

**KE322\_1**

**Young lives: is now a good time to be young?**

**About this free course**

This free course is an adapted extract from the Open University course KE322 Young lives, parenting and families: [www.open.ac.uk/courses/modules/ke322](http://www.open.ac.uk/courses/modules/ke322?utm_source=google&utm_campaign=ou&utm_medium=ebook).

This version of the content may include video, images and interactive content that may not be optimised for your device.

You can experience this free course as it was originally designed on OpenLearn, the home of free learning from The Open University –

[www.open.edu/openlearn/education-development/young-lives-now-good-time-be-young/content-section-0](https://www.open.edu/openlearn/education-development/young-lives-now-good-time-be-young/content-section-0?utm_source=openlearn&utm_campaign=ol&utm_medium=ebook)

There you’ll also be able to track your progress via your activity record, which you can use to demonstrate your learning.

Copyright © 2019 The Open University

**Intellectual property**

Unless otherwise stated, this resource is released under the terms of the Creative Commons Licence v4.0 <http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-sa/4.0/deed.en_GB>. Within that The Open University interprets this licence in the following way: [www.open.edu/openlearn/about-openlearn/frequently-asked-questions-on-openlearn](http://www.open.edu/openlearn/about-openlearn/frequently-asked-questions-on-openlearn). Copyright and rights falling outside the terms of the Creative Commons Licence are retained or controlled by The Open University. Please read the full text before using any of the content.

We believe the primary barrier to accessing high-quality educational experiences is cost, which is why we aim to publish as much free content as possible under an open licence. If it proves difficult to release content under our preferred Creative Commons licence (e.g. because we can’t afford or gain the clearances or find suitable alternatives), we will still release the materials for free under a personal end-user licence.

This is because the learning experience will always be the same high quality offering and that should always be seen as positive – even if at times the licensing is different to Creative Commons.

When using the content you must attribute us (The Open University) (the OU) and any identified author in accordance with the terms of the Creative Commons Licence.

The Acknowledgements section is used to list, amongst other things, third party (Proprietary), licensed content which is not subject to Creative Commons licensing. Proprietary content must be used (retained) intact and in context to the content at all times.

The Acknowledgements section is also used to bring to your attention any other Special Restrictions which may apply to the content. For example there may be times when the Creative Commons Non-Commercial Sharealike licence does not apply to any of the content even if owned by us (The Open University). In these instances, unless stated otherwise, the content may be used for personal and non-commercial use.

We have also identified as Proprietary other material included in the content which is not subject to Creative Commons Licence. These are OU logos, trading names and may extend to certain photographic and video images and sound recordings and any other material as may be brought to your attention.

Unauthorised use of any of the content may constitute a breach of the terms and conditions and/or intellectual property laws.

We reserve the right to alter, amend or bring to an end any terms and conditions provided here without notice.

All rights falling outside the terms of the Creative Commons licence are retained or controlled by The Open University.

Head of Intellectual Property, The Open University

# Contents

* [Introduction](#Introduction1)
* [Learning outcomes](#LearningOutcomes1)
* [1 Regional difference and divergence](#Session1)
* [2 Intergenerational unfairness](#Session2)
* [3 Social mobility](#Session3)
* [4 Teenage kicks?](#Session4)
* [5 Teenage bedrooms](#Session5)
* [6 Whose playground is it anyway? Social class, social power and being young](#Session6)
	+ [6.1 Hiding in the light: rich young lives](#Session6_Section1)
	+ [6.2 Not in education, employment or training?](#Session6_Section2)
* [Conclusion](#Session7)
* [Glossary](#Glossary1)
* [References](#References1)
* [Acknowledgements](#Acknowledgements1)
* [Solutions](#Solutions1)

## Introduction

Young lives – diverse, complicated, unique and significant – are a fascinating subject to study. The lives of children, young people and young adults are important to every society and their welfare, safety, health and happiness – their quality of life – are at the heart of every society and its hopes for a better, fairer future. As societies change, they need to consider what to do in response to the interests, priorities, rights and aspirations of children and young people and this gives rise to some vitally important questions. In this course, Young lives: is now a good time to be young?, you will be able to take a closer look at some of the recent and emerging reports and academic studies which are focused on young lives in the UK today and thereby to consider some of these important and often urgent questions.

This OpenLearn course is an adapted extract from the Open University course [KE322 Young lives, parenting and families](http://www.open.ac.uk/courses/modules/ke322).

## Learning outcomes

After studying this course, you should be able to:

* demonstrate greater specialist knowledge and understanding of children’s and young people’s lives
* have a greater understanding of the social, historical, political, geographical, demographic, cultural and philosophical influences on young people’s lives
* draw on contemporarily relevant knowledge of how issues such as age, geography and class affect children and young people.

## 1 Regional difference and divergence

Early lives are lived within a complex interplay of education, wealth, health, family circumstances and experiences. But they are also affected by where we live and the resources available where we grew up (for example, good transport links or a swimming pool or a safe neighbourhood). While many of us might easily and readily identify how where we were born has influenced our lives, perhaps a more difficult question to answer is whether where you are born should matter. Keep this in mind as you do the first activity.

Start of Activity

**Activity 1 Does where you are born (still) affect your chances in life?**

Allow about 1 hour

Start of Question

**Human geography** can play a significant role in understanding young lives. Anne Longfield, the Children’s Commissioner for England, has examined the North–South divide in England. (Although an English example is used here, data illustrating geographical divergence from another part of the UK could equally have been used.)

Read the following materials from Growing Up North:

* infographic: [Time to Leave the North–South Divide Behind](https://www.open.edu/openlearn/ocw/pluginfile.php/2183788/mod_resource/content/2/Childrens-Commissioners-Growing-Up-North.pdf) (Longfield, n.d.a).
* pp. 4–7 of the Executive Summary and Recommendations: [Look North: A Generation of Children Await the Powerhouse Promise](https://www.childrenscommissioner.gov.uk/publication/growing-up-north-a-generation-of-children-await-the-powerhouse-promise/) (Longfield, n.d.b).

Now answer the following questions:

* In what ways does it still matter where children are born?
* Why might these particular recommendations reduce the North–South divide?

Write your answers in the box below.

End of Question

*Provide your answer...*

[View discussion - Activity 1 Does where you are born (still) affect your chances in life?](%22%20%5Cl%20%22Session1_Discussion1)

End of Activity

It would seem that where you are born today remains a significant determinant of life choices and chances. For example, by the age of 5, less than half (49%) of children born into the poorest families in the north of England achieve a ‘good level of development’, which compares with 59% of children living in poverty in London (Clifton et al., 2016). Also, just a third of those children who receive free school meals in the north go on to achieve the standard of five GCSEs at grades A\*–C, including English and Maths (Clifton et al., 2016). And this situation is set to get worse. Demand for skilled workers in the north of England is forecast to increase, with three-quarters of the 2.4 million new jobs expected to be available in 2022 requiring A levels or equivalent in training (Clifton et al., 2016).

Of course, the picture is more complex than that. So, for example, while London still has the highest levels of child poverty in the country (Child Poverty Action Group, 2018), it has experienced a remarkable, rapid increase in newborn life expectancy (Office for National Statistics, 2017). This could be as a result of the selective migration of more healthy individuals from more deprived areas of the UK to London (and the south-east) (Office for National Statistics, 2017).

However, life expectancy is now actually falling in some parts of the UK (Office for National Statistics, 2017) and being born in what the Social Mobility Commission has called one of the UK’s ‘cold spots’ (Social Mobility Commission, 2017) means low wages and fewer routes into good jobs, leaving people trapped in poverty. You will look at social mobility later.

## 2 Intergenerational unfairness

While many inequalities are long-standing, and different ways of looking at divergence can emerge, there are also more recent developments. An example of a new inequality relates to ‘intergenerational unfairness’. Some people believe that a new trend has developed where older people’s lives are prioritised over those of younger people. ‘Baby boomers’ (those born between 1946 and 1964) have supposedly been prioritised over ‘Millennials’ (typically those born between the early 1980s and the mid-1990s to early 2000s) and that the older generation have ‘pulled up the ladder’ (most often referring to the housing ladder) behind them, leaving the younger generation with no hopes of a mortgage or a good pension, and with an environmental catastrophe (climate change) to deal with and pay for.

In the next activity, you will look at evidence of the argument that young people today face a ‘perfect storm’: a combination of low wages, precarious employment, an insecure labour market, student debt and high housing costs. When you listen to some young people today, the feeling is that it is not a good time to be young and that things were much better for their parents and grandparents. They believe that they can’t ‘get on with their lives’ until intergenerational unfairness is fixed.

Start of Activity

**Activity 2 Intergenerational unfairness**

Allow about 1 hour

Start of Question

First, watch Video 1.

Start of Media Content

Video content is not available in this format.

Video 1 Intergenerational unfairness

[View transcript - Video 1 Intergenerational unfairness](%22%20%5Cl%20%22Session2_Transcript1)

Start of Figure



End of Figure

End of Media Content

The Resolution Foundation is a ‘think tank’ working to improve the living standards of low- to middle-income families in the UK; it has drawn together a range of people to debate this issue and devise a way forward. Don’t forget that if you are particularly interested in the work of a specific organisation such as this one, you might want to follow their Twitter feed: @resfoundation.

Now read:

* [Why intergenerational unfairness is rising up the agenda, in 10 charts](https://www.resolutionfoundation.org/comment/why-intergenerational-fairness-is-rising-up-the-agenda-in-10-charts/) (Gardiner, 2017).

Do you agree that intergenerational inequality is real? If not, why not? If so, is it a problem?

End of Question

[View discussion - Activity 2 Intergenerational unfairness](%22%20%5Cl%20%22Session2_Discussion1)

End of Activity

## 3 Social mobility

A key indicator of a meritocracy is the extent to which a society enables **social mobility**. Social mobility implies a more level playing field and fairer opportunities for individuals to change social or economic class or to achieve different status and outcomes than might otherwise be predicted for someone with their particular geographical, cultural or parental background. The education system could, for example, be used to this end. However, despite being a UK government priority, sustained and widespread social mobility remains elusive.

One way of measuring social mobility is to examine attained professional status in relation to an individual’s educational background. In the UK, it is important to bear in mind that private (also referred to as independent) schools tend to be used by families on high incomes to educate their children. High incomes are also commonly found in specific professions. Therefore a cycle of privilege occurs, with high income professionals sending their children to private schools and privately educated pupils going on to become high income professionals. This correlation between high income professionals and private school education can be observed statistically. The following graph is taken from the Social Mobility Commission report (Social Mobility Commission, 2017, p. 79) and shows the percentage of people at the top of a sample of professions who went to independent schools, at two points in time, the late 1980s and 2016.

Start of Figure



**Figure 1** Percentage of people at the top of a sample of professions who attended independent schools, comparisons over different time periods.

[View description - Figure 1 Percentage of people at the top of a sample of professions who attended ...](%22%20%5Cl%20%22Session3_Description1)

End of Figure

The graph provides a mixed picture in terms of social mobility. CEOs of companies come from a wider range of educational backgrounds (one factor may be that the number of companies has increased since 1986). There has been, however, an increase in the proportions of privately educated individuals entering journalism and medicine and only minimal change in barristers and the judiciary. The next activity looks at a real world example involving a person from a non-private school background who defied the odds and became a barrister.

Start of Activity

**Activity 3 Adventures in social mobility**

Allow about 1 hour

Start of Question

Hashi Mohamed came to the UK as a refugee aged 9. His identity as a poor Muslim Somalian could place him in a position of multiple disadvantages. During his childhood in the UK, he lived in crowded housing and didn’t achieve anything remarkable within school. However, Hashi now works as a barrister, considered to be an elite profession mainly occupied by people from privileged, privately educated backgrounds. Listen to Audio 1 in which Hashi discusses his change in situation.

Start of Media Content

Audio content is not available in this format.

Audio 1 Adventures in social mobility

[View transcript - Audio 1 Adventures in social mobility](%22%20%5Cl%20%22Session3_Transcript1)

End of Media Content

End of Question

[View discussion - Activity 3 Adventures in social mobility](%22%20%5Cl%20%22Session3_Discussion1)

End of Activity

## 4 Teenage kicks?

Start of Figure



**Figure 2** The creation of the teenager

[View description - Figure 2 The creation of the teenager](%22%20%5Cl%20%22Session4_Description1)

End of Figure

The image and idea of ‘being a **teenager**’ are part of ‘Western’ received wisdom, but it wasn’t always that way. The next activity considers how the idea of ‘the teenager’ came to be so widespread. It also considers the ways in which certain places, such as the bedroom, have become central to teenage experience and identities. Working through the activity will allow you to become more familiar with how young people come to be recognised as a distinctive collective entity. It will also introduce you to the way academic research investigates such social phenomena.

Start of Activity

**Activity 4 Teenage dreams are hard to beat**

Allow about 30 minutes

**Part 1**

Start of Question

The discovery and invention of the teenager in the mid-nineteenth century, and the way the concept took hold of the popular imagination throughout most of the twentieth century, are the subjects of Jon Savage’s book, Teenage: The creation of youth 1875–1945 (Savage, 2007).

Watch Video 2 ‘Teenage’, in which Jon Savage describes making a film for TV (Teenage, 2013) about his research for the book:

Start of Media Content

Video content is not available in this format.

Video 2 Teenage

[View transcript - Video 2 Teenage](%22%20%5Cl%20%22Session4_Transcript1)

Start of Figure



End of Figure

End of Media Content

End of Question

**Part 2**

Start of Question

Now read this short article on youth movements written by Matt Wolf, another of the makers of the film Teenage (2013):

* [10 Youth Movements That Changed History](https://www.huffingtonpost.com/matt-wolf/10-youth-movements-that-c_b_4958409.html) (Wolf, 2014)

End of Question

**Part 3**

Start of Question

Complete the following drag and drop activity, to match the youth movements to the place they are associated with and their formation dates.

Start of Media Content

Interactive content is not available in this format.

End of Media Content

End of Question

[View discussion - Part 3](%22%20%5Cl%20%22Session4_Discussion1)

End of Activity

## 5 Teenage bedrooms

In much of the early studies of young people’s sub-cultures (Willis, 1977) the focus was on boys and young men in schools, the streets or the workplace. Angela McRobbie (2000) criticised this work for excluding young women and sidelining their experiences. McRobbie suggested young women were invisible to the researchers because their social life was more likely to be centred on their bedrooms, away from the gaze of researchers who were mainly young-ish men who explored a world familiar to themselves – schools, playgrounds, street corners and workplaces, but neglected the more domestic sphere of home life.

The next activity builds on McRobbie’s insights by examining the new spaces of teenage life and what they can tell us about families, parenting and social values.

Start of Activity

**Activity 5 A room of my own**

Start of Question

In this extract from the BBC radio show Thinking Allowed, two academics discuss their research about how young people’s bedrooms are central to their emerging identity and sense of space and place.

Listen to the following audio.

Start of Media Content

Audio content is not available in this format.

Audio 2 Teen bedrooms

[View transcript - Audio 2 Teen bedrooms](%22%20%5Cl%20%22Session5_Transcript1)

End of Media Content

Now read the associated webpage, [Get out of my room! The truth about a teenager’s bedroom](https://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/articles/1cTqJL1BRZ7XfLRDPkTwRz3/get-out-of-my-room-the-truth-about-a-teenagers-bedroom) (BBC Radio 4, n.d.).

1. Which is your favourite of the six elements defined as significant?
2. What are the reasons discussed in the programme for the new significance of bedroom life to teenagers?

Make a note of your thoughts on the issues raised in the programme.

End of Question

*Provide your answer...*

[View discussion - Activity 5 A room of my own](%22%20%5Cl%20%22Session5_Discussion1)

End of Activity

## 6 Whose playground is it anyway? Social class, social power and being young

Start of Figure



**Figure 3** Clockwise from top left: Charterhouse School, Surrey (fees: £37,000 per year full board), Eton College, Berkshire (fees: £32,000 per year), HMYOI Feltham (cost per prisoner: £74,000 per year) and Rugby School, Warwickshire (fees: £12,000 per year).

[View description - Figure 3 Clockwise from top left: Charterhouse School, Surrey (fees: £37,000 per ...](%22%20%5Cl%20%22Session6_Description1)

End of Figure

In this course, some activities will mean that you are exploring how you feel about youth and young people, how they affect you in various personal ways and how these ‘**affects**’ may shape your perspectives. Recognising ‘affect’ as an important dimension of social life helps to identify the way emotions, desires and feelings operate at the core of the political dynamics that shape our lives (Gatens and Lloyd, 1999).

There are part of what the African philosopher Achille Mbembe refers to as a new ‘politics of viscerality’ (Mbembe, 2016). An appreciation of ‘affect’ forms part of a **psychosocial approach** to understanding contemporary life. It emphasises how emotions, such as anxiety, play a productive role in personal value systems and help to reproduce certain social realities, such as hierarchies around class, gender and race or, conversely, help to dismantle them by building more egalitarian social horizons.

## 6.1 Hiding in the light: rich young lives

Young working class people have been routinely held up for scrutiny in social research and social policy, and they are implicitly held to account for their various behaviours. However, the richer you are the more likely you are to escape being seen as a problem to society (Du Bois, 1903) or a burden to be managed by social interventions of one kind or another. If you are rich, you are less likely to be known by names or labels you didnt ask for, you are of less interest to government agencies such as social services or the police, and you are less likely to be researched. Thinking critically, you might ask if these issues are connected.

Start of Figure



**Figure 4** No problem here?

[View description - Figure 4 No problem here?](%22%20%5Cl%20%22Session6_Description2)

End of Figure

The next reading is focused on the lives of young people who don’t usually feature in social policy research papers. It concerns young people who are usually almost invisible to social researchers. They are young people who have attended the schools pictured in Figure 3, or ones like them. They might be described as ‘well off’, ‘the elite’, ‘posh’ or simply ‘rich’.

The idea of ‘cultural capital’ and its relationship with the reproduction of class is now widely accepted but there remains a rich seam of research able to reveal just how different status groups are currently evolving and adapting. In this next piece, academic Daniel Smith reflects on the implications of his study into how an albeit changing elite still finds ways to effectively and efficiently reproduce itself.

Start of Activity

**Activity 6 The Branded Gentry**

Allow about 30 minutes

Start of Question

Read the article ‘[Britain’s elites: new lions, old foxes](https://archive.discoversociety.org/2018/10/02/britains-elites-new-lions-old-foxes/)’ by Daniel Smith.

As you read, consider how particular niche sports and certain marketing brands can become emmeshed in the lives of some young people and what the consequences of this might be.

End of Question

[View discussion - Activity 6 The Branded Gentry](%22%20%5Cl%20%22Session6_Discussion1)

End of Activity

Research and social studies are often focused ‘down’ toward people at the bottom of the social hierarchy; relatively powerless people to whom ‘things are done’ or to whom services are provided, to put it more politely. Those with power often remain less well scrutinised. This can be as true when it comes to race, gender and sexuality as it is for class. White people, for example, are less frequently seen (by white people) as a distinctive category and still rarely become the objects of social studies as white people.

## 6.2 Not in education, employment or training?

If the previous activity was concerned with those young people who rarely feature in social research and social policy, this last activity returns to more conventional subjects: young people whose wellbeing appears to be ‘at risk’, or who are seen to present risks to society because they are not engaged in any of the conventional avenues of adolescent progression – school or college, waged work or training. They are referred to as ‘**NEET**s’ because they are ‘Not in Education, Employment or Training’.

As children become young people and seek more autonomy for themselves, they may face growing risks of poverty and material deprivation. According to Daniel Sage (2016), almost a third of people (32.6%) in the UK aged under 18 were at risk of poverty or social exclusion, while 10.5% were experiencing material deprivation. By contrast, the corresponding figures for older people were 18.1% and 1.9% (Social Justice Index (SJI), 2015, cited in Sage, 2016). Tens of thousands of young people will fail to receive the kind of support they need to get into the labour market.

The number of unemployed young people has fallen from the peak levels of 2012 (see Figure 5 below), and although the proportion of young people as a percentage of the general population has been falling for some time, the proportion of young people (aged 16–24) who are unemployed has also fallen from 13.1% in November 2016 to 11.9% in Nov 2017 (House of Commons Library, 2018a). By comparison, in 2016, the unemployment rate for all those aged 16 and above was just 5%, suggesting that unemployment is a much bigger problem for young people than for anybody else. Unemployment is a particularly acute problem for young black people – over the period from December 2015 to February 2016, the unemployment rate among black 16–24-year-olds was 27.5%, more than double the rate for young white people (Unison, 2016).

Start of Figure



**Figure 5** Unemployment levels by age 1992–2017 (House of Commons Library, 2018a, p. 6)

[View description - Figure 5 Unemployment levels by age 1992–2017 (House of Commons Library, 2018a, p. ...](%22%20%5Cl%20%22Session6_Description3)

End of Figure

Some of the challenging circumstances faced by young people are examined in the next activity.

Start of Activity

**Activity 7 Not so Nice and NEET**

Allow about 1 hour and 30 minutes

Start of Question

Read the following report: [Engaging young people not in education, employment or training: the case for a youth resolution](https://www.ucu.org.uk/engagingyoungneets) (Simmons et al., 2014).

Now complete the following quiz to help you consolidate the information and analysis in the report.

1. According to the report, young people’s attainment in education and training is a crucial factor in:

End of Question

making successful transitions to adulthood

their overall wellbeing

their average lifetime income

avoiding criminal pathways

[View answer - Part](%22%20%5Cl%20%22Session6_Interaction1)

Start of Question

2. According to a report by Benyon, in 1973 factory life could be:

End of Question

bleak and alienating

a lot of laughs

worth a lot of money

unskilled and unending

[View answer - Part](%22%20%5Cl%20%22Session6_Interaction2)

Start of Question

3. De-industrialisation meanss that the conventional transitions to adulthood have become:

End of Question

disordered or suspended

clearly signposted

smoother and more enriching

a career opportunity for moral entrepreneurs

[View answer - Part](%22%20%5Cl%20%22Session6_Interaction3)

Start of Question

4. In the mid-1980s, what proportion of 16-17 year olds available for work were unemployed?

End of Question

Over half

About one third

Less than a quarter

Does anybody care?

[View answer - Part](%22%20%5Cl%20%22Session6_Interaction4)

Start of Question

5. The acronym NEET was first coined in what year?

End of Question

1996

1949

1968

1918

[View answer - Part](%22%20%5Cl%20%22Session6_Interaction5)

Start of Question

6. According to the UCU study, which of the following assets are associated with being NEET?

End of Question

Depression, isolation, anxiety and over-eating.

Chronic fatigue syndrome, intolerance, nail biting and anxiety.

Amnesia, depression, teenage angst and total torpor disorder.

Nail biting, intolerance, chronic fatigue syndrome, isolation and over-eating.

[View answer - Part](%22%20%5Cl%20%22Session6_Interaction6)

Start of Question

7. The Wolf Review (2011) showed that many low-level vocational or pre-vocational training programmes provide participants with:

End of Question

little or no advantage when seeking employment

significantly reduced self-esteem

a higher than average elementary qualification

several formatted certificates of general worthiness

[View answer - Part](%22%20%5Cl%20%22Session6_Interaction7)

Start of Question

8. What does the Youth Resolution propose?

End of Question

Kite-marked partnerships between local authorities, employers and education institutions.

Adult minimum pay.

More funding.

More youth centres.

[View answer - Part](%22%20%5Cl%20%22Session6_Interaction8)

Start of Question

9. According to research by Yates and Payne (2006), servicers can be criticised for working with the easy to reach rather than:

End of Question

the most vulnerable

the hard to reach

the right age group

those more at risk of harm

[View answer - Part](%22%20%5Cl%20%22Session6_Interaction9)

Start of Question

10. What does the Youth Resolution propose a strategy for?

End of Question

Driving up labour market standards

Fixed training budgets.

Making things better for everybody.

A Charter for Youth.

[View answer - Part](%22%20%5Cl%20%22Session6_Interaction10)

Start of Question

Using the report, create your own summary document of the key points. This summary should be approximately 400 words, and might consist of a series of briefly-annotated bullet points. Preparing this document will involve developing skills in sifting and sorting information as well as presentation skills, and it will help you to engage more fully in the analysis presented in the report.

End of Question

*Provide your answer...*

[View discussion - Part](%22%20%5Cl%20%22Session6_Discussion2)

End of Activity

Increasing numbers of young people find themselves in precarious economic circumstances in which it is very difficult for them to fend for themselves, thrive and flourish. They may be seen to pose more of a threat to society than a symbol of its failures. When this happens, the policing of young people becomes an urgent priority for government.

## Conclusion

In this free course, Young lives: is now a good time to be young?, you have explored some of the contemporary research studies offering engagement and insight into children and young people’s lives today. Hopefully, you have been able to find in this course some disruptive thinking, challenging some of the more established approaches and lines of enquiry. Hopefully you will agree that we constantly need to remain open to new ideas and to ensure we refresh and reinvent research methodologies if we are to be able to answer of the important questions embedded in any consideration of young lives today.

This OpenLearn course is an adapted extract from the Open University course [KE322 Young lives, parenting and families](http://www.open.ac.uk/courses/modules/ke322).

## Glossary

Affects

The term affects refers to the way social and political processes are physically experienced.

Human geography

A branch of geography that focuses on the interrelationships between people, places and environments.

NEET

A young person who is Not in Education, Employment or Training.

Psychosocial approach

A psychosocial approach combines the methods and insights of psychology, psycho-analysis and sociology.

Queer

Queer theory and queer perspectives are derived from questioning the critical role of gender, sexuality and desire in society.

Russell Group

The Russell Group is a collection of 24 universities in the UK that pride themselves on the quality of their research and training.

Social mobility

A sociological term describing the movement of individuals and groups between social classes or other types of social stratification. Upward social mobility or the opportunity to move from a lower to a higher class is a common policy goal for governments in Western democracies.

Sub-cultural studies

An academic discipline that studies particular groups of people in modern societies. The groups are often composed of young people.

Teenager

Someone between the ages of 13 and 19.

## References

BBC Radio 4 (n.d.) Get out of my room! The truth about a teenager’s bedroom [Online]. Available at <https://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/articles/1cTqJL1BRZ7XfLRDPkTwRz3/get-out-of-my-room-the-truth-about-a-teenagers-bedroom> (Accessed 25 July 2019).

Child Poverty Action Group (2018) Child Poverty Facts and Figures [Online]. Available at <http://www.cpag.org.uk/content/child-poverty-facts-and-figures> (Accessed 5 July 2019).

Clifton, J., Round, A. and Raikes, L. (2016) Northern Schools: Putting Education at the Heart of the Northern Powerhouse [Online]. Available at <https://www.ippr.org/research/publications/northern-schools-putting-education-at-the-heart-of-the-northern-powerhouse> (Accessed 26 July 2019).

Du Bois, W.E.B (1903) The Souls of Black Folk, ‎Chicago, A. C. McClurg & Co.

Gardiner, L. (2017) Why Intergenerational Unfairness is Rising up the Agenda, Resolution Foundation, London [Online]. Available at <https://www.resolutionfoundation.org/comment/why-intergenerational-fairness-is-rising-up-the-agenda-in-10-charts/> (Accessed 26 July 2019).

Gatens, M. and Lloyd, G. (1999) Collective Imaginings: Spinoza, Past and Present, London, Routledge.

House of Commons Library (2018a) Briefing Paper 2017-0248: Youth Unemployment [Online]. Available at <http://researchbriefings.files.parliament.uk/documents/CDP-2017-0248/CDP-2017-0248.pdf> (Accessed 14 July 2019).

Longfield, A. (n.d.a) Time to Leave the North–South Divide Behind [Online]. Available at <https://www.childrenscommissioner.gov.uk/wp-content/uploads/2017/06/Childrens-Commissioners-Growing-Up-North.pdf> (Accessed 1 June 2019).

Longfield, A. (n.d.b) Look North: A Generation of Children Await the Powerhouse Promise [Online]. Available at <https://www.childrenscommissioner.gov.uk/wp-content/uploads/2018/03/Growing-Up-North-March-2018-1.pdf> (Accessed 1 June 2019).

Mbembe, A. (2016) Frantz Fanon and the Politics of Viscerality, 27 April, YouTube video, added by Duke Franklin Humanities Institute [Online]. Available at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=lg_BEodNaEA&feature=youtu.be> (Accessed 18 June 2019).

McRobbie, A. (2000) Feminism and Youth Culture, Basingstoke, Palgrave.

Office for National Statistics (2017) What Impact could Lowering the UK Voting Age to 16 have on the Shape of the Electorate? [Online]. Available at <https://visual.ons.gov.uk/what-impact-could-lowering-the-uk-voting-age-to-16-have-on-the-shape-of-the-electorate/> (Accessed 29 July 2019).

Pitts, J. (2013) Reluctant Gangsters: The Changing Face of Youth Crime, London, Routledge.

Sage, D. (2016) ‘Young people at risk: Challenges and policy options for the UK’, London, Policy Network [Online]. Available at <https://www.social-inclusion-monitor.eu/uploads/tx_itao_download/EZ_Policy_Brief_SIM_Europe_ENG_01_2016_01.pdf> (Accessed 27 September 2019).

Savage, J. (2007) Teenage: The Creation of Youth 1875–1945, London, Pimlico.

Simmons, R., Thompson, R., Tabrizi, G. and Nartey, A. (2014) Engaging young people not in education, employment or training: The case for a Youth Resolution [Online]. Available at <https://www.ucu.org.uk/engagingyoungneets> (Accessed 19 July 2019).

Smith, D. (2018) ‘Britain’s elites: new lions, old foxes’, Discover society [Online]. Available at <https://discoversociety.org/2018/10/02/britains-elites-new-lions-old-foxes/> (Accessed 20 September 2019).

Social Mobility Commission (2017) Social Mobility in Great Britain: Fifth State of the Nation Report [Online]. Available at <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/social-mobility-in-great-britain-fifth-state-of-the-nation-report> (Accessed 26 July 2019).

Social Mobility Commission (2017) Time for Change: an Assessment of Government Policies on Social Mobility 1997–2017, Social Mobility Commission, London [Online]. Available at <https://www.learningandwork.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2017/06/2017-06-28-Social-Mobility-Commission.pdf> (Accessed 16 June 2019).

Teenage (2013) Directed by Matt Wolf [Film], UK, Soda Pictures.

Unison (2016) The Damage: A Future at Risk – Cuts in Youth Services, London, Unison [Online]. Available at <https://www.unison.org.uk/content/uploads/2016/08/23996.pdf> (Accessed 1 October 2019).

University of Reading (n.d.) Interdisciplinary Network for the Study of Subcultures, Popular Music and Social Change [Online]. Available at <http://www.reading.ac.uk/history/research/Subcultures/> (Accessed 25 July 2019).

Willis, P. (1977) Learning To Labour: How Working Class Kids Get Working Class Jobs, New York, Columbia University Press.

Wolf, M. (2014) ‘10 youth movements that changed history’ Huffpost, 13 March [Online]. Available at <https://www.huffingtonpost.com/matt-wolf/10-youth-movements-that-c_b_4958409.html> (Accessed 25 July 2019).

## Acknowledgements

This free course was written by Pam Foley. It was first published in October 2019.

Except for third party materials and otherwise stated (see [terms and conditions](http://www.open.ac.uk/conditions)), this content is made available under a [Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-ShareAlike 4.0 Licence](http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-sa/4.0/deed.en_GB).

The material acknowledged below is Proprietary and used under licence (not subject to Creative Commons Licence). Grateful acknowledgement is made to the following sources for permission to reproduce material in this free course:

## Images

Course image: © DisobeyArt/iStock

Figure 1: © Crown copyright, Social Mobility Commission, Reproduced under the terms of the OGL, www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/doc/open-government-licence

Figure 2: Teen group drops by for a visit at the Minneapolis Institute of the Arts. https://artmuseumteaching.com/2012/10/28/why-museums-dont-suck/ This file is licensed under the Creative Commons Attribution-Non-commercial-No Derivatives Licence http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-nd/3.0/

Figure 3 © Greg Balfour Evans / Alamy Stock Photo; © Skyscan Photolibrary / Alamy Stock Photo; © Robin Bell / REX / Shutterstock; © Justin Kase zninez / Alamy Stock Photo.

Figure 4: © Buzz Pictures / Alamy Stock Photo

Figure 5: Briefing Paper, Youth Unemployment Statistics, House of Commons Library, 2018, Reproduced under the terms of the OGL, www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/doc/open-government-licence

## Audio-visual

Video 1: Intergenerational Foundation

Video 2: © Guardian News & Media Ltd 2019

Audio 1: © BBC

Audio 2: © BBC

Every effort has been made to contact copyright owners. If any have been inadvertently overlooked, the publishers will be pleased to make the necessary arrangements at the first opportunity.

**Don't miss out**

If reading this text has inspired you to learn more, you may be interested in joining the millions of people who discover our free learning resources and qualifications by visiting The Open University – [www.open.edu/openlearn/free-courses](http://www.open.edu/openlearn/free-courses?LKCAMPAIGN=ebook_&MEDIA=ol).

## Solutions

## Activity 1 Does where you are born (still) affect your chances in life?

#### Discussion

Anne Longfield, as Children’s Commissioner for England, decided to focus some of her attention and resources on the north–south divide in England because of the clear geographical differences in things such as wages, jobs, GCSE achievement and engagement with higher education, which all play an important part in young lives.

Geographical differences are linked to divergence in equality of opportunity and while this is by no means a recent phenomenon, it is one important piece of the bigger picture. Longfield sees geographical differences like this as unfair and something that should not be accepted as inevitable. She describes the North–South divide as one component playing a part within a complex set of interactions, or dynamic, between education, wealth, health, labour markets, family aspirations and transport links that negatively affects many children’s and young people’s lives.

In the report’s recommendations, you can see a variety of ideas for addressing the damaging effects of regional inequalities: putting children at the heart of regeneration and urging additional investment to support local councils are probably foreseeable recommendations, but there are others here too. Changes need to be made for children and young people of different ages; strengthen early intervention services, increase early identification of special needs, provide greater leadership from key schools (the Northern School programme recommendation). There is also a recommendation to put in plans to prevent young people from dropping out of education early. The report recommends a closer relationship between schools and local employers. It also recommends that arts, culture and sports are provided, in the first instance, to children and young people from disadvantaged backgrounds. Addressing geographically based opportunities and services for children and young people like this has real potential to address disadvantage.

[Back to - Activity 1 Does where you are born (still) affect your chances in life?](%22%20%5Cl%20%22Session1_Activity1)

## Activity 2 Intergenerational unfairness

#### Discussion

There certainly are differences between generations, but you can argue that while the evidence about jobs, pay, housing, lower incomes and less spending is clear enough, other issues would be relevant in any discussion of whether life is worse for young people today; living standards were lower, and health care and health outcomes were certainly worse for older generations, while younger people benefit from the profound social changes brought about by previous generations.

Yet the intergenerational dimensions of inequality cannot be ignored. Perhaps the most glaring example of this is that, as some young people will inherit property (and perhaps other assets) and some people will not, wealth inequality is constantly self-perpetuating, across the generations.

Perhaps it is too easy to focus on the division and conflict between generations. Lots of intergenerational support and help continue, for example, the ‘bank of mum and dad’ often helps with university costs, while many children and young people still provide care and support to older generations.

Discussions like this about whether this is a good time to be young can be very revealing; perhaps we need more of them.

[Back to - Activity 2 Intergenerational unfairness](%22%20%5Cl%20%22Session2_Activity1)

## Activity 3 Adventures in social mobility

#### Discussion

Hashi offers an individualised explanation for his success that he describes as ‘social confidence’. One of the young people in the audio recognises and affirms that social confidence is a quality that many people she has met from private schools possess. Hashi explains how his social confidence emerged in part by reflecting on the possible life he might have lived and the opportunities presented to him as a refugee in a new country. Another of the young women talking with Hashi in the audio casts some doubt on his self-confidence message and argues that in fact adversity can cause some people to lose confidence.

Hashi also refers to ‘character’. This is a subjective concept that Hashi links to the skills and attitudes developed by people who face adversity. Although he doesn’t use the term, this would appear to have similarities with the concept of ‘resilience’ or ability to bounce back in the face of adversity. Far from being an inherent individual quality, ‘resilience’ is conventionally understood to emerge as the product of social relationships and experiences.

Finally, one of the young women identifies ‘adaptability’ as a quality that can help with social mobility. Hashi affirms that there is a requirement to be like a chameleon and adapt one’s behaviour to the context. This appears to have some similarities with ‘cultural capital’. ‘Cultural capital’ essentially involves possessing and applying a certain type of legitimate knowledge to a specific context. So, for example, to do well in the legal profession, it would be useful to have an awareness of the legal language, as well as the cultural and social topics, that many barristers share. Such legitimate knowledge may help build rapport and trust, which in turn may open up opportunities.

[Back to - Activity 3 Adventures in social mobility](%22%20%5Cl%20%22Session3_Activity1)

## Activity 4 Teenage dreams are hard to beat

### Part 3

#### Discussion

As one of the female narrators in the video notes, ‘A lot of people try to shape the future. But it’s the young ones who live in it.’ This observation resonates strongly with events such as the UK referendum on leaving the EU. Young people tended to vote ‘remain’, or could not vote at all, but they will live in the future created by the votes of older people.

Savage’s observation on how frequently pop culture starts with ‘frenzied young women’ and the role of young women’s diaries and journals in providing a crucial record of the experience is a reminder about how history is constructed. As someone who frequently writes from ‘**queer**’ perspectives, Savage is sensitive to the way women play prominent roles in history but are frequently written out of it.

The images we have of youth depend on this history and what is selected, what is left out and whose stories are told. As the film suggests, youth is a social construction that inevitably involves ideas about gender, race and power. This is self-evident in an organisation such as the Hitler Youth that became notorious for its explicit alignment with the development of fascist political power in Germany. The complicity of the Boy Scouts in British colonial projects may be less explicit and less notorious, but it was no accident of history.

Studies of other less formal youth groupings, such as Hippies, Punks, Dreads, Goths or Riot Grrrls can also be fruitful and are the subject of distinctive academic disciplines, such as **sub-cultural studies** (see, for example, the [Interdisciplinary Network for the Study of Subcultures, Popular Music and Social Change](http://www.reading.ac.uk/history/research/Subcultures/) (University of Reading, n.d.).

[Back to - Part 3](%22%20%5Cl%20%22Session4_Part3)

## Activity 5 A room of my own

#### Discussion

The programme opens out important questions about the way ideas around young people’s bedrooms have shifted. These changes reflect, and are driven by, the way personal spaces are shaped by economic developments, and the social relations of gender and class. Even questions once associated with public spaces, such as young people’s involvement in crime, have become tangled in these changes. According to some criminologists (Pitts, 2013), the decline in recorded levels of youth crime may be at least partially attributable to boys and young men spending so much more of their time indoors, in bedrooms, among the adrenalin-fuelled thrills of gaming consoles. These, it is argued, have replaced the edgy thrills and status rewards of stealing cars and other forms of street crime with their virtual equivalent. The researchers provide insights into the ways social order and social values are played out in teenage bedrooms. The domestic sphere has been transformed, partially by electronics, but also by the decline of public spaces where teenagers can mix and play safely and collectively, such as youth clubs.

[Back to - Activity 5 A room of my own](%22%20%5Cl%20%22Session5_Activity1)

## Activity 6 The Branded Gentry

#### Discussion

While playing polo appeared to struggle a little with its elitist tag, the Jack Wills Brand and the name ‘Jack Wills’ consciously adopted an elite group identity in British society, namely the 18–23 demographic of the ‘upper-middle classes’. This group of young people, wealthy, privately educated and often having attended the ellite group of public schools (known as the Clarendon group) and going on to, again, a particular group of UK universities are still able to use patronage and sponsorship opportunities (but these levers of power need to be constantly brought into the light). Here, Smith discusses how the British educational elite institutions have been able to adapt, allowing a more diverse intake and embracing a meritocractic ethos. This research reveals one way in which involving certain marketing brands (or particular low participation sports) produces the networks among elite groups that are so advantageous to their young people.

If you’re interested, you can hear Daniel Smith in the following Radio 4 programme: [Thinking allowed: fashion and class](https://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/b08snhwm) (from 14:07 to 27:44).

[Back to - Activity 6 The Branded Gentry](%22%20%5Cl%20%22Session6_Activity1)

## Activity 7 Not so Nice and NEET

### Part

#### Answer

**Right:**

making successful transitions to adulthood

**Wrong:**

their overall wellbeing

their average lifetime income

avoiding criminal pathways

[Back to - Part](%22%20%5Cl%20%22Session6_Part1)

### Part

#### Answer

**Right:**

bleak and alienating

**Wrong:**

a lot of laughs

worth a lot of money

unskilled and unending

[Back to - Part](%22%20%5Cl%20%22Session6_Part2)

### Part

#### Answer

**Right:**

disordered or suspended

**Wrong:**

clearly signposted

smoother and more enriching

a career opportunity for moral entrepreneurs

[Back to - Part](%22%20%5Cl%20%22Session6_Part3)

### Part

#### Answer

**Right:**

Over half

**Wrong:**

About one third

Less than a quarter

Does anybody care?

[Back to - Part](%22%20%5Cl%20%22Session6_Part4)

### Part

#### Answer

**Right:**

1996

**Wrong:**

1949

1968

1918

[Back to - Part](%22%20%5Cl%20%22Session6_Part5)

### Part

#### Answer

**Right:**

Depression, isolation, anxiety and over-eating.

**Wrong:**

Chronic fatigue syndrome, intolerance, nail biting and anxiety.

Amnesia, depression, teenage angst and total torpor disorder.

Nail biting, intolerance, chronic fatigue syndrome, isolation and over-eating.

[Back to - Part](%22%20%5Cl%20%22Session6_Part6)

### Part

#### Answer

**Right:**

little or no advantage when seeking employment

**Wrong:**

significantly reduced self-esteem

a higher than average elementary qualification

several formatted certificates of general worthiness

[Back to - Part](%22%20%5Cl%20%22Session6_Part7)

### Part

#### Answer

**Right:**

Kite-marked partnerships between local authorities, employers and education institutions.

**Wrong:**

Adult minimum pay.

More funding.

More youth centres.

[Back to - Part](%22%20%5Cl%20%22Session6_Part8)

### Part

#### Answer

**Right:**

the most vulnerable

**Wrong:**

the hard to reach

the right age group

those more at risk of harm

[Back to - Part](%22%20%5Cl%20%22Session6_Part9)

### Part

#### Answer

**Right:**

Driving up labour market standards

**Wrong:**

Fixed training budgets.

Making things better for everybody.

A Charter for Youth.

[Back to - Part](%22%20%5Cl%20%22Session6_Part10)

### Part

#### Discussion

The Youth Resolution report proposes a variety of challenging initiatives for government. The report’s approach is to shift the focus from the personal and individual deficiencies of young people towards a more structural method of addressing young people’s predicaments.

[Back to - Part](%22%20%5Cl%20%22Session6_Part11)

# Figure 1 Percentage of people at the top of a sample of professions who attended independent schools, comparisons over different time periods.

## Description

This is a chart showing the percentage of people at the top of professions who attended independent schools .

[Back to - Figure 1 Percentage of people at the top of a sample of professions who attended independent schools, comparisons over different time periods.](%22%20%5Cl%20%22Session3_Figure1)

# Figure 2 The creation of the teenager

## Description

This is a photograph of a group of teenagers.

[Back to - Figure 2 The creation of the teenager](%22%20%5Cl%20%22Session4_Figure1)

# Figure 3 Clockwise from top left: Charterhouse School, Surrey (fees: £37,000 per year full board), Eton College, Berkshire (fees: £32,000 per year), HMYOI Feltham (cost per prisoner: £74,000 per year) and Rugby School, Warwickshire (fees: £12,000 per year).

## Description

This is four photographs of the following buildings: Charterhouse School, Eton College, HMYOI Feltham and Rugby School.

[Back to - Figure 3 Clockwise from top left: Charterhouse School, Surrey (fees: £37,000 per year full board), Eton College, Berkshire (fees: £32,000 per year), HMYOI Feltham (cost per prisoner: £74,000 per year) and Rugby School, Warwickshire (fees: £12,000 per year).](%22%20%5Cl%20%22Session6_Figure1)

# Figure 4 No problem here?

## Description

This is a photograph of two men dressed to play polo.

[Back to - Figure 4 No problem here?](%22%20%5Cl%20%22Session6_Figure2)

# Figure 5 Unemployment levels by age 1992–2017 (House of Commons Library, 2018a, p. 6)

## Description

This is a line graph showing unemployment levels by age between 1992 and 2017.

[Back to - Figure 5 Unemployment levels by age 1992–2017 (House of Commons Library, 2018a, p. 6)](%22%20%5Cl%20%22Session6_Figure3)

# Video 1 Intergenerational unfairness

## Transcript

NARRATOR

Young people today are under pressure from low wages, precarious employment, high housing costs, student debt and high taxation. They cannot get on with their lives, and they see the welfare state retreating from their generation. While politicians chase the grey vote, young people are made to feel that it's somehow their fault. It didn't use to be this way. Previous generations got a free higher education, could buy a home in their twenties, have decent jobs and now have generous pensions and universal benefits. A combination of austerity from the fallout of the global financial crisis, increasing globalisation, wage squeezes and low growth have all hit young people at the same time as many countries' populations are ageing. It means younger workers have to support more people in retirement and spend more on health and social care, placing increasing strain on the contract between the generations at a time when young people are least able to afford it. We need a new social contract – one that ensures each new generation has better prospects than those before, a contract that is fair to all generations. Join IF in calling for a fairer future for younger and future generations.

[Back to - Video 1 Intergenerational unfairness](%22%20%5Cl%20%22Session2_MediaContent1)

# Audio 1 Adventures in social mobility

## Transcript

HASHI MOHAMED:

I didn’t excel at school. I didn’t go to one of our prestigious universities for my first degree but I would end up doing a post-graduate degree at Oxford on a full scholarship, and then I became a barrister. So what exactly happened, and what does it tell us about social mobility in Britain? In part I put it down to a visit to Kenya when I was nineteen. I went back to the semi-slum we had shared as a family. When it rained it smelt the same way I remembered and I walked the streets with a deep sense of familiarity. I recalled the early morning crowing cockerels and the frequent power cuts. And I came to one very firm conclusion – I did not want to spend the rest of my life here. With this settled, I decided my home and my future would be in the UK. And from this point on, my confidence and determination grew. It is this self-belief that I try and instil in other people with backgrounds like mine. This is a gathering of students from poor homes, seeking careers in the law, people like Deepak.

DEEPAK:

Today is probably I think it’s the first time I've met a barrister. I'm from East London and there's a lot of Indian boys, Somali boys and a lot of our parents, they don’t do white collar jobs. They fix fridges. They're delivery drivers and so on, so there is a lack of social networking that goes on in sort of my extended family and so on

HASHI MOHAMED:

I am often asked to talk at events like this. Many in the audience migrated to the UK or have parents who migrated here and for them seeing someone like me is a real eye opener and my message is always uncompromising.

HASHI MOHAMED:

[GIVING SPEECH] Just because you have grown up in very poor circumstances and just because you have grown up in a very deprived area without the necessary opportunities that may have been available to you, it does not necessarily follow that you are somebody with a handicap. Indeed I would go as far as to say it’s a strengh because it means you have still managed to have made it through many problems and many issues and many disadvantages and that means that you are somebody with character. So play to your strengths, tell a compelling story. If I was able to do it from my circumstances, I do strongly also believe that you are able to do it. Thank you very much ladies and gentleman.

HASHI MOHAMED:

Over lunch afterwards I spoke to some of the students. I wanted to know what they thought of what I had said, especially about social confidence, which I believe is vital if you are to succeed at the bar.

1ST SPEAKER:

That was what really resonated with what you said that if you have confidence in yourself you can overcome some challenges that seem insurmountable, but I think along the way I've lost that with having to deal with so many things, you know being the only breadwinner while looking after my family, and I've lost a lot of confidence. Can I do it? Do I even want to do it? I'm so tired of trying to do it. So I think today I've got some of that confidence back.

2ND SPEAKER:

Yeah, I just want to add to that. I think that sometimes telling your story can make you appear weaker than other people. I mean you’ve come from a difficult background. I think that it kind of like defeats you.

3RD SPEAKER:

But when you say defeat you what is it that, that is that...

2ND SPEAKER:

Yeah, to some extent it’s special pleading like ‘oh I should have mitigating circumstances’, which I don’t want personally. I don’t want to have people look down on me or pity me. It’s quite personal and it’s quite difficult to share your story sometimes because it’s like you don’t want to be vulnerable.

3RD SPEAKER:

I do agree confidence is really important. There's something for me at my university that I just really admired in people that had come from certain private schools, that had sort of had pumped into them to have this confidence. But I also think that it’s not just confidence as a level of... you have to learn how to adapt. And this is something that I wanted to ask you about because I think, even like the way I speak from a young age, I've sort of learnt that if I refine my voice in a certain way, people take me more seriously. And it’s a level of sort of adapting that is not necessarily positive, doesn’t go with all of my beliefs. And I wondered what you thought about that and whether that’s something that you’ve felt that you’ve had to do?

HASHI MOHAMED

It’s almost like a chameleon like trick that you have to perform in the sense that you have to be a number of people in a number of different settings right? So when I'm, for example, around my grandmother and my mother and the sort of older folk in my family I only speak in Somali. And then of course, if I may be hanging around with my nieces and nephews or my friends, we might be talking about ‘dabbing’ and all sorts of other ways of doing things and ‘What's going on fam?’, ‘What you saying fam?’ and you talk in a different kind of context. And then the next day I'm in Court saying ‘My Lord, my learned friend is completely mistaken.’ And you're constantly having to adapt as you say, and that’s why, when I'm hanging around with my nieces and nephews and my cousins, I'm like, look guys, I’m more than happy to play this game and talk in this way now, but I just hope you guys can switch this off. You are gonna have to do that to get far.

[Back to - Audio 1 Adventures in social mobility](%22%20%5Cl%20%22Session3_MediaContent1)

# Video 2 Teenage

## Transcript

[MUSIC PLAYING]

FEMALE VOICE

'We are teenagers. But we didn't always exist.'

MALE VOICE

'First, we were just children. And then all of a sudden, we were supposed to be adults.'

JON SAVAGE

In the early years of the twentieth century, this new stage of life was defined between childhood and adulthood. And that stage of life was initially called 'adolescence' by G. Stanley Hall, an American psychologist, and defined as being between the ages 13 to 24. And this separate stage of life, having been defined, caused problems. It caused problems for adults and governments. And so it had to be controlled, either by groups like the Boy Scouts or by overt militarism, putting these kids into the army, or for actual, real-time adolescents, who, having been defined as a separate stage of life, began to think, 'Well, how is this going to work for us? What are the potentials of this if we're different, if we're something between childhood and adulthood, what are we? What could we be?'

FEMALE VOICE

'Our teachers and our parents didn't understand us. So we created our own world.'

FEMALE VOICE

'Whether they called us hooligans, flappers, jitter-bugs, or sub-debs, we knew who we were.'

JON SAVAGE

It was fascinating to me to look at, sort of, inter-war, pre-war material from the point of view of the youth culture that we know, so to find stuff that is, if you like, predictive. And the most obvious predictive youth culture is the Swing culture of the late thirties, which is fantastically exciting, nationwide, very popular, and has its own language, has its own clothes, has its own dances. It's a separate youth world. And as a result of that, the purchasing power of young people begins to become apparent. This new youth world begins to become apparent to adults. And this is the start of a half decade, you know, five, six, seven-year process that ends up in the teenager. In the winter of '44, '45, the word teenager passed into general use, which was a revelation to me when I found out about it. I knew there had been youth culture before that. And that happened principally because of Sinatra's success, and the mad, the frenzied young women. And pop culture often starts with frenzied young women, by the way, which is a very important point. And also parenthetically on that score, when writing the book, it's often young women's diaries, obviously most classically Anne Frank, but there are many others as well, who provide this wonderful information about the state. So young women are very important in this story, maybe crucial to this story. And they're often downplayed.

FEMALE VOICE

'In Germany, news of war was intoxicating.'

MALE VOICE

'The old had sent us to die. And we hated them.'

JON SAVAGE

The Nazis very much made youth a plank of their new world. Youth will create the new Germany. And there are lots of quotes from Hitler saying what he wanted from his youth. So I put it in the book, because it created this dialectic. This is the way that it can all go horribly wrong, as we all know, that youth can be regimented, that they can be seduced by promises of autonomy, of freedom, of their own world, and then bound and enslaved into a pitiless war machine.

FEMALE VOICE

'People thought there was no hope for youth, but we were searching for something to believe in, and we were willing to fight for it.'

JON SAVAGE

I always wanted to get away from the standard documentary format. And we just wanted to have a bit of fun, actually. I mean, I always think this is downplayed. It's a very, very serious subject. And I hope we've done that justice. I certainly feel as though we have dealt with the seriousness of it. But also, it's about young people. You want it to be innovative, or you want it to be different. And you don't want to talk down to people. Obviously, another feature of film is that it takes you there. It's an emotional medium, in a different way from music, but it's an emotional medium. And obviously, that stage of life, you are very emotional. So we need to capture some of that, but obviously, with a film-makers discipline. You're shaping a story. You're actually creating a way of telling it. And I'm very happy with the way it has turned out.

FEMALE VOICE

'A lot of people try to shape the future. But it's the young ones who live in it.'

[MUSIC PLAYING]

[Back to - Video 2 Teenage](%22%20%5Cl%20%22Session4_MediaContent1)

# Audio 2 Teen bedrooms

## Transcript

INTERVIEWER

Let me just bring you in here, Shawn. I mean, you've researched youth culture and private space in the United Kingdom. To what extent do the young people in your study regard their bedrooms, or speak about their bedrooms as extensions of themselves? The idea, this is me, this is where I am?

SHAWN

Yeah. I mean, I think Jason's sort of example of arriving back to his home and seeing his room is quite significantly changed does sort of highlight some of the kind of key uses of bedrooms by young people. Of course, the bedroom is one of the first spaces that they have any control over, one of the first spaces that they can call their own. Even if their bedrooms are shared, often, young people do find a way of actually kind of marking out that space and being able to use the resources that they have available to them to say, this is me. This is my corner of the room. This is my space sort of within the house. It's one of the first spaces in terms of who young people can actually let into the room. One of the first spaces that they can regulate.

INTERVIEWER

Some people-- I've read about once, people even have love doorbells on their rooms before people get in, or signs, keep out.

SHAWN

Absolutely. And you know, this is a very kind of physical marker of kind of marking out that this is your space. And certainly, in my research, which comes from a more ethnographic background, a number of my participants did use those sorts of things. So literally, doorbells on the front of their bedroom doors that their parents had to ring before they entered it.

INTERVIEWER

And this growth in the teen bedroom culture, I mean, would you link it to the idea of the rise of the concept of adolescence as part of almost a new invented name for part of the life cycle?

SHAWN

Yes, absolutely. I mean, I think that's a really sort of critical sort of idea that certainly unites Jason's work and my more sort of contemporary work. And the sort of recognition of adolescence and teenage as sort of social categories in their own right, you know, that this is a different period in your life. It's not about being a child. It's not about being an adult. It's a very turbulent period in a young person's life. When they're having to work through sort of new emotions, physical changes, new friendships, numerous transitions, it's probably one of the most sort of turbulent periods in one's life. And so the idea that they ought to have a space where they can have time to work through some of these changes--

INTERVIEWER

So you can argue, in a way, for separate space. Because you've now got a separate category called the adolescent. And adolescents, therefore, need a separate space.

SHAWN

Absolutely. And also, if you sort of think about the post-war context as well, when we start to see the rise of the teen markets, when sort of popular cultural products are being made specifically for teenagers-- particularly in relation to music and to magazines-- rock and roll music, for example. This is something that was very alien to these teenager's parents. So in many ways, those resources were kind of feeding into what we now understand as bedroom culture-- you know, listening to this weird music, reading these strange magazines that weren't accessible to them in the context or in the confines of their bedrooms.

INTERVIEWER

Because, I mean, in recent times, a sociologist like Angela Robbie criticised some of the subcultural studies of the '70s, because they didn't really look at girl's culture. I mean, you want, in a way that perhaps they were looking outside. They weren't paying enough attention, you'd want to say, to what was going on at home to the bedroom.

SHAWN

Yeah, absolutely. And Robin Garber's account is really seminal, in as much as it's getting us to think about why girls were not appearing in discourses about youth culture, about young people in public spaces. And one of their arguments was that that was because young women were primarily living out their cultural lives in the domestic sphere. Their bedrooms were about training up to be wives and mothers. They had domestic responsibilities. They didn't necessarily have the freedoms of their male counterparts. And of course, bedroom spaces were not easily accessible to the--

INTERVIEWER

Researchers.

SHAWN

--researchers, absolutely.

INTERVIEWER

SHAWN

[Back to - Audio 2 Teen bedrooms](%22%20%5Cl%20%22Session5_MediaContent1)