

TOO OLD TO BE YOUNG

Discussion Paper Two



THE NEEDS OF THE YOUNG ADULT



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In modern society adulthood has become a difficult period to define. It is no longer acceptable to simply align adulthood with the attainment of adult size and physiological function. In most societies adulthood is defined primarily in social terms. Individuals may be regarded as adults on reaching a stage of adequate physical and mental development, independent of parental control, and relatively satisfied with their job and attitudes towards life. Such a social definition immediately poses the question as to how children reach this stage of maturity.

Of the two major factors likely to affect the maturation of young people, physiological development obviously plays a large part. Puberty, the period during which sexual organs mature, can last anything from 6 months to 2 years or even longer, and in primitive societies is regarded as the distinguishing factor between child and adult. However, the social development of the individual has become significant in present day society and has brought with it the need to distinguish adolescence as a period in human growth beginning at the same time as puberty but extending over a much greater length of time. Previously society was more authoritarian, socially stratified, and religious, and was based upon meeting the basic human needs for health, food, and shelter. Confronted by the relative affluence of modern times, adolescence has emerged as a more clear cut social and physiological phase - and attempts are made to analyse and meet the needs presented by young people.

The needs of the young people during adolescence are closely connected with the development of self-socially, sexually, vocationally and philosophically. Such a development of self should give recognition to the presence of the un-conscious needs of an individual; it would also recognise the conscious, goal seeking effort to make adjustments within the everyday world and to evolve an identity which has continuity, some consistency and some adaptability. If one accepts such a socio-psychological explanation of adolescence it becomes possible to produce a theory of needs and drives in order to understand these needs more fully. Such a theory of motivation has many implications for the adult working with the adolescent.

Underlying all the developmental needs of adolescence is the great need for interaction between the individual, his/her peers and adults. This would seem to have very strong implications for the role of the youth service working with young adults. Unrestricted by the confines placed upon other institutions e.g. school, commercial provision, mass media, the youth service can be cited as having as its major objective the social development of young people. Initially youth provision offers an opportunity for young people together with friends.

However, it is such interaction that can be utilised by the worker in initiating opportunities for young people to be involved in taking responsibility, and making their own decisions. Much of the anxiety linked with goal achievement can be dealt with as young people meet new situations. Thus if one recognises the period of adolescence as one where young people are gradually creating an adult identity and self relation to society at large, the youth worker would seem to be in an ideal situation to facilitate transition from child to adulthood.

In the following table the needs of the adolescent are listed alongside the expected response in early and late adolescence.

TABLE - DEVELOPMENTAL NEEDS OF ADOLESCENTS

NEED	EARLY ADOLESCENCE	LATE ADOLESCENCE
1. To achieve an appropriate dependence/independence pattern.	By establishing an independence from adults in self-identification.	By establishing self as an independent person. Making own decisions on matters concerning self.
2. To achieve an appropriate affectional pattern.	By accepting self as a person worthy of affection.	By building a strong affectional bond with another person. By accepting an adult role in a variety of groups.
3. To achieve a sense of belonging.	By accepting and adjusting to special groups with whom it is possible to identify.	
4. To acquire an appropriate sex role.	By learning role through personal contacts and social situations.	By becoming attached to a member of the opposite or same sex and preparing to accept future sex role.
5. To develop intellectual skills and concepts.	By developing intellectual, language, and motor skills essential for individual and group participation.	By developing intellectual, language, and motor skills and the political understanding necessary to assume civic responsibility.
6. To develop conscience, and a set of values.	By acquiring for oneself a guide to ones own behaviour.	By acquiring a philosophy of life.

Adapted from: Karl C. Garrison, Psychology of Adolescence. 6th Ed. c 1965 (p. 23).

QUESTIONS FOR DEBATE

1. *Do present attitudes in the youth service retard maturation?*
2. *Is it sufficient merely to use older club members as fodder for leadership ?*
3. *What criteria should be used when setting up a programme to meet the needs of young adults?*
4. *Is it right to assume that young adults are fully self-determining?*
5. *Is the youth service justified in extending adolescence?*
6. *Is there a need for an alternative service outside youth service to provide for the 18+?*

"TOO OLD TO BE YOUNG" -

A SERIES OF LOCAL DEBATES

THE NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF YOUTH CLUBS wants to encourage open discussion and action on work with the over 18's. A number of people have been working together with NAYC to produce background material which is available to stimulate debate and the following have volunteered to assist any local events to achieve debate and action with this important age group:

PAT BARRY & RAM BOLTON - Full time workers at Chestnut Lodge, an ILEA statutory youth provision opened in 1975 and designed to meet the social and recreational needs of young adults. **LINDA FIRSHT** - Staff members at West Central Jewish Centre, London - an independent agency primarily concerned with community development vis-a-vis helping people find resources and activities meaningful to themselves in a Jewish Community context. **KEITH PULLMAN** - Community Education Organiser working with Young Farmers Clubs and young adults throughout Oxfordshire. YFC have within their membership a large proportion of young adults and place considerable emphasis on membership involvement. **JOHN L. HUNTER** - County Youth and Community Officer, Isle of Wight (ILEA Centres plus voluntary centres). Previously Bristol and Wiltshire. **BERT JONES** - Course Tutor for new two-year Diploma Course in Youth and Community Work, commencing at Cartrefle College Wrex-ham in September- an emphasis on working with 18+ age group will be a feature of the course content. Previously full-time Youth Worker in South Wales - 7 years - working especially with older age group. **GEORGE RUDDOCK** - District Youth & Community Officer, Liverpool Education Authority. Previously Senior Youth Worker of 18 - 30 Club in inner London.

If you feel there is a need in your area to call together workers concerned with over 18's, please contact JANET HUNT at: NAYC, P.O. Box 1, Blackburn House, Bond Gate, Nuneaton, Warwickshire CV11 4DB, who will try to arrange a local seminar with you, with the assistance of the nearest resource person to your area.

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A SERIES OF DISCUSSION LEAFLETS

This is the second of a series of leaflets edited by Janet Hunt of NAYC. Paper Three gives an example of "Programme Development for Working with Young Adults" by Linda Firsht a Community Worker at West London Central Jewish Centre in Holborn, London. This paper is available from NAYC Nuneaton.