why the tool could offer effectiveness: Through this thesis, it has become clear that higher levels of participation with community partners, in this case specifically teachers, impacts children and youth involvement. Consider the work “Archeology in the Community” has done and the success they have had by training and educating teachers for free. This model shows promise that this concept could be applied nationally at local levels. Offering teacher clinics would help educate teachers in how preservation fits into civics and a myriad of other subject matters such as science, history and art. Teachers would walk away with lesson plans in hand as well as ways of applying preservation to their classrooms, increasing the odds for preservation-based work to be offered to school-aged children.

These clinics should center around social concepts and preservation-related matter including application through story times, classroom centers, instruction and conversation points. There should also be a strong focus within these clinics “on topics or themes that are representative of real-world situations and/or problems children face in their classroom and community as well as current events.”[[165]](#endnote-165) Examples could include anti-gentrification campaigns, saving a historic landmark, commemorating past figures that still are culturally sensitive today, etc.

What children are losing without this: Without this, teachers are frequently unaware of the adaptability and importance preservation presents students for real-world application of many subjects. Children are not exposed to preservation because it is not part of standardized national curriculum.

Why and how age-appropriateness is fulfilled through the proposal: Early childhood teachers should be targeted as the primary audience because early childhood is an essential time to establish groundwork of how social studies impacts one’s role as a citizen.[[166]](#endnote-166) Therefore, by including early education teachers in “preservation clinics” children could be better served in inclusion of preservation.

Which developmental stage is employed: All developmental stages would be subject to analysis and better understanding by this proposition, but this paper’s position supports promoting teacher clinics for elementary school ages (ages 5 to 11) as the most relevant to their curriculum. This includes learning about civics and “voicing opinions, identifying and solving problems, negotiating roles, perceiving diversity and inequality, and recognizing the consequences of their decisions and behaviors on others.”[[167]](#endnote-167)

Best purveyor of this proposition within the preservation community: Local county or city planning offices are the best purveyors because they are able to make personal connections the easiest to local teachers and schools. It is a natural relationship.

Which organizations I interviewed that employ it (if any): Archeology in the Community and Growing Up Boulder employ this tool.

Quote from an interview that backs up the proposition: Growing Up Boulder’s Director stated that “Empowering teachers with resources and knowledge about the planning field is a key to our success.”[[168]](#endnote-168)

Toolkit Proposition #5: Preservationists must find more creative and non-invasive ways to retrofitting current local historic and cultural resources to multi-use spaces instead of solely focusing on standing as a historic resource alone. While this is a broad proposition, it is one meant to be applied in heavily diverse ways best suited for each resource.

Why the tool could offer effectiveness: This paper has found that to engage children and youth, especially the two current youngest generations, there must be a diverse offering of opportunity available. To reach children especially, parents and families holistically must be considered when strategizing about how to garner interest. Lily Sanabria-Hernandez states that “Collaborative problem-solving will require that parents, educators, specialists, and administrators work together to determine appropriate resources and supports as well as specific information-sharing practices that facilitate parental engagement.”[[169]](#endnote-169) Multi-use spaces refers to a historic or cultural resource that also stands as a picnic area, playground, STEM center, etc. It must be enticing to get parents to spend their valuable time to bring their children or youth, which generally also means that the space must appeal to all ages. Other examples of non-invasive ways to retrofit for this proposition include creating augmented reality apps that can be self-guided and interactive or utilize geofilters that offer a special filter at a token location within the site.

What children are losing without this: Without resources being holistically engaging to all ages, it deters families from visiting and engaging. Thus, children lose out on opportunity to be exposed to preservation practices and activities.

Why and how age-appropriateness is fulfilled through the proposal: This proposal directly works for children and youth engagement. It is working as a proposition designed to find a way to draw interest to preservation resources. Site organizers must find ways to work towards age-appropriateness by hosting more variety of age-appropriate offerings.

Which developmental stage is employed: All developmental stages would be subject to analysis and better understanding by this proposition.

Best purveyor of this proposition within the preservation community: Historic site managers/local historic non-profits.

Which organizations I interviewed that employ it (if any): Puyallup Main Street Association and City of San Antonio employ this tool.

Quote from an interview that backs up the proposition: Ms. Hay from the City of San Antonio stated that “Creativity in activities offered is the key to full-community inclusion.”[[170]](#endnote-170)

Social-Constructivism

I would like to take the time to introduce the idea of social-constructivism when considering the content of this paper’s work and how preservationists can serve as “influencers” to our youngest generations. This is a theory that is introduced here because it characteristically supports, through qualitative data research, the impact preservationists can have when collaborating (i.e. offering learning framework through real-life experiences) with our youngest generation, especially children due to their phase of age development. This is so important because the concept begs us to consider how, as preservationists, we can better serve as teachers within our communities. This does not have to be in the traditional sense, but in any form of educating our young people about the maintenance and care of historic and cultural resources. We need to see ourselves as professionals within the concept of a “knowledge community.” This serves as this paper’s theoretical framework and a way to connect this work’s hypothesis to its conclusions. Understanding the idea of social-constructivism is a baseline to understand some basic concepts of child development and characteristics of Gen Z and Gen Alpha.

A post-revolutionary Soviet psychologist, Lev Vygotsky, developed the term social-constructivism. Vygotsky was a pioneer who disagreed that learning could ever be, or should be, separate from social milieus, thus bridging the understanding of learning and what we understand as cultural landscapes.

Within this conceptual understanding, engagement must serve as a “knowledge community” versus solely education as an individual process.[[171]](#endnote-171) Vygotsky identified that a child’s cultural development, which includes civic concepts, appears twice within reaching youth-age: first, socially, and ,second, individually. It is important to recognize that social components of cultural development appear first, as this is the specialty area where preservationists can be most impactful. It also stresses the fact that child and adolescent age are even more important to engage than previously recognized by the field of historic preservation.

In addition, “All the higher functions originate as actual relationships between individuals.”[[172]](#endnote-172) Social-constructivism stresses that “All cognitive functions including learning are dependent on interactions with others (e.g. teachers, peers, and parents)…learning is critically dependent on…a collaborative process…which is situation specific and context bound.”[[173]](#endnote-173) This process should foster inter-psychological (person to person) and intra-psychological (inner) learning.

Particularly relevant to the field of historic preservation, is social-constructivism’s emphasis on cultural landscapes: “Culture can teach children both what to think and how to think.”[[174]](#endnote-174) It is the cultural elements of one’s environment that lead to development of ways of thinking and knowledge for communities. Preservationists can serve as channels for these developmental learning skills and work towards endowing each young citizen with a better investment in their own cultural history, preservation endeavors and social contexts. As this concept brings to our awareness, it is the connections and how we relate with our young children that can create the most impact, thus understanding them as generations, as this paper argues, is vital.

Conclusion

Children and youth are the inheritors of our built and cultural world and their presence and relevance in the preservation field is paramount, whether in the community or school. Children and youth must be given an opportunity to connect with the work of their elders to allow it to resound within their own psyche in self-defining categories of value. The field proudly works towards inclusion, and this also must expand to recognize age as well as family structures. Children and youth are developmentally the most prone to exploring new worlds, openly, out of any age-groups.[[175]](#endnote-175) Most parents also want to be engaged in their child’s learning and exploration. In many cases parents are the ones steering the opportunity for exploration to occur.

Through implemention of the propositions above, complemented by fluidity and understanding generational trends, we have many and various opportunities to establish and maintain dynamic relationship with both families and teachers. If preservationists can recognize the value in observing and applying generational trends, the field and its resources could be more aptly prepared for engagement and can be at the forefront of engaging families in culturally-relevant activities and events. The options are limitless from art to oral history, all the way to foodways, but presentation is key and that is the heart of what this chapter has aimed to address.

CHAPTER 5:

Conclusion

This thesis specifically addresses the needs of Gen Z and Gen Alpha (our youngest generations), who, like adults, have daily contact with historic and cultural resources. This paper also shows that both the natural and human-impacted environment in which we live affects us all. This begs the questions: why are children and youth so often excluded from preservation-engagement offerings?

My findings show that this exclusion is the result of the field overlooking children and youth, and it is exacerbated by the improper discourse of our field’s regular vocabulary for young people. As stated earlier, when one searches for preservation engagement of children and youth within the field, there are very few examples. Whereas, when one searches other discourses/fields, one finds more results. Thus, it shows that our current discourse is just not reaching our children and youth.

This work advocates a new discourse within the field, one that is more inclusive to children and youth. We can use our discourse as a tool to improve trans-generational equity. To begin with, we should not combine all young ages into a one-size-fits-all “youth” category. By doing so, we are not meeting or harnessing the developmental advantages of young minds. This paper proposes a simple change to this issue: as a field, we must be more conscientious in using the terms “youth” and “child.” Additionally, preservation outreach coordinators should be educated about children’s development stages so we can adequately develop content for age-appropriate levels and voids can more easily be identified.

Encouraging the field be more cognizant in referring to both children and/or youth provokes important reflection on our methodology and strategies of engagement. There are a number of ways of interacting with children and youth, but we as professionals must bridge the gap by determining what is the best way to inspire them to consider what historic and cultural resources are important to them. This paper has identified the conceptual process of metacognition as one of the best ways to inspire young minds. Metacognitive experiences are supported through the tool-kit propositions as making preservation-based work relevant to children and youth by allowing them to reflect and change how they perceive both the content and themselves within that framework. Through the metacognition framework, we are able to deliver new experiences to our young stewards. Through these experiences, we can expand cognitive skills and promote young people to use implicit theories to form their own understandings of the world around them.

Positive Youth Development has also been introduced in this paper as an approach to how preservationists can become involved in adolescent development. While the concept focuses heavily on youth, it can be applied to children as well. Positive Youth Development is proposed within the context of this paper because it promotes engagement of young people alongside others including their parents, teachers, communities, etc.

It is also vital for us to equitably engage at various developmental stages, not solely youth, but also children, as is the case currently. As stated earlier, it is extremely important to engage with children at the age bracket of 5 to 11, due to their developmental growth and development of life-long interests during that age range. It is imperative we harness the energy that these ages can bring to our field and work! Teaching historic preservation to children and youth is so important to make this possible.

It is important to reiterate that this paper is not solely focused on advocating for preservation education, but, rather, it is advocating for preservation engagement via education. This has been found as one of the best pathways to spark engagement for the target age ranges defined in this paper. It has been found through this paper’s research that preservationists’ primary potential area of impact is tied to education both inside and outside the classroom. “Heritage education,” as it is referred to in Chapter 2, helps one better understand how preservationists can work alongside archeologists and historians to offer a vehicle of civics education. The “Five Pathways” were presented within this work to help bridge understanding how preservationists can better engage within school and communities. Although civics education/heritage education is not promoted through this paper as the only solution to engagement, it is presented as a way of making preservation education accessible to diverse groups.

This paper presents an original creation of case studies and propositions to support the engagement of preservation to our youngest stewards as a fluid entity and one that continually requires and deserves investment from historic preservation professionals. As stated in Chapter 1, historic preservation started as an activist movement. The field has its roots in change, which makes all the propositions listed in this paper a possibility. While the field does have its obstacles of hegemony, the field is still at a young age to where it can reinvent itself as a source of learning for all ages.

This paper implores its readers to draw individual inspiration from the data, case studies, interviews and propositions presented to try to engage children and youth in their own local community. The assembled content helps ground ideas for considering communities at large. Interviews were a vital element to informing this treatise due to the lack of published scholarly content and articles on the subject matter. Because of this, was imperative to garner information from professionals as to the status of what is and what is not occurring and why. Results show that preservationists are not in the right area of the community to best reach children and youth, and a better position is required to prove relevancy.

The vision of this work’s hypothesis is that we as preservationists can better provide a basis for young and future generations to develop their own creative and innovative ways of approaching their local historic and cultural resources. In doing so, we enable our young children to influence their own surroundings, because each community holds unique needs. We must make our young population aware of how architecture and historic resources are a part of the everyday lives. This hypothesis benefits not only the children and youth, but also increases the development of a community as a whole. The result of the interviews conducted in this thesis, validate this idea of preservation being “holistic” within the community. All of the interviewees drew conclusions that in order to best serve the needs of our children and youth, preservationists must be present in schools. The fact is, we currently are not well represented in schools, but this thesis sheds light on the importance of exploring this area of engagement.

Engagement is proposed all across the community to make the most impact, from schools to cultural institutions to government organizations. Each proposition presented stretches the current understanding of how professionals can nourish children and youth by presenting them with opportunities to learn and develop new understandings of their communities. With that being said, based on the conclusions drawn from this paper, the focus of the tool-kit was heavily slanted towards engagement in schools.

The field of historic preservation is robust, meaningful and relevant and it has the capability to reach many children, a fact that currently is underacknowledged. This paper’s hypothesis is to advocate for the importance of reaching our children and youth. Without their “buy-in,” our current work stands to be null and void for future generations, because it cannot connect to our youngest stewards’ interests and needs. Understanding them is so important, so this is why generational analysis has been proposed in this work as a solution.

For this thesis’ hypothesis, considering generational groupings and age-appropriateness allows for informed engagement techniques that match anticipated structures of growth in children and youth. In doing so, preservationists’ discourse can expand knowledgeably in identifying a target stage of development. Gen Z and Gen Alpha’s generational groupings are “characterized by abilities, attitudes, and priorities that are qualitatively different from those of preceding and subsequent generations.”[[176]](#endnote-176) Through market-research, analysis has shown that our two youngest generations currently are most drawn to app-based interactions, have shorter attention spans and heightened digital literacy.[[177]](#endnote-177)

Using more fine-tuned discourse, preservationists can better delineate between what children and youth need from us as professionals to increase their learning about the field. This field relies on public support, which includes our future stewards of tomorrow. This paper has introduced generational analysis as a response to “understanding your future consumer.” It is even one of the proposed tool-kit solutions. By using generational analysis, we can meaningfully understand and reinterpret generational needs so that they appear alongside appropriate developmental milestones. This is also considered within this paper and determined as “trend forecasting.”

By summarizing generational analysis and trends that appear within them, preservationists can understand drivers of change and be ahead of the curve of needs and trends. Social-constructivism has also been introduced within this work to accentuate the idea of using generational analysis within a preservationist’s scope of work. Social-constructivism can offer qualitative data research importantly tied to age development. It also importantly promotes inter- and intra-psychological learning processes. For our current youngest generations, research-results show that maturity is proven to occur at earlier ages, making their buy-in to a field’s mission important at an earlier age.

Preservationists are in a position professionally to prepare students for the world they will inherit. Our youngest population are digitally hyper-connected and “inside” and “outside” the classrooms are now blurred together more than ever. With the fluid use of technology, alternate reality and varied concepts of digital natives cultural landscape, learning is no longer limited to a classroom. Gen Z and Gen Alpha are on the forefront of this type of “seeing the world” and thus are the most opportune generations to have preservationists reaching through physical and non-physical platforms, both in and outside of the classroom. Both inside and outside the classroom, learning styles are more imperative than ever for preservationists to use when considering how to be involved in civic education.

Understanding how to motivate young stewards is the heart of this paper. Exploration of this paper’s hypothesis was developed first by recognizing the issue of youth not being considered as valuable stakeholders in sustaining the field’s future. As a next step, this paper has taken that hypothesis and investigated where youth are currently present, in what capacity, and to what degree Gen Z and Gen Alpha are connecting to preservation. This paper has found that, presently, Gen Z and Gen Alpha have very few opportunities across the country to connect to the field, though the potential is available in each community.

As a field, historic preservation should utilize the tool called trend forecasting which is applied in virtually every discipline such as fashion, technology, non-profits, local farmers markets, art galleries, etc. to shape trends into practical application tools.

This thesis then evaluated how this information can be feasibly applied and understood so that our work can achieve relevancy and appeal to youth audiences. This evaluation built upon significant examples from the preservation field and other disciplines (including archeology, environmental advocacy and urban planning) and real-world generational analysis from market research. The case-study approach used enabled in-depth exploration of this complex issue while keeping the analysis in a real-life setting.[[178]](#endnote-178) Case studies were analyzed by reading through the applicable material, identifying the impact and problems within the study and relating the alternative solutions to broader implementation measures within historic preservation.[[179]](#endnote-179) The intention of this analysis has not been direct applications for policy, but instead a tool-kit to help support preservation practitioners achieve greater success in engaging children and youth.

Opportunities for Further Research

Future areas of study on this subject could include how the digital cultural landscape alters generational trends and what the preservation field can do to better understand the impacts of generational trends on our work, and explore educational content that can be directly applied from preservationists to educators.

I argue that preservationists must begin to see themselves as a part of a “knowledge community.” We must take responsibility for educating children and youth as a holistic process. A child’s cultural development, including civic concepts, appears at a young age. This presents an opportunity for us as preservation educators. Preservationists should engage with students, whether directly in classrooms or indirectly by hosting teacher clinics. We must create a youth engagement strategy that can adapt to generational trends and be abreast of such forecasting. In that way we are proactive instead of reactive as a field.

Conclusion

By simply changing our discourse, to include children and youth, would be a huge step forward. It is time that the field recognize the importance and talent of our young stewards and give them a seat at the table. Each community can find unique ways to do this, but the heart of it must remain the same so we work towards promoting trans-generational equity. With the tool-kit presented in this thesis, one can hopefully have a better understanding of some options as to how to engage communities as a whole. It truly does take a village to raise our children and this paper works towards fostering this and propelling preservation advocacy. The preservation field needs our young stewards to be present in our work. We need their energy, their ideas and their ways of engaging with the world. Only with hard work and effort will preservationists be able to make the necessary changes to include our youngest stewards – but it is possible and so worth it!

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