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Dear Editor/Producer:

What if the “failure to launch” is actually an intelligent response to the challenges that today’s young adults face?

In **NOT QUITE ADULTS: Why 20-Somethings Are Choosing a Slower Path to Adulthood, and Why It’s Good for Everyone** (Bantam Dell; December 28, 2010), Richard Settersten, Ph.D., and Barbara E. Ray shatter widespread stereotypes about today’s 20-somethings and issue a call to action. “The great shake-ups that are going on in the transition to adulthood are transforming American life,” they write, “and the reverberations will be felt by everyone. These changes will demand new responses from governments, families, and society.”

Drawing on almost a decade of cutting-edge multi-disciplinary research from the MacArthur Research Network on Transitions to Adulthood—as well as nearly five hundred additional interviews with a diverse group of young people from Detroit, Minneapolis St. Paul, New York City, San Diego, and a small community in rural Iowa—Settersten and Ray bring us a more nuanced understanding of this generation and of the unique challenges they face as they come of age. Many of their findings are surprising:

- A slower transition to adulthood is often just the ticket in today’s tough economy. Young adults who finish college and delay marriage and child-rearing get a much better start in life than those who leave the nest too early, settling for low-paying jobs and having children at a young age.
- Few 20-somethings who live at home are mooching off their parents. More often, they are using the time at home to gain necessary credentials and save money for a more secure future. Launching too fast can cause serious setbacks down the road.
- Helicopter parents aren’t so bad after all. Involved parents provide young people with advantages, including mentoring and economic support, that have become increasingly necessary to success.
- A college degree still pays, now more than ever. While most young people aspire to college, many are unprepared for it or have unrealistic plans that lead to high drop-out rates. In a knowledge economy, nothing is more damaging than foregoing higher education or failing at it.
- Young people in the U.S. have “sharply diverging destinies.” One group—the “swimmers”—has the resources to take a slower path to adulthood. The other, much larger group—the “treaders”—does not, particularly in the wake of a recession that has undermined middle- and working-class families. The consequences can be devastating not only to them but to the future health and success of our country.

As Jane Isay, author of *Walking on Eggshells*, says, “In a world that is confused by 20-somethings, **NOT QUITE ADULTS** offers insight that will help us understand this generation. Hopeful and



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challenging, this book is a must-read for parents and policy makers alike.” Let’s talk soon about **NOT QUITE ADULTS**.

Sincerely,