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ADOLESCENCE

The Maker Generation

Post-Millennials and the future
they are fashioning

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The Legatum Institute is a London-based think-tank with a global vision: to see all people lifted out of poverty. Our mission is to create the pathways from poverty to prosperity, by fostering Open Economies, Inclusive Societies and Empowered People.

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Acknowledgements

CONTENTS

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

We are living in a time of increasing technological development, which has profound implications for the UK's social and economic order. For young people growing up today, known as Generation Z or 'the post-millennials', the present day brings new opportunities and new challenges. In the very near future, this generation will make and explain much of the world to the rest of us. Rather than simply adopting the lives of today's adults, they will help society adjust to the myriad possibilities of the future.

This paper takes a perspective on the future of this generation, both in terms of its opportunities, and the challenges it faces through adolescence. On the one hand, it has the potential to be a 'maker' generation, explaining the new world to the rest of us, but it is also one for which a rise in instances of mental ill-health and suicide amongst adolescents is evidence of some real challenges. We consider the questions that need to be addressed with respect to the three arenas for young people: family, community and school, and in particular how the challenges (and opportunities) arising from the prevalence of social media can be addressed.

THE CHANGING NATURE OF ADOLESCENCE

The historic experience of adolescence has been a process passing relatively quickly from dependence to responsibility, taking on a prescribed function and starting a family. In early industrial societies, adolescents would join the established local workforce or help manage the home. Since the mid-20th century, the decline of manufacturing and the emergence of a technological era has removed the certainty from many young people's futures.

In today's West, adolescence is now much longer, and a very different experience to that of traditional societies. For most people in the West puberty begins at age 11-13, and for many, true adulthood does note commence until early twenties. Increasingly, young people are deferring the steps we associate with growing maturity, such as getting a driving license, settling down with a partner or deciding on a career.

Many adolescents are growing up without a clear 'function', except participation in formal academic education, and without clarity on their future adult roles. Many new and better opportunities have arisen, but they must seek, choose, and compete for these themselves.

The current technological acceleration has one obvious implication. It puts a new responsibility and a new power into the hands of a cohort of young people for whom this accelerated era—the time since the millennium—is the only one they have ever known. Perhaps in consequence, they are deferring the transition into adulthood and taking time to define themselves and their role in the world.

YOUNG PEOPLE'S OUTLOOK

Today's generation of adolescents and emerging adults are highly capable and in many respects well adapted to the challenges of the future. Most of all, post-millennials are choosing and learning to innovate with existing resources in an attempt to adapt situations to their own needs, rather than simply expecting the world to deliver these to them.

They have learned to be self-reliant (and reliant on each other), which is a great foundation for the challenges that lie ahead. Young people are positive about their immediate futures. A 2012 study found that 85% of 16-19-year olds, and 80% of 20-24-year olds, feel optimistic about the next 12 months.[1]

Young people exhibit greater social commitment than previous generations. Since 2010, young people have moved from being the least likely age group to volunteer for a good cause, to the most *likely* group.[2] A majority want to work for a company that makes a positive impact, prefer purposeful work to a high salary, and would work harder if they were making a difference to others.[3]

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1 *Measuring National Wellbeing: Measuring Young People's Wellbeing,* Office for National Statistics, 2012

2 *Community Life Survey 2015-16*, Office for National Statistics

3 Global Tolerance survey cited in 'Millennials want to work for employers committed to values and ethics', *The Guardian*, 5 May 2015

Young people are moralistic in a way recent generations were not. 59% of them feel 'traditional values' are important to them. 98% of respondents feel marriage has a place in today's society. This moralism has a potential downside—it can encourage intolerance and undermine support for free speech—but it has a clear upside too.

Post-millennials everywhere are pessimistic about the state of the world. A 'large majority of young people think it'll be harder for them to get a good job than it was for their parents' generation (77%) and also that it will be harder to buy a home (83%)'.[4] A third of all young people say they would rather have grown up when their parents were children.[5] Pessimism on this scale is unique to today's young people. All other generations believe they will have a better life than their parents' generation.

ARE YOUNG PEOPLE TODAY FLOURISHING OR STRUGGLING?

On many measures, today's young people are much better behaved than their late 20th century predecessors. The last decade has seen a 71% fall in the number of young people sentenced for criminal offences.[6] Rates of teenage pregnancy in the UK have halved in the past two decades.[7] The proportion of 11-15 year olds who have tried drugs halved in little more than a decade; the same goes for underage drinking.[8]

On the other hand, Britain has developed an adolescent mental health crisis. Rates of depression and anxiety among teenagers have increased by 70% in the past 25 years. A major government study[9] found that 37% of 14-15 year old girls have three or more symptoms of psychological distress. A quarter of girls (24%) and one in 10 boys (9%) are depressed at the age of 14.[10]

Many young people with mental health issues do not receive any clinical support. As such issues are more likely to be missed in young people, there is a reluctance among adolescents to use mental health services; there are often gaps in the provision of support as adolescents make the transition from child to adult services. Mental health issues among adolescents that are not addressed can have many longer term damaging impacts, such as worse physical health, poor social educational and employment outcomes, and greater levels of substance use.[11]

Most analyses of the phenomenon of increasing distress among teenagers, especially girls, identify the digital world in general and social media in particular as a major contributor.[12] 11% of British girls and 5% of boys aged 10-15 typically use social media for more than three hours on a school day. 37% of 15 year olds are 'extreme internet users'.

Social media has also been shown[13] to increase social isolation—which is one of the biggest drivers of poor mental health. In general, online friendships are no substitute for 'real' ones,

4   *Social Attitudes of Young People*, HM Government Horizon Scanning Programme, December 2014

5   *The Millennial Bug: Public attitudes on the living standards of different generations,* Resolution Foundation, September 2017

6   'Youth Justice Statistics 2015/16, England and Wales', Youth Justice Board / Ministry of Justice statistics bulletin, 26 January 2017

7   England's Teenage Pregnancy Strategy: a hard-won success, *The Lancet*, 6 August 2016

8   *Smoking, Drinking and Drug Use Among Young People in England*—2014, NHS Digital, 23 July 2015

9   *Longitudinal Study of Young People in England cohort 2: health and wellbeing at wave 2*; Department for Education Research report, July 2016

10   Praveetha Patalay, *Mental ill-health among children of the new century*, Institute of Education, UCL, 2017

11   Martin Knapp et al, *Youth Mental Health: New Economic Evidence*, PSSRU, 2016

12   For example, see *Measuring National Well-being: Insights into children's mental health and well-being*, Office for National Statistics, 20 October 2015

and social media is only a positive if it supplements the relationships people make and maintain in the real world.

THE CHALLENGE FOR YOUNG PEOPLE

Changes in family structure have a profound impact on the health of young people. For example, those living with a lone parent or in a blended family are twice as likely to experience mental health problems.[14] The proportion of children living in lone parent families has tripled, to 25%. A recent study found that only just over 50% of 16 year olds are living with both their biological parents.[15] The change in family life, and for some the absence of a father in particular, means that many new parents have not had the role models previous generations relied upon to teach and guide them.

Beyond a good home life, young people need supportive communities, including both the friendship of peers, and the company of adults. Past research has shown that in cohesive neighbourhoods—defined as a place where people know their neighbours—adolescent wellbeing and mental health are stronger.[16] However, young people increasingly lack exposure to adult norms through early participation in the workforce. Meanwhile they are kept 'safe' by remaining in unsupervised activity alone or with peers.

The British education and training system is comprehensively failing to supply the UK economy with the workers it needs for the jobs of today—let alone the high-skilled jobs of the future. Two-thirds of businesses believe that secondary schools are not effective at preparing young people for work.[17] British schoolchildren are among the least educated in the developed world.[18] England is the only country in the OECD where the youngest adults are less literate and numerate than the generation approaching retirement.[19] Increasingly schools are investing time in addressing mental health and mental resilience issues among their pupils, at the expense of their primary teaching responsibility.[20]

The university experience and a graduate degree are yielding diminishing returns;[21] it may be that in time the model is substantially reformed. The satisfaction levels of those who take the first route, to university, are falling with the diminishing job prospects of graduates. A third of students were taking courses of no value in terms of leading to good jobs.[22] The principal challenge is how to support more young people to gain useful training in the emerging industries of the future, as well as in the traditional sectors—many of which are also being transformed by technology.

Social networks furnish young people with the role models and the contacts they need for success. Young people rely on networks to develop life plans and grow their aspirations.[23]

13   Brian A. Primack et al, 'Social Media Use and Perceived Social Isolation Among Young Adults in the U.S.', *American Journal of Preventative Medicine*, 2017, 53(1):1–8

14   *Mental Health of Children and Adolescents in Great Britain*, Office for National Statistics & Department of Health, 1999

15   Alec Martin, *Factsheet: Separation and Divorce* Relate Policy and Research Team, December 2013

16   C. Aneshensel and C. Sucoff, 'The neighbourhood context of adolescent mental health', *Journal of Health and Social Behaviour*, 1996

17   British Chambers of Commerce, *Business and Education Survey 2015*

18   *Building Skills for All: A Review of England, Policy Insights from the Survey of Adult Skills*, OECD 2016

19   *Survey of Adult Skills* (PIAAC), Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development, 2015

20   'Pressure on UK schools to tackle mental health grows— Evidence shows state-funded programmes need to start earlier', *Financial Times*, 15 November 2017

21   'Many graduates earn 'paltry returns' for their degree', *BBC News*, 5 February 2018

22   *Review of vocational education: the Wolf report*, Department for Education, 2011

23   K. Kintrea et al., *The influence of parents, places and poverty on educational attitudes and aspirations*, Joseph Rowntree Foundation, 2011

41% of young people from poor families do not have anyone in their family whose career they can look up to, compared with 16% of those from affluent backgrounds.[24] The clear danger is of a widening social divide between those young people equipped to benefit from the new opportunities and those left behind as low-skilled work is abolished.

The environment in which adolescents grow up has a major impact on their current and future wellbeing. Many need more support within the family, community and school environment. For many others, the overall education system needs to provide them with a pathway to meaningful employment and a sense of purpose as an adult.

CASE STUDY: THE ICELANDIC MODEL

'Youth in Europe' is an evidence-based health promotion project targeting youth substance abuse. It started in Iceland in the mid-1990s, at a time when its adolescents experienced higher levels of substance abuse than the rest of Europe. It involves extensive collaboration between researchers and policy-makers, underpinned by community-based work with tailored local solutions underpinned by ongoing monitoring and analysis.

The intervention model stressed the importance of building around the individual in order to positively influence behaviour. It emphasised the role of parental support, monitoring and time spent with parents. It also encouraged participation in organised youth activities, such as sports or recreational and extracurricular programs. Finally, it strengthened parent organisations and cooperation, by linking parents together through the school.

An important component of the approach is community visibility and fostering 'community buy-in'. This has fostered an alliance between local schools, parental groups, local authorities and recreational and extracurricular workers, with the goal of decreasing the likelihood of adolescent substance use in the community.

Following the implementation of the programme, substance abuse halved, decreasing more in Iceland than in any other Western country. There has been a marked strengthening of protective factors, such as spending more time with their parents: the proportion who often or almost always spent time with their parents during working days rose from 23% to 31%. Adolescents also spent less time outside at night. Iceland has not suffered the steep rise in mental ill-health other countries have, because those 'protective factors' were deliberately put in place.

This approach has already been considered and adopted by over 200 European cities (including mid-sized cities, such as Gothenburg and Cork). The experience in these cities provides more supportive evidence that what was done there could be done anywhere in the UK. The relevance of this example to the UK is that it demonstrates an effective community-led approach to addressing challenges of adolescents in an evidence-led and programmatic way.

24   *Broke, not broken: Tackling youth poverty and the aspiration gap*, Prince's Trust, 2011

24a   Inga Dora Sigfusdottir, Thorolfur Thorlindsson, Alfegeir Logi Kristjansson, Kathleen M. Roe and John P. Allegrante, *Substance use prevention for adolescents: the Icelandic Model,* Health Promotion International, 24(1), December 2008

MAKING THE RIGHT FUTURE

We will only be able to realise the opportunity and potential of the upcoming generation of adolescents if they are prepared for adulthood in the best possible way. This will mean ensuring that the three arenas of their lives (family, community, schools) are all providing them with the supportive and challenging environment they need.

The primary responsibility of helping young people grow up rests ordinarily with their parents. The job of parents is to shepherd their children into adulthood, steadily releasing them into larger and larger spheres of responsibility and adult interaction. We need to ask how best to support parents in creating the home environment that is both nurturing and challenging.

Young people need to be enabled—as in Iceland—to participate in positive activity, with their peers and outside the home. The delivery of structured and unstructured activity for young people is a clear social responsibility of a neighbourhood. We need to ask how to invigorate the engagement of youth in local communities and moderate the damaging effects of social media.

Given their significant direct engagement with pupils, and their convening power for parents, schools play a critically important role as a seedbed for community social capital. We need to ask how schools can support the emotional wellbeing and mental health of pupils, and help them navigate the myriad routes that face them on leaving school. We also need to consider how to reduce the burden on schools in the first place.

CONCLUSION

In order to answer these questions we also need to ensure that the challenges are properly assessed and the causes diagnosed. As part of the Legatum Institute's work on adolescent mental health, we will continue to assess the challenges and opportunities facing this emerging generation. This exercise will be conducted in partnership not only with academics and practitioners, but also with wider groups.

INTRODUCTION

This paper takes a perspective on the future, which will be made by the generation currently finishing their education, sometimes called Generation Z or the 'post-millennials'.

This generation in particular has great potential. The technological acceleration we have witnessed puts new responsibility and power into the hands of those young people for whom this era—the time since the millennium—is the only one they have ever known. It is very possible that in future young people will make and explain much of the world to the rest of us. They are likely to have a more enhanced role than previous generations did at their age.

However, their ability to realise this potential is being threatened. Though today's young people are less likely to be taking drugs, committing crime and getting pregnant than prior generations, Britain has an adolescent mental health crisis. Recent analysis of the millennium cohort study indicates that a quarter of girls (24%) and one in 10 boys (9%) are depressed at age 14.[25] This stage of life is when people are particularly susceptible to the development of mental health issues, with most adult mental illness starting during adolescence.[26]

Our prosperity as a nation is dependent on the wellbeing of all its members. Furthermore, the journey of people out of poverty towards prosperity depends on ensuring this next generation emerges as a thriving cohort. Their employment prospects and collective contribution to society are dependent on their wellbeing. Just as modern universities seek to benefit from the value of the inventions their facilities enable, society as a whole can expect to benefit from what the post-millennials come up with. But for this to happen we need to do better with our young people.

Although this challenge is becoming increasingly prominent in the public domain, there have been many organisations working on the ground to increase awareness and diagnosis,[27] provide mental health services in schools,[28] and more holistic support services[29] for young people. However, the public policy element to the debate has been lagging behind these efforts. These efforts need to start with understanding young people and the challenges they face. This report intends to contribute to that understanding.

STRUCTURE OF REPORT

The changing nature of adolescence: The next chapter takes a brief look at adolescence as a life stage, and its history.

Young people's outlook: We begin our review of the current generation of adolescents by analysing their outlook.

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25   Praveetha Patalay, *Mental ill-health among children of the new century*, Institute of Education, UCL, 2017

26   Martin Knapp et al, *Youth Mental Health: New Economic Evidence*, PSSRU, 2016

27   For example, Charlie Waller Memorial Trust

28   For example, Place2Be and Anna Freud National Centre for Children and Families
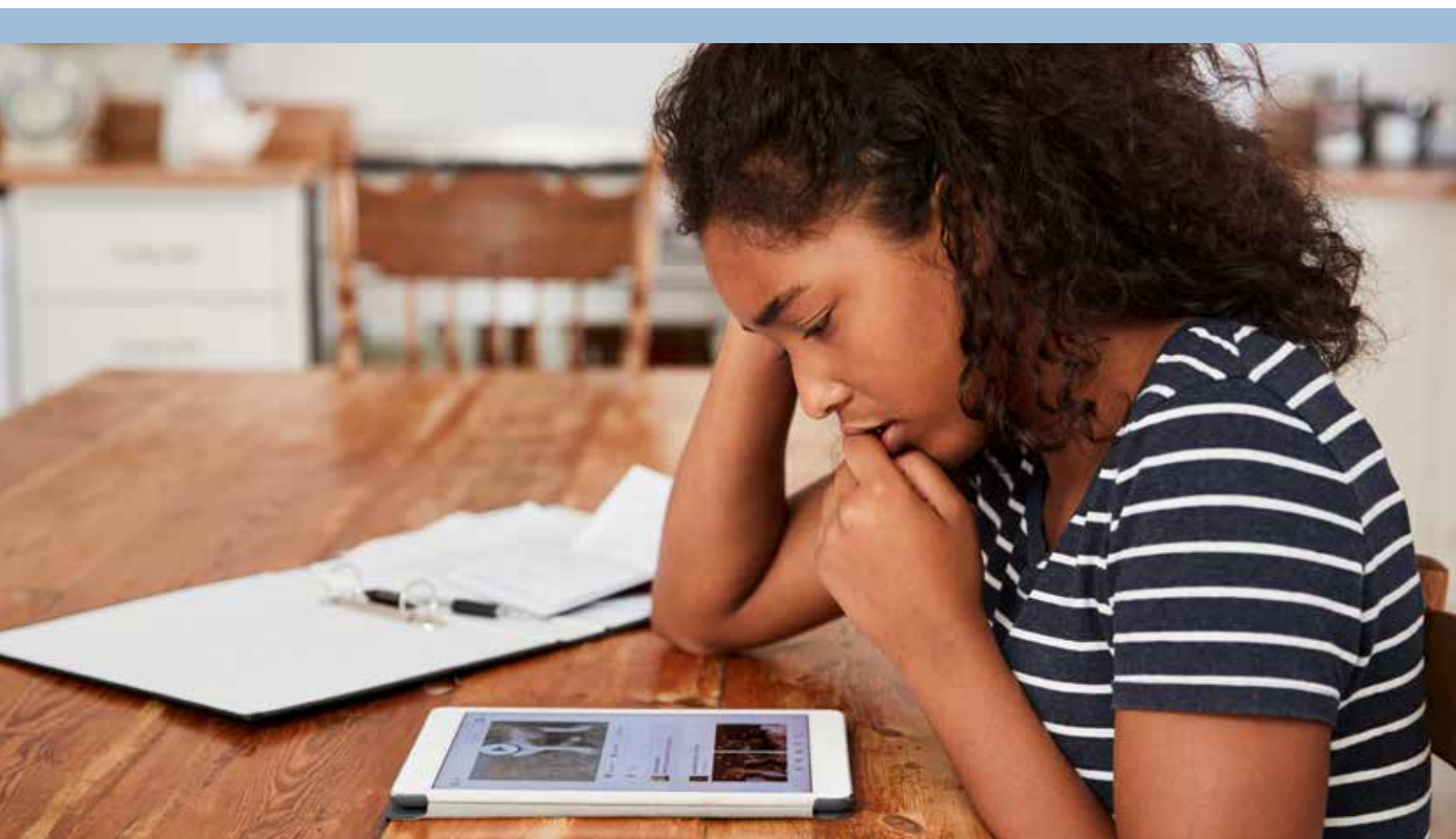
29   For example, The Mix

Are young people flourishing or struggling: The following chapter examines the state of young people, the millennials and post-millennials, in Britain today and considers whether they are flourishing or floundering.

The challenge for young people: We then look at the challenges facing adolescents through the lens of the different environments they experience.

Case Study: The Icelandic Model: We present a case study of the pioneering Icelandic Model for addressing substance abuse. This model of evidence-based community and government engagement provides a potential structure for supporting adolescents to overcome the challenges they face.

Making the right future: We consider the questions that need to be addressed with respect to the three arenas for young people: family, community and school—and in particular how the challenges of social media can be addressed.

THE CHANGING NATURE OF ADOLESCENCE

INTRODUCTION

Adolescence is the stage of life between childhood and adulthood, marked by particular physical, cognitive and emotional transitions. It was first analysed by G.S. Hall in 1904, who described it as a time of 'storm and stress' in which young people experiment with risk.[30]

As Hall and subsequent researchers have shown, a period of adolescence is common to almost all civilisations. However, both the duration and the purpose of adolescence are very different in the modern West. Pre-industrial societies tended to have a short period of transition from childhood to adulthood, which usually occurred in the early to mid-teens and was often marked simply by a ceremony or test, a 'rite of passage', after which young people assumed their adult roles. Although adolescence has always involved the growth and testing of independence, the traditional experience of it has been one of *conforming*—of passing quickly from dependence to responsibility, taking on a prescribed function (usually an economic one) and starting a family.[31]

In today's West, adolescence is much longer, and a very different experience to that of earlier societies. Firstly, it starts earlier. In the early 20th century, puberty began for most people in the West at age 13-15; today it begins on average two years earlier, at age 11-13.[32] Secondly, the beginning of adulthood is also later: as Dr Jeffrey Arnett has argued, we should regard real adulthood as beginning only around age 25. This reflects the changing place of young people in the economy and society.

INDUSTRIAL AND POST-INDUSTRIAL ADOLESCENCE

Adolescents and young adults were a vital resource for early pre-industrial societies around the world. In a settled, largely changeless community, they were used to garrison the frontier or to do the tough or boring jobs at home. In a nomadic community on the move, they were also pathfinders: energetic assets whose urge to experiment with leadership and responsibility, to discover new resources and new routes, to find food and to fight, were well suited to the roles of scout, hunter and junior warrior.[33]

Urban and then industrial society effectively terminated these distinct roles. It had a clear destination for most young people: once adults, they would join the established local workforce or manage the home, which could usually be supported by a single wage. But there was less of a distinct specific role for adolescents in the factories, mills, mines and dockyards of the industrial age; it was more of a preparation for a fully-fledged adult job.

Indeed, much of the effort of progressive social reformers in the 19th and 20th centuries concentrated on restricting the role of children and young people in the economy in order

30   G.S. Hall, *Adolescence: Its psychology and its relation to physiology, anthropology, sociology, sex, crime, religion, and education*, 1904

31   Crystal Kirgiss, *In Search of Adolescence: A New Look at an Old Idea*, 2015

32   Jeffrey Arnett, 'Emerging Adulthood: A Theory of Development From the Late Teens Through the Twenties', *American Psychologist*, May 2000

33   Crystal Kirgiss, *In Search of Adolescence: A New Look at an Old Idea*, 2015

to protect them from physical exploitation and give them opportunities for a better life in adulthood. The spread of education through the population and up the age scale (starting with universal compulsory education up to age 10 in 1870, extended to age 14 in 1918, to age 16 in 1973 and to age 18 in 2015) has progressively removed adolescents from the British workforce.

The period of transition to adulthood, then, has become longer. At the same time, the onset of puberty has occurred at a gradually younger age (dropping one year every 25 years) since the mid-1800s. [34] The term 'teenager' was first coined at the end of the Second World War, and the post war years saw a market develop, which began to take off during the 1950s and into the '60s.[35] Widening access to contraception and the motor car helped create a space for adolescent independence and exploration, which was not a feature of pre-20th Century life.[36]

Over the same period, in the world of work, the decline of manufacturing has removed the certainty over many young people's futures. Many new and better opportunities have arisen, but these must be sought, chosen and competed for. The destination—the future purpose which adolescents are committed to—has become unclear.

EMERGING ADULTHOOD

Even in 1904, Hall described a final stage of adolescence extending beyond the teenage years. Jeffrey Arnett gives this stage of life a new term, 'emerging adulthood', which he says is 'neither adolescence nor young adulthood but is theoretically and empirically distinct from them both.'[37] Emerging adults are legally 'of age', but are cognitively and emotionally—as well as subjectively i.e. from their own perspective—not yet fully adult.[38] Increasingly, young people are deferring the steps we associate with growing maturity. For example in the US, there is evidence that fewer young people are getting a driving license or forming sexual relationships, let alone settling down with a partner or deciding on a career.[39]

In the 1960s the influential psychologist Erik Erikson described adolescence as a 'psychosocial moratorium' marked by 'free role experimentation', when society allows a period of independence before final decisions on love, work and worldview need to be made.[40] The description applies to the whole period of adolescence and emerging adulthood. Though most young people are eager to seek adult roles and to adopt adult behaviour, this is also a period of questioning and testing, of seeking the boundaries of the civilisation you belong to and peering at what lies beyond; a time of transgression, licensed by society, which—it is hoped—will end with participating in the norms of society being chosen as the free decision of the adult.

ADOLESCENTS AS MAKERS

It is very possible that, in future, young people will make and explain much of the world to the rest of us. To a degree, every generation of young adults 'makes the future'.

34   See Anon, 'The Invention of Adolescence' www.psychologytoday.com dated 1st January 1995. Accessed 17th July 2018.

35   Jon Savage, *Teenage: The Creation of Youth Culture*. London: Pimlico, 2008.

36   Before the 'teenage' a sexually mature person was treated as an adult, today they still live at home with their parents. See, fn28.

37   Jeffrey Arnett, 'Emerging Adulthood: A Theory of Development From the Late Teens Through the Twenties', *American Psychologist*, May 2000

38   Research by Arnett shows more 18-25 year olds regard themselves as 'in some respects' not yet adult than think of themselves as adults in all respects.

39   Jean Twenge, 'Have Smartphones Destroyed A Generation?', *The Atlantic*, September 2017
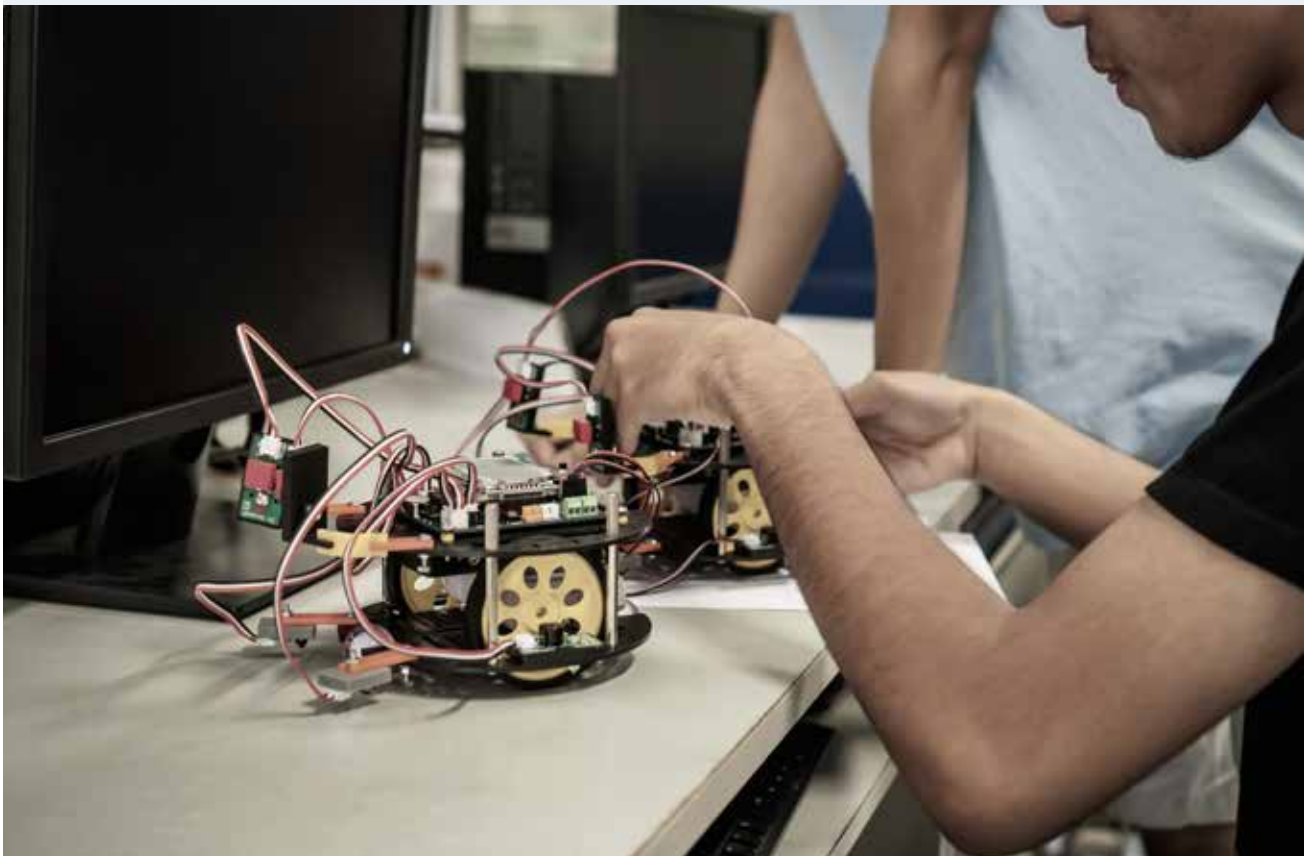
40   Erik Erikson, *Identity, Youth and Crisis*, 1968

The Makers

At Imperial College's new campus in White City, west London, is a new kind of laboratory. The Makerspace, says the university, is a 'unique immersive environment [which] provides young people with a space to experiment, design and innovate'.

The Makerspace is just one part of the new Imperial College. Traditional teaching spaces are there too. But, the lab represents an important shift in the way this world-leading science university regards its role. Traditionally, a university's job was to pass on information and good practice—the best that has been thought and said, in Matthew Arnold's phrase— as well as the pastoral training and the schooling in 'character' which Cardinal Newman regarded as equally important for students as academic learning.[43]

These Victorian foundations are still essential. Secondary, Further and Higher Education are the systems we have made to pass on to young people a body of knowledge and a set of rules to live by. Modernity has not dispensed with the need for the past; nor are creativity, self-discovery and 'learnacy' the only skills that young people need to navigate the future.[44] But something new has arrived in this century, a new role for school-leavers, to become what the Makerspace calls the 'makers, hackers, inventors and entrepreneurs' our society needs in order to prosper in the 21st century.

Developments in technology and culture proceed in a way that life is genuinely different from one generation to the next: each cohort of young people in modern times has had a new reality to adjust to and own. But in the 21st century, this process has gone into overdrive[41]—we are in what has been called 'the great acceleration'.[42] But the great acceleration has one obvious implication. It puts a new responsibility and a new power into the hands of a cohort of young people for whom this accelerated era—the time since the millennium—is the only one they have ever known.

Traditionally, adult society inducted adolescents into the world. Looking forward, young people will continue to need—indeed, they will need more than ever—a grounding in the accumulated values and wisdom of our culture. However, they have a more enhanced role than previous generations did at their age. Rather than simply conforming to adult life, they will also help the rest of us adjust to the bewildering possibilities of the future for both the economy and communities.

CONCLUSION

Increasingly adolescents are growing up without a clear 'function', except participation in formal academic education, and without clarity on their future adult roles. Perhaps in consequence, they are deferring the traditional rites of passage into adulthood and taking time to define themselves and their role in the world. At the same time, there is a potentially strong and positive role to which today's young people, the millennial and particularly the post-millennial generations, are naturally well suited.[45]

But, we argue, this benign development will not occur on its own. Young people will not 'make' the future, or not make a good one, unaided by the rest of us. The job of society as a whole, like a good university, is first to ensure the transmission of the essentials—a combination of knowledge and good character—in a safe and supportive environment and second, to provide the space and the tools with which young people can 'experiment, design and innovate' as safely and productively as possible.

To understand the challenge better, let us turn to consider the wellbeing of young people in the West, and specifically the UK, today.

41 Indeed the difficulty of prediction has itself become a form of prediction. One widely circulated—but unsubstantiated—'fact' is that '65% of children entering primary school today will ultimately end up working in completely new job types that don't yet exist.' This unknowable assertion reflects much of the futurology around young people today. *The Future of Jobs Report*, World Economic Forum, undated.

42 Robert Colvile, *The Great Acceleration: how the world is getting faster, faster*, 2016

43 Matthew Arnold, *Culture and Anarchy*, 1869; John Henry Newman, *The Idea of a University*, 1854

44 Sir Ken Robinson, *passim*.

45 These cohorts are of course closely aligned in experience and values, though as we shall explain (see 'The post-millennial experience' in Chapter 4 below) there are some significant differences too. Where a distinction should be made we refer to 'millennials' or 'post-millennials' explicitly. Where the research comprehends both cohorts or obviously refers to people at a specific life stage (e.g. at school or in employment) we may simply say 'young people'.

YOUNG PEOPLE'S OUTLOOK

Adolescents in the modern world have a historically unique quality. That the phase, coined by Erik Erikson as the 'psychosocial moratorium', extends beyond the teens into the early 20s represents a major benefit for modern society. For as we shall see, today's generation of adolescents and emerging adults—especially the 'post-millennial' generation—are highly capable and in many respects well adapted to the challenges of the future. Early indicators suggest that the post-millennial generation—Gen Z, born around the year 2000 and coming of age around now—have a range of capabilities and attitudes that fit them well for the times that are upon us.

THE POST-MILLENNIAL EXPERIENCE

In 2015, the US ad agency Sparks & Honey surveyed 1,000 teenagers and analysed social media data to produce an influential report into the culture and attitudes of the post-millennial cohort. Their analysis rings true for a British context too what follows is an argument built on these and similar insights.

Sparks & Honey argued that Generation Z—their term for post-millennials—are both 'the opposite and extreme version of millennials'.[46] This can be explained by a look at the two generations' experiences growing up.

Millennials grew up in the 1990s, a time of comparative global peace and the apparent certainties of economic growth. It was the era of Francis Fukuyama's 'end of history' and the triumph of an economic philosophy that prioritised individual effort and reward over collectivist management.[47] At the same time, as Allan Bloom lamented in his famous 1987 book *The Closing of the American Mind*, education in both Britain and the US increasingly taught young people to make up their own world, and to begin by disparaging the inheritance of Western civilisation.[48] These factors help explain the sense of entitlement which some commentators and sociologists have noted in the millennial generation—a focus on the 'rights' claimed by individuals to assert their independence from inherited norms.[49]

The certainties of this cohort's youth, however, were short-lived. A decade of peace and prosperity was followed, in the millennials' young adulthood, by a decade of conflicts in Iraq and Afghanistan, and a deep recession following the financial crisis of 2008. These experiences have taught millennials to distrust 'power', and to disbelieve narratives of permanent prosperity and global good conduct with which they grew up.[50]

Post-millennials had a very different childhood. They grew up with their country's soldiers involved in long, controversial wars that seemed more like civilisational clashes than rational acts of self-defence. They saw their parents and older siblings suffer the fall-out of the Great Recession. In consequence, they too distrust power; they are inoculated, almost

46   Sparks & Honey, *Meet generation Z: Forget everything you learned about millennials,* 2014

47   Francis Fukuyama, *The End of History and the Last Man*, 1992

48   Allan Bloom, *The Closing of the American Mind*, 1987

49   Joel Stein, 'Millennials: The Me Me Me Generation', *Time Magazine*, 20 May 2013

50   According to a poll by Harvard Institute of Politics, over 80 per cent of American millennials distrust the political system, the media, and financial institutions. 'Millennials don't trust anyone. That's big deal.', *Washington Post*, 30 April 2015

from birth, against belief in permanent Western progress ('the American dream is dead' as Sparks & Honey puts it). Crucially though, their experience did not breed entitlement or disillusionment. Rather, they grew up without big dreams about the world, which owes them little and which, they feel, is incapable of doing much good. Whilst this is, in many ways, a great foundation for the challenges that lie ahead, it also suggests that there is likely to be a problem with a sense of loneliness, personal security and attachment. Some of this we are already beginning to see manifest the mental health issues which will be discussed shortly.

HOPEFUL AND CARING

Research from around the world suggests that post-millennials everywhere are optimistic about themselves, even if pessimistic about the state of the world (see below). Young people in the UK exhibit this particularly strongly. As the government's review of evidence concluded: 'Internationally, young people are consistently more optimistic about their own futures than the future of society as a whole. Young people in Great Britain are fairly pessimistic about society's future compared to other countries, but about average in agreeing that their own future is promising.[51] Broadly speaking, young people are personally positive about their immediate futures. A 2012 study found that 85% of 16-19-year olds, and 80% of 20-24-year olds, feel optimistic about the next 12 months.[52]

Perhaps more significantly, as Sparks & Honey puts it, in their cultural, social and political attitudes Gen Z are more 'conservative and caring' than millennials, and 'focused on issues that reflect more traditional values [including] caring for the greater good'. Overall, 'Gen Z are resourceful, creative [and] humble',[53] or damagingly self-deprecating and lacking in confidence.

We have suggested that today's young people are natural 'makers', with the creativity and humility needed to deliver practical value. As Sparks & Honey's report suggested, post-millennials are 'fixers', disposed to 'hack' a solution—to innovate with existing resources—rather than expect the world to deliver what they need.[54]

THE NEW MORALISM

The emerging generation exhibits greater social commitment than previous ones. The latest Community Life survey from the Office of National Statistics found that, since 2010, young people have moved from being the least likely age group to volunteer for a good cause, to the most likely group.[55]

The trend is most marked in recruitment. Graduates—the young people with the most choice of employment with good progression options—are increasingly opting for jobs that satisfy moral as well as financial goals, delivering social value as well as, or instead of, profits. A 2015 survey found that 62% of young people want to work for a company that makes a positive impact, half prefer purposeful work to a high salary, and 53% would work harder if they were making a difference to others.[56]

51 *Social Attitudes of Young People*, HM Government Horizon Scanning Programme, December 2014

52 *Measuring National Wellbeing: Measuring Young People's Wellbeing*, Office for National Statistics, 2012

53 Sparks & Honey, *Generation Z: The Last Generation*, 2015

54 Sparks & Honey, *Generation Z: The Last Generation*, 2015

55 *Community Life Survey 2015-16*, Office for National Statistics

56 Global Tolerance survey cited in 'Millennials want to work for employers committed to values and ethics', *The Guardian*, 5 May 2015

Analysis of British Social Attitudes survey data for the period between 1985 and 2012 shows that younger generations (Blair's Babies) are more likely than older (Thatcher's children) to agree with the propositions that:

- benefits are "too high and discourage job search"

- the "unemployed could find a job if they wanted"

- "People should stand on their own two feet"

Furthermore, the analysis also shows that they are more likely to disagree with the propositions that:

- "Government should spend more to help poor"

- "Government should redistribute"

Another report[57] found that 59% of British Millennials feel 'traditional values' are important to them. 98% of respondents feel marriage has a place in today's society. Yet another study[58] suggests successive generations exhibit increasing support for traditional notions of self-reliance (see box 1).

The 'new moralism' of millennials and post-millennials is played out in their life choices. They may express politically liberal doctrines—stressing their individualism and independence, while also supporting a doctrine of selflessness—but they behave like members of a community. While traditional models of 'sexual regulation'—doctrines of chastity and fidelity, institutionalised in marriage—have largely fallen away, marriage itself remains popular. And in a host of ways our culture is reaching for new forms of regulation, particularly aimed at stopping harassment and abuse.[59]

PESSIMISM

Millennials came of age around the year 2000. Aged up to 35 today, their adult lives have been defined by the emergence of the internet and by profound shifts in the labour and housing markets, which have made them the first generation in the modern era who believe they have worse prospects than their predecessors.[60] This trend, many people think, is set to continue for the post-millennials leaving school now.

A survey by the Resolution Foundation found that almost half the overall population (young and old) expect young people to have a worse standard of life than their parents, and only a quarter expect it to be better. For example, research identified that a 'large majority of young people think it will be harder for them to get a good job than it was for their parents' generation (77%) and also that it will be harder to buy a home (83%)'.[61]

The pessimism is worse among young people themselves. It is possible that this desire reflects a 'political' belief about the direction the world is going in, rather than an actual pessimism about individual prospects. Pessimism on this scale is unique to today's young people. All other generations believe they will have had a better life than their parents' generation.[62]

57   *Youth Trends Report*, 2016

58   Maria Grasso et al, 'Thatcher's Children, Blair's Babies, Political Socialization and Trickle-down Value Change: An Age, Period and Cohort Analysis', *British Journal of Political Science*, 2017

59   Research for the Public Religion Research Institute in the US found a wide variety of attitudes to sex and sexuality among millennials, but a consistent theme. As described by one commentator, 'far from displaying a lack of moral code, the report suggests millennials embracing nebulous but durable moral through-lines that eschew the "whats" of behavior for the "hows" and "whens."' Catherine Woodiwiss, 'Agree to Disagree: Millennials Talk Sex and Morals', *Sojourners*, 27 March 2015

60   *Millennials in Adulthood*, Pew Research Centre, March 2014

61   *Social Attitudes of Young People*, HM Government Horizon Scanning Programme, December 2014

62   Ipsos MORI, Social Research Institute Intergenerational Justice Joseph Rowntree Reform Trust, June 2013

CONCLUSION

The extended period of adolescence that has become the norm for the current generation is not necessarily a cause for concern. This is particularly so when combined with the greater realism and greater social commitment of the post millennials. However, their potential is unlikely to be realised if they do not have an overall sense of optimism, and if too many emerge from this phase of their lives with mental and emotional scars that affect their wellbeing. It is to these challenges to their wellbeing that we now turn.

Pessimism for the Future

In a landmark study, the Joseph Rowntree Foundation surveyed the attitudes of different age cohorts towards their economic outlook. They found that Generation Y had a bleaker outlook on their future, in contrast with their parents more positive outlook.

29% of Generation Y felt that they would be worse off than their parents. Only 42% of them expected that their generation would have a better standard of living than that of their parents.

In contrast this expectation of a better standard of living than the previous generation rises to 60% for Generation X and as high as 70% for respondents among the Baby Boomers.

Overall there was agreement across the age groups that Generation Y will experience the toughest times.

Generation Me or Generation We?

There is a debate among academics about how to interpret the range of evidence about the post millennial generation. For example, Jean Twenge, professor of psychology at San Diego State University, presents an alternative observation that increasingly young people pursue superficial, personal or even anti-social goals, rather than more profound, pro-social ones. She asserts that "overall, the generational shift is toward more extrinsic values (money, image, and fame) and away from intrinsic values (community feeling, affiliation, and self-acceptance)."

She argues young people are simply reflecting the society that brought them up: "like every generation, today's emerging adults have been shaped by their culture", which she describes as individualistic and narcissistic, prioritising fake 'self-esteem': "Overall, the generational shift is toward more extrinsic values (money, image, and fame) and away from intrinsic values (community feeling, affiliation, and self-acceptance)."[63] Twenge's argument is that this culture is making young people miserable.

Professor Twenge's perspective is strongly disputed by Jeffrey Arnett, professor of psychology at Clark University in Massachusetts, and the coiner of the concept of 'emerging adulthood'. "Today's emerging adults," he says, "are not Generation Me but Generation We, an exceptionally generous generation that holds great promise for improving the world."

He argues that this era is both tougher, and full of more possibility, than previous ones. There is therefore more stress—mental ill-health and anxiety—and more positivity among young people: 'anxiety and depression in emerging adulthood are not a consequence of inflated self-esteem earlier in development, but of the identity struggles that are a normal part of the emerging adulthood life stage, in love and work.' He argues that young people are consistently optimistic about the future, and that this is useful:

> "The high expectations and optimism of emerging adults, far from being a bane to themselves or society, are actually a psychological resource during what is often a stressful and difficult time of life. Because they are making their way toward building the foundation of an adult life and trying possibilities that often do not work out well for them and require them to try something else, they are frequently knocked down in the course of their 20s. Their optimism, their self-belief, is what enables them to get up and try again."

Arnett cites the declining incidence of risky behaviour and the increases in social tolerance and community service as evidence that Twenge's characterisation of a hedonistic and selfish generation is misplaced. "They are a generation that should be commended for the improvements in their behaviour and heralded for their promise in creating a more generous and accepting society."[64]

As with different parents, or indeed a young person in varying moods, it is possible to hold apparently incompatible views about the character and prospects of millennials and post-millennials. One way of reconciling the conflict between Twenge and Arnett is to observe that although young people appear to hold self-oriented, even narcissistic views, their actual conduct belies these attitudes.

Furthermore, more recent research suggests that stated attitudes may be changing too—that post-millennials are asserting more 'Generation We' views than their 'Generation Me' predecessors from the millennial cohort. While Twenge's perspective is an outlier, it should not be ignored or dismissed as part of the process of developing policy.

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63   Jean Twenge, 'The Evidence for Generation Me and Against Generation We', *Emerging Adulthood*, March 2013

64   Jeffrey Arnett, 'The Evidence for Generation We and Against Generation Me', *Emerging Adulthood*, March 2013

ARE YOUNG PEOPLE TODAY FLOURISHING OR STRUGGLING?

How are the kids? As with many families, this is not an easy question to answer. Indeed, sometimes the debate over the wellbeing of young people resembles an argument between parents over whether they should be seriously worried, or congratulate themselves on a job well done. The evidence suggests we should be doing both.

THE CASE FOR OPTIMISM

In the 1990s, society worried about a rising tide of youth crime, teenage pregnancy and substance abuse. There is reason to believe these are now less of less of a concern in the UK.

The last decade has seen a 71% fall in the number of young people sentenced for criminal offences.[65] This reflected an increase in the use of alternative treatment of young people involved in crime, but it is also part of a discernible trend across the West. Fewer young people are choosing to commit crime.[66]

Rates of teenage pregnancy in the UK have halved in the past two decades, and are now at their lowest levels since records began in the late 1960s.[67]

Substance abuse is falling sharply. The proportion of 11-15 year olds who have tried drugs halved in little more than a decade—from 29% in 2001 to 15%in 2014. Underage drinking remains prevalent—38 & of 11-15 year olds have tried alcohol—but this is a sharp fall since 2003, when 61% had done so—a rate that had held constant since the early 1980s. In 2003, 42% of 11-15 year olds had tried smoking; in 2014, the figure was just 18%—the lowest level recorded since the survey began in 1982.[68]

THE CASE FOR CONCERN

There is another side to this data. These trends reflect a fall from a very high base. As a review by Hagell et al of the data over thirty years concluded, "rates [of emotional and behavioural problems] remain at historically high levels."[69] This is particularly the case for emotional problems.

Today's young people may not be taking drugs, committing crime and getting pregnant in the same numbers as yesterday's young people—but they are in another kind of trouble, which is arguably as serious. Britain has an adolescent mental health crisis.

One in ten British 11-15 year olds have significant mental health problems. Such issues account for a significant proportion of the burden of ill health experienced by young people in the UK. Recent analysis of the millennium cohort study indicates that a quarter of girls (24%) and one in 10 boys (9%) are depressed at age 14.[70] This stage of life is when people are particularly susceptible to the development of mental health issues, with most adult mental illness starts during adolescence.[71]

65 *Youth Justice Statistics 2015/16, England and Wales*, Youth Justice Board / Ministry of Justice statistics bulletin, 26 January 2017

66 *Key Data on Adolescence: 10th edition*, Association for Young People's Health, 2015

67 'England's Teenage Pregnancy Strategy: a hard-won success', *The Lancet*, 6 August 2016

68 *Smoking, Drinking and Drug Use Among Young People in England—2014*, NHS Digital, 23 July 2015

69 Ann Hagell and Sharon Witherspoon, 'Reflections and implications', *Changing Adolescence: social trends and mental health*, ed. Ann Hagell, 2012

70 Praveetha Patalay, *Mental ill-health among children of the new century*, Institute of Education, UCL, 2017

71 Martin Knapp et al, *Youth Mental Health: New Economic Evidence*, PSSRU 2016

Image credit: Shutterstock

Those in the older end of this range appear particularly vulnerable. A third of 15-year-old girls, and a tenth of 15-year-old boys, report self-harming—the majority doing so at least once a month.[72] Even among primary school age children, the challenge is becoming even more apparent—with increasing reports of self-harm.[73]

The prevalence of distress among teenage girls is very marked: in a government study involving surveys of 30,000 14-15 year olds, 37% of the girls had three or more symptoms of psychological distress, for example feeling worthless or unable to concentrate.[74] Suicide among girls and women aged 10-29 increased by 19% between 2012 and 2015.[75]

These alarming figures represent a sharp rise, commensurate with the falls in 'traditional' indicators of youth dysfunction. According to a 2016 media report, the proportion of 10-24 year olds hospitalised for cutting (deliberate self-harm with a sharp object) increased by 11% between 2010 and 2014. As the report states, 'rates of depression and anxiety among teenagers have increased by 70% in the past 25 years.'[76]

Many young people with mental health issues do not receive any clinical support. In a recent study 4% of 16-25 year-olds with severe mental illnesses were found not to be receiving mental health support. Three reasons were identified for the poor uptake of services: such

72 *Key Data on Adolescence: 10th edition*, Association for Young People's Health, 2015

73 'Children as young as three are self-harming, say teachers', *The Guardian*, 23 January 2018

74 'Excessive social media use harms children's mental health', *Daily Telegraph*, 20 October 2015

75 Manchester University and *British Medical Journal* study cited in 'Self-harming up by 70% among young teenage girls', *The Times*, 19 October 2017

76 'Teenage Mental Health Crisis,' *The Independent*, 27 February 2016

issues are more likely to be missed in young people than in any other age group, a reluctance among adolescents to use mental health services,[77] and gaps in the provision of support as adolescents transition from child to adult services.

Mental health issues among adolescents that are not addressed can have long-term damaging impacts, such as worse physical health, poor social educational and employment outcomes, and greater levels of substance use.[78] Unsurprisingly, adolescents with mental health issues are far more likely to end up having contact with the criminal justice system.

DIGITAL YOUTH

Neither the causes of the decline in risky behaviour, nor the causes for the rise in distress are clear; more research is therefore needed before strong conclusions are drawn. One development, however, whose emergence has occurred at the same time as both, is the arrival in children and young people's lives of the internet. Young people are increasingly attached, often alone at home, to their smartphones or computers. The link has been made by the chief executive of the NHS, who stated that it was being forced to pick up the pieces of a childhood mental health epidemic driven by social media.[79]

11% of British girls and 5% of boys aged 10-15 typically use social media for more than three hours on a school day. 37% of British 15 year olds are 'extreme internet users', defined by the OECD as someone who typically uses the internet for more than six hours on a weekend day for non-school purposes; this is the second highest rate (after Chile) in the OECD.[80]

Not all of this activity is harmful. It should be remembered that previous generations have also worried[81] about the effect of communications technology—especially radio and television—on young people, who have, broadly speaking, turned into well-adjusted adults. Online activity can aid cognitive development; some argue that young people benefit from 'mediated' communication and the safeguards inherent in virtual rather than real connections. Robert Hannigan, the former head of GCHQ, has suggested that children should be encouraged to spend time online as a means of filling the UK's digital skills gap: children addicted to their screens could be 'saving the country'.[82]

Much of the analyses of the phenomenon of increasing distress among teenagers, and especially girls, identifies the digital world in general and social media in particular as a major contributor.[83] While in some cases social media may enhance relational skills and social connections, it is not an adequate alternative to face-to-face relationships.[84] Even if the evidence remains ambivalent on the effects of 'screen time' itself, what is unarguable is that time spent online is time spent not with family, and not in direct, face-to-face interaction with peers. This may be the more significant feature of young people's digital immersion— that it reduces the time young people spend learning from adults and gaining the skills of

77 Martin Knapp et al, *Youth Mental Health: New Economic Evidence*, PSSRU 2016

78 Martin Knapp et al, *Youth Mental Health: New Economic Evidence*, PSSRU 2016

79 'Web Giants are Fuelling Mental Health Crisis', *The Times*, 14th June 2018:

80 Emily Frith, *Social media and children's mental health: a review of the evidence*, Education Policy Institute, June 2017

81 Neil Postman, *The disappearance of childhood*, New York, 1982

82 Robert Hannigan, 'Don't pull your kids away from screens. I ran GCHQ and know that Britain is desperate for digitally curious minds', *Daily Telegraph*, 7 August 2017

83 For example, see *Measuring National Well-being: Insights into children's mental health and well-being*, Office for National Statistics, 20 October 2015

84 As a review for the Nominet Trust concluded, 'the positive relationship with social connectedness only holds for using the internet to maintain existing relationships. Using the internet to make new friends has been linked to lower levels of wellbeing'. Paul Howard-Jones, *The Impact of digital technologies on human wellbeing*, Nominet Trust, 2011

social connection. It has also been shown[85] to increase social isolation—which is one of the biggest drivers of mental health. Indeed, a AXA PPP poll of 18-24 years taken in 2014 found that this age-group were four times more likely to feel lonely than those over 70 years old.[86]

The evolution of Facebook is a typical example. It started as a network for Harvard students. As it spread, consistent with the global character and liberal ethics of this community and the 'end of history' spirit of the early 2000s, Facebook presented itself as a means of creating a single global citizenship. It would overcome the differences of nation and culture, and bring everyone together; it would enable young people anywhere to transcend the limitations of locality and become like Harvard students. However, only around 100 million users—a small proportion of the 2.2 billion total—use the platform to engage in what one could term 'meaningful communities'.

In general, online friendships are no substitute for 'real' ones,[87] and social media is only a positive if it supplements the networks people have in their daily lives, which means the people you actually see and interact with 'irl'—in real life—rather than behind a screen. Hence, rather than creating a single 'global community',[88] Facebook is now dedicated to a different purpose: 'to give people the power to build community.' It remains to be seen whether this shift in purpose is sufficient to address concerns.

CONCLUSION

Young people today are growing up later; they are living cleaner, safer (but still high-risk) lives than recent generations, with fewer opportunities to develop mental resilience. This is possibly connected to the amount of time they spend online, rather than engaging with family and friends. Although, despite some troubling indications, the evidence remains unclear on many aspects of the effects of children's online experience in social media and gaming—and indeed to what extent shifting family environments could be contributors.[89]

In the next two chapters we develop these themes and cast forward, citing further research into young people's attitudes and the state of the 'systems' they are joining, to explore how the future might look for today's school leavers.

85   Brian A. Primack et al, 'Social Media Use and Perceived Social Isolation Among Young Adults in the U.S.', *American Journal of Preventative Medicine*, 2017, 53(1):1–8

86   Radhika Sanghani, 'Generation Lonely: Britain's young people have never been less connected.' www.telegraph.co.uk posted 28th December 2014.

87   Barbro Fröding and Martin Peterson, *Why virtual friendship is no genuine friendship*, Ethics and Informationa Technology (2012) 14(3): 201

88   Alexis C. Madrigal, 'The education of Mark Zuckerberg', *The Atlantic*, November 2017

89   Ann Hagell and Sharon Witherspoon, 'Reflections and implications', *Changing Adolescence: social trends and mental health*, ed. Ann Hagell, 2012

THE CHALLENGE FOR YOUNG PEOPLE

We have seen how the current generation of adolescents have a distinct outlook on life. Notwithstanding the many positive and optimistic attitudes they hold, there are some significant negative trends among young people. Even as many 'traditional' indicators of social risk—crime and substance abuse for instance—are improving, others—such as mental ill-health and extreme internet use—are getting much worse. Meanwhile the economic context, and the public systems we put in place to support young people, have some bleak projections.

This section reviews the different environments that influence young people, and analyses how well they prepare adolescents. These environments include first those they grow up in (family, community and schools), and then those they move into (university, job, career).

FAMILY

Today's young people are growing up in increasingly fractured families. The proportion of children living in lone parent families has tripled, to 25%. A recent study found that only just over 50 percent of 16 year olds are living with both their biological parents.[90] Since the early 1970s, the annual number of marriages has halved and the number of divorces has grown by a third. Cohabitation has tripled, to include around a third of all women aged 18-49. Around half of all children are now born to unmarried parents,[91] and they are more likely to experience family breakdown than those born to married parents.

We know that children who grow up in households without both parents are more likely to experience emotional and behavioural difficulties, to underperform in school and to suffer more challenges in their own relationships as adults.[92] Children with a mental health problem are more likely to be boys, living in a lower income household, in social sector housing.[93] Although the overall effect of these changes cannot be entirely predicted, we know, for example, those living with a lone parent or in a blended family are twice as likely to experience mental health problems.[94] The Relationship Foundation has found that less than 50% of Gen 'X' and "Y" children are living with both parents. This has a social cost, but it also has a financial cost with the Relationship Foundation calculating that the cost to the Exchequer of family breakup and instability being approximately £48 billion per year.[95]

The change in family life means that many new parents lack the role models previous generations relied upon. It has become increasingly necessary to impart the lessons of parenting deliberately. One model being trialled by Surrey County Council, following research and design by Christina Odone,[96] is the National Parenting Organisation, which runs classes and forms networks of advice for young parents, giving them practical help and a community of support.[97]

90 Alec Martin, 'Factsheet: Separation and Divorce', Relate Policy and Research Team, December 2013

91 Frances Gardner et al, 'Trends in parenting', *Changing Adolescence: social trends and mental health*, ed. Ann

92 *Three years on: Survey of the development and emotional well-being of children and young people*, ed. Nina Perry-Langdon, Office for National Statistics, 2008

93 *Childhood and Adolescent Mental Health: understanding the lifetime impacts*, Office of Health Economics and the Mental Health Foundation, April 2004

94 *Mental Health of Children and Adolescents in Great Britain*, Office for National Statistics & Department of Health, 1999

95 Anon, *Counting the costs of family failure: Update 2016*, The Relationship Foundation. Cambridge, 2016. p4

96 A former Senior Fellow of the Legatum Institute

97 National Parenting Organisation, www.nationalparenting.org.uk

Part of the process of 'minimising' adolescents, as described by Robert Epstein—of keeping them in an infantilised and isolated limbo—has also been the withdrawal of parents from the central guiding role they ought to play. Many parents feel unable to manage their teenage children, or feel their involvement is inappropriate, with the result that young people are left to grow up in a community of peers.[98] David Goodhart labels this the 'Saffy Effect' after the character in *Absolutely Fabulous* (BBC) in his analysis of family policy in the *Road to Somewhere*.[99] Others see management, or control, as their sole function, and devote their energy to restraining their teenagers, keeping them in a childlike absence of responsibility and away from the grown-ups. There are, however, signs that parents are now spending more time with their teenage children,[100] and teenagers reporting more positive attitudes towards their parents, than a generation ago.[101]

COMMUNITY

Beyond a good home life, young people need supportive communities, including both the friendship of peers and also the company of adults. Historically, young people were socialised into the responsibilities of adulthood through a number of formal and informal channels, which created structured activity in the company of adults. Declining labour market participation, volunteering, and community activity such as attendance at church or other communal events, mean that young people have less exposure to adult norms.[102]

This is part of a trend identified by Dr Robert Epstein of the Cambridge Center for Behavioral Studies in Massachusetts. For too long, he argues, young people have been 'minimised': reduced in the expectations we have of them and the scope we give them to work and play in:

> 'Beginning in the late 1800s… the age of entry into adulthood was gradually increased from 13 or so to about 26 today. As that age increased, two things happened to young people that have caused great harm. First, they have been increasingly infantilised—that is, treated as incompetent young children, no matter how competent or responsible they actually are as individuals. Second, they became increasingly isolated from responsible adults, trapped more and more in the world of teens, a world which came to be dominated by specialised divisions of the media and fashion industries. Treated as children and isolated from adults, teens have become increasingly depressed and defiant, in many ways living down to the low expectations we have for them.'[103]

98 This may reflect a corresponding 'over-parenting' that applies to younger children. An example of this is the growing gulf that separates primary from secondary school children in the UK, in terms of the way they are managed by their parents. As Hagell et al summarise the research in this area, 'It is clear that parents in the UK are now less likely to let younger children go out and about on their own than they used to, and that children's exposure to the outside world is mediated by adults who accompany them everywhere during the primary school years. Autonomy does come, but in a rush with the transfer to secondary school, when it becomes unfeasible for parents to carry on protecting to the same degree and children often experience a 'crash course' in managing journeys on public transport at this point.' 'Some thoughts on the broader context: neighbourhoods and peers', in *Changing Adolescence: social trends and mental health*, ed. Ann Hagell, 2012

99 David Goodhart, *The Road to Somewhere: The New Tribes Shaping British Politics*. London: Penguin, 2017. p479. Goodhart's label speaks also to the growing number of

children who are being 'carers' for older members of their family, including, sometimes, their parents. Approximately 700,000 British 16-18 years olds are now classified as 'carers' according to www.carers.org. Accessed 17th September 2017.

100 Giulia M Dotti Sani & Judith Treas, 'Educational Gradients in Parents' Child-Care Time Across Countries, 1965–2012', *Journal of Marriage and Family* (2016) 78: 1083–1096

101 *Internal analysis of Understanding Society wave 2 and British Household Panel Survey* unpublished, Office for National Statistics 2013.

102 Frances Gardner et al, 'Trends in parenting', *Changing Adolescence: social trends and mental health*, ed. Ann Hagell, 2012

103 Dr Robert Epstein, 'Childhood v. Adulthood: Why Robert Epstein Says We Infantilize Our Youth', *Youth Worker*

In recent years, some youth workers who engage 'difficult' teenagers have adopted the term 'asset-based' to describe their approach, in contrast to the 'deficit-based' model we are used to. As the youth worker, Colin Falconer, explains: 'too often the world defines young people as what they're not, and what they haven't got. Not in education, not in training, haven't got a home, haven't got a job.'[104] The asset-based approach, by contrast, focuses not on 'risks', 'harms' or 'needs', but on the positive attributes which young people present: their strengths, ambitions, passions and capabilities. These are attributes to which all the young person's problems—even if they appear to loom much larger—are secondary, and they make them assets, not liabilities for society.

There has been a longstanding appreciation of the need for programmes to support young people. Historically the Duke of Edinburgh Awards scheme has been highly regarded. More recently, the National Citizen Service (NCS) was launched by then Prime Minister David Cameron in 2011. It provides a publicly funded offer to school leavers, comprising volunteering and residential training in company with young people from different places and backgrounds. Over 300,000 young people have taken part so far.[105] Nevertheless, there have been strong criticisms of NCS's funding settlement and performance, including from both the National Audit Office and the Public Accounts Committee. In early 2017, they found

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104 'Advantaged Thinking', www.advantagedthinking.blogspot.co.uk
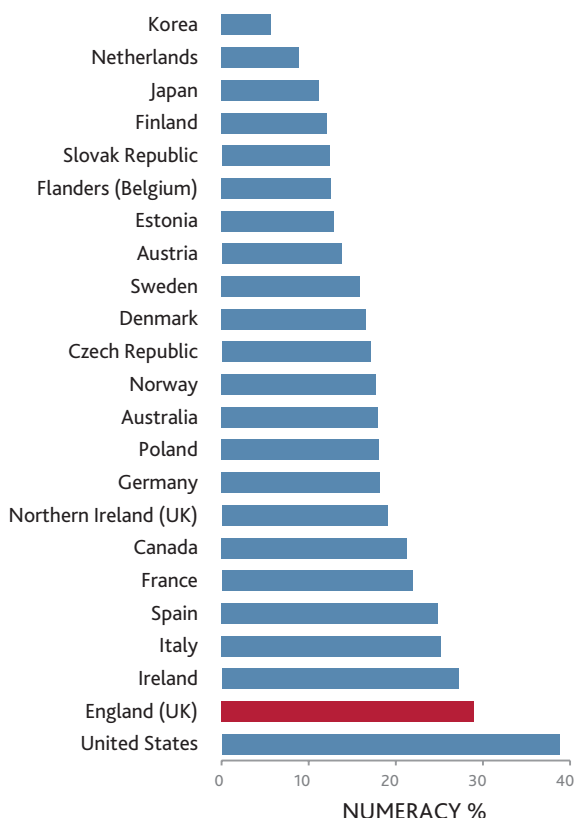105 *NCS Annual Report* 2016/17

LITERACY %

Korea
Japan
Netherlands
Finland
Estonia
Poland
Australia
Flanders (Belgium)
Czech Republic
Slovak Republic
Denmark
Sweden
Norway
Germany
Northern Ireland (UK)
Austria
Canada
Ireland
France
Italy
United States
Spain
England (UK)

0   10   20   30   40

NUMERACY %

Korea
Netherlands
Japan
Finland
Slovak Republic
Flanders (Belgium)
Estonia
Austria
Sweden
Denmark
Czech Republic
Norway
Australia
Poland
Germany
Northern Ireland (UK)
Canada
France
Spain
Italy
Ireland
England (UK)
United States

0   10   20   30   40

Above: Too many teenagers in England have low basic skills Percentage of 16-19 year-olds with low literacy and numeracy (below level 2)

the scheme was failing to reach the targeted number of young people and spending £1,862 per person—£300 per person over budget:[106]

> "what remains to be seen is whether NCS will become a 'rite of passage' and meet its ambitious targets for increasing the number of participants or achieve its long-term societal aims"

There is a strong impulse in young people to define themselves through relationship, forming networks of likeminded peers to journey through adolescence together. Increasingly this is enabled through the internet, which as we have seen can have both a widening and a narrowing effect on young people's views and the diversity of their network. Past research has shown that in neighbourhoods that are cohesive—defined as a place where people know their neighbours—adolescent wellbeing and mental health are stronger.[107]

SCHOOL

Beyond their home lives, the systems put together by adults to help young people are not serving them well. British schoolchildren are among the least educated in the developed world. According to a skills survey by the OECD of 24 developed nations, young people in

106 'National Citizen Service initiative 'costs too much', spending watchdog warns', *Children and Young People Now*, 13 January 2017

107 C. Aneshensel and C. Sucoff, 'The neighbourhood context of adolescent mental health', *Journal of Health and Social Behaviour*, 1996

108 *Building Skills for All: A Review of England*, OECD Skills Studies, 2016

England rank 22nd for literacy and 21st for numeracy. They also report that 'England has more university students with weak literacy and numeracy skills than most countries'.

England is the only country in the developed world where the youngest adults are less literate and numerate than the generation approaching retirement. Far from progressing over time, we are regressing.[109]

> "Although young people in [England and NI] are entering a much more demanding labour market, they are not much better equipped with literacy and numeracy skills than those who are retiring. These skills are essential not only for strong economic and social outcomes, but also for the acquisition of a wider range of knowledge and skills."
>
> OECD[110]

It is little wonder that two-thirds of businesses believe that secondary schools are not effective at preparing young people for work.[111]

Recent governments have made significant attempts to correct these problems. Literacy and numeracy have been central to the school curriculum for 20 years. Reforms by the Coalition Government to the way literacy is taught appear to be yielding positive results. From 2011 to 2016, England rose in the international literacy rankings for 10 year olds from 11th to joint 8th.[112]

This improvement is to be welcomed, and yet it perhaps a masks a deeper issue lurking beneath the surface: the role of schools and teachers in relation to that of parenting. In other words, there has been frequent comment from teachers that what is being required of them is turning them into surrogate parents.[113] Examples might include sex education, 'citizenship classes' and facilities such as providing breakfast as well as homework clubs. But, whether this comment is justified or not, it does imply that important time for educational input is being squeezed by other requirements being put onto teachers which, in turn, has an effect on the levels of educational attainment which can be reached in the reduced time available.[114]

UNIVERSITY

For young people over 16, these changes have come too late—and tomorrow's school leavers face an unsatisfactory range of options.

Traditionally, for most people the transition to adulthood was managed—as well as by families and communities—by schools and the workplace. Schools imparted the basics, but your destination was set: you would do what your parents did, or something very similar, and arrangements were in place to induct you into the life mapped out for you.

For the small minority who composed the elite, the route after school was different. These young people would be free to forge their own paths in life. For them, formal education continued, an extension of the general instruction they had received at school. However, university—as Cardinal Newman stressed—was about more than learning knowledge. As his

109 *Survey of Adult Skills* (PIAAC), Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development, 2015

110 *Survey of Adult Skills* (PIAAC), Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development, 2015

111 British Chambers of Commerce, *Business and Education Survey 2015*

112 *Progress in International Reading Literacy Study* (PIRLS), cited in 'Reading results should 'ring in the ears of opponents of phonics', says Gibb', *Times Educational Supplement*, 5 December 2017

113 Back in 2011 the head of OfSted, Sir Michael Wilshaw, commented in an interview that the problem of 'surrogate parenting' by schools was a significant issue. Graham Patten, 'Schools acting as "surrogate parents" says Ofsted chief' *The Telegraph*. 31st October 2011.

114 Some initial work on this has been done. See Alan Ebbens '"Whose job is it anyway?": a phenomenological exploration of the roles that parents and teachers ascribe to themselves and each other in the overall education of children' University of Bristol, PhD Thesis, 2011.
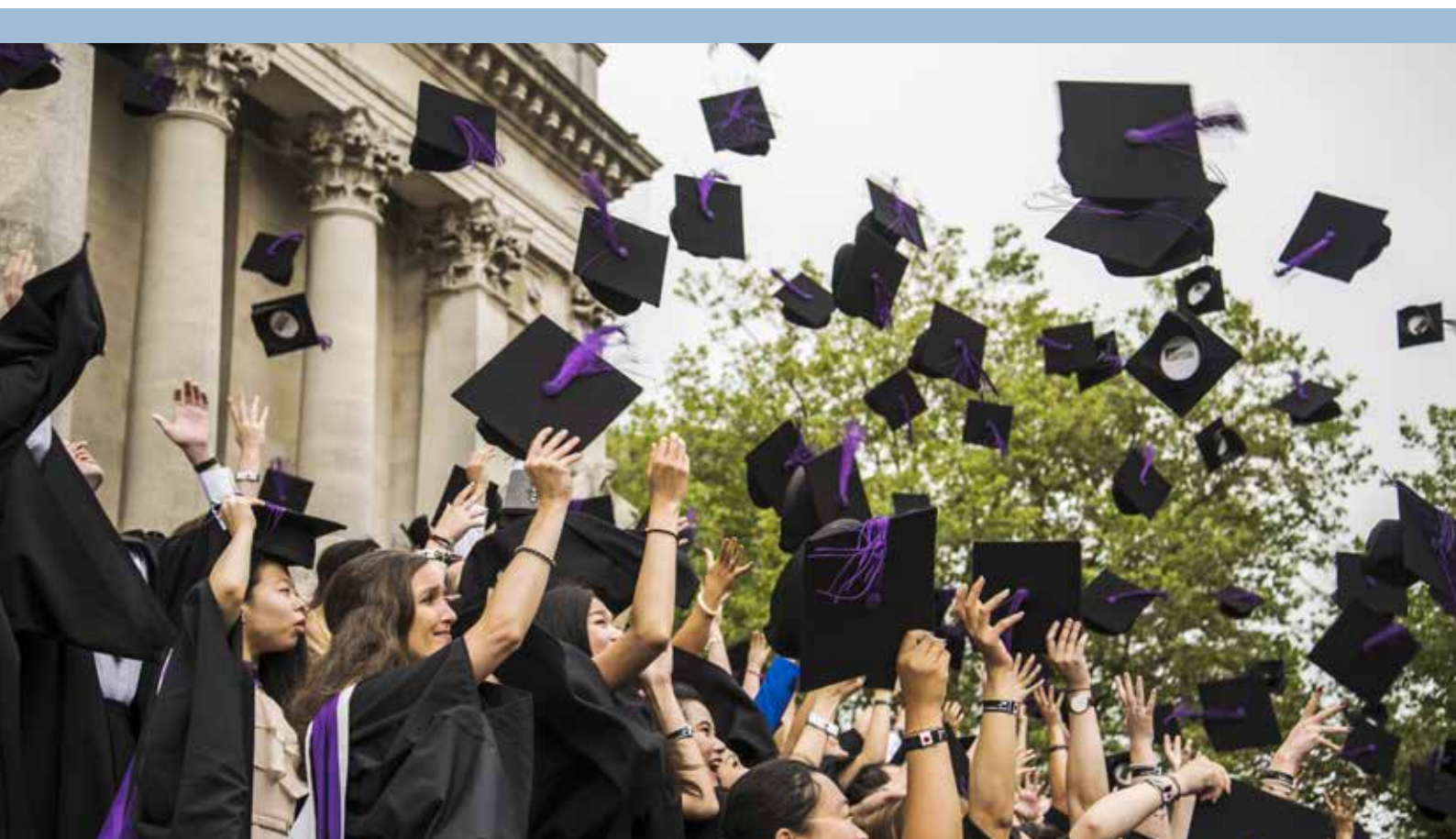
biographer explains, it was 'the delicate and gradual process of launching the young person into the world'.[115]

Today, we want everyone to have the opportunity, previously confined to the few, to forge their own paths. For this reason, and on the grounds that a university degree has traditionally been a condition of most well-paid professional jobs, the number of people going to university has steadily risen to almost 50% of school leavers.

As we have seen, the university experience and a graduate degree are yielding diminishing returns;[116] it may be that in time the model is substantially reformed. Already universities are offering shorter degree courses and useful ideas are circulating about how to broaden students' experience beyond academic study.[117]

However, the principal challenge is how to support more young people to gain useful vocational training in the emerging industries of the future, as well as in the traditional sectors—many of which are also being transformed by technology. We need young people equipped in a range of trades, from construction to care work, coding to design, none of which necessarily requires a university degree. Even those professions which have in recent decades become 'graduate only'—such as banking or law—could perhaps revert to the days when school leavers went straight to the office, but this time with a part-time university course or university accreditation for in-work training.

115   Paul Shrimpton, *The 'making of men': the idea and reality of Newman's university in Oxford and Dublin*, 2014

116   "Many graduates earn 'paltry returns' for their degree', *BBC News* 5 February 2018

117   David Reed, 'Two-year degrees leave a maturity gap—let's fill it with volunteering', *The Guardian*, 15 December 2017

In the UK, broad-based common education ends at 16, and then the path splits. Even since the extension of compulsory education to age 18, young people are offered a comparatively well-funded, academically narrow sixth-form curriculum aimed at preparing them for university, or a comparatively poorly funded vocational route (spending on Further Education has flat-lined for 25 years, during which time secondary school spending per pupil has almost doubled).[118]

As Sir Anthony Seldon, Vice Chancellor of Buckingham University, puts it, school leavers still need guidance, support and boundaries: "You can't assume that people suddenly morph from dependent teenagers to autonomous adults over the summer holidays."[119] Seldon sees universities equipping people to overcome their self-regard: 'We're here to try and help people learn how to be free.'[120] The same goes for every institution catering to young people.

The satisfaction levels of those who take the first route, to university, are falling with the diminishing job prospects of graduates, the piling up of student debt, and the growing consciousness of alternative means (like Massive Open Online Courses, or MOOCs) of learning the best of all that has been thought and said: in 2016 only 37% of students agreed that they were receiving value for money at university, down from 53% in 2012.[121] There are growing signs of a reaction against university, including among better-off students, with the number of privately educated pupils applying for BTEC vocational courses (such as construction, animal management, engineering and agriculture), rather than Higher Education, doubling in the last four years.[122] Reports state that fewer than half who take the vocational qualifications at sixth form go to university.

ROUTES TO EMPLOYMENT

Paul Johnson, the Director of the Institute for Fiscal Studies, has written powerfully about the way Britain's education system, and the debate around it, disadvantages the majority of young people and holds Britain back:

> 'Our education system is designed for students who go straight from A Levels to university. It is set up in a way that makes it easy for those who are good at exams. Their route is clear. It's much tougher for the rest. Their route is opaque. This is mirrored in a public debate that focuses relentlessly on universities, their funding, their students, or the pay of their vice chancellors, for goodness' sake. That is not where the fundamental problems lie. It is our failure to get enough young people into high quality, job-based training at 18 that creates our skills shortages, low wages and productivity problems.'[123]

The British education and training system is comprehensively failing to supply the UK economy with the workers it needs for the jobs of today—let alone the high-skilled jobs of the future. Professor Alison Wolf's 2011 report for government found that a third of students were taking courses of no value in terms of leading to good jobs.[124] In 2012, 194,000 hairdressers were trained for 18,000 vacancies, while only 123,000 people were trained for 274,000 jobs in construction.[125] The Royal Academy of Engineering forecasts that the UK

118 Long-run comparisons of spending per pupil across different stages of education, IFS 2017

119 Sir Anthony Seldon, 'Universities can help students become free adults', *The Flourishing University*, 27 July 2017

120 Interview with Jules Evans, published 1 August 2017, *Philosophy for Life*

121 Emilie Sundorph and William Mosseri-Marlio, *Smart campuses: how big data will transform higher education*, Reform, 2016

122 'Top schools push pupils away from universities', *The Times*, 26 August 2017

123 Paul Johnson, 'My son taught me a lesson about university', *The Times*, 5 January 2018

124 *Review of vocational education: the Wolf report*, Department for Education, 2011

125 Louise Bamfield, *Rebalancing the UK's Education and Skills System: Transforming capacity for innovation and collaboration*, Royal Society of Arts, 2013

economy requires 830,000 more engineers by 2020; already a quarter of firms recruiting staff with STEM qualifications report difficulties in doing so.[126]

Reform is underway in post-16 education. *The Wolf Report* in 2011 prompted changes in the quality and assessment of FE courses, and from 2018 'T Levels'—more rigorous technical qualifications—will be introduced in further education colleges. 'Occupational standards' will be developed for all occupations, designed through consultation with employers.

T-Levels also attempt to combine apprenticeships and Further Education; a number of qualifications, including care worker, lorry driver, police officer and estate agent qualifications will all be delivered through in-work training. The Coalition government introduced a levy on large companies, equivalent to 0.5% of their wage bill, to finance training and support for apprentices. Three million young people are due to become apprentices by 2020 though significant doubts remain over the quality of these roles and the implementation of the programme. In the last quarter for which figures are available (Q4 of 2016/17) the number of apprenticeship starts was down by 27% on the previous year.[127]

As this overview shows, the options facing young people leaving school are to go straight into low-skilled employment, the sixth-form route to university, the FE route to a vocational career, or an apprenticeship. However, there is a final option, to go it alone as a self-employed entrepreneur or 'gig worker'. This choice is becoming increasingly attractive to young people for a variety of cultural and economic reasons. 55 percent of British and 72% of US teenagers say they want to start their own business someday.[128]

Yet British education is poorly adapted to support young people who will become self-employed. A government report in 2014 by Lord Young of Graffham advised a greater emphasis on enterprise in schools; an Ofsted report in November 2016 found only one in ten schools was fulfilling this expectation.[129] In an increasingly changing world, this poses particular challenges.

CAREER OPPORTUNITIES

Effective socialisation is directly beneficial to career progression. 41% of young people from poor families do not have anyone in their family whose career they can look up to, compared with 16% of those from affluent backgrounds.[130] This matters, because social networks furnish young people with the role models and the contacts they need for success. Research suggests that young people rely on networks to develop life plans and grow their aspirations.[131] As this implies, the positive experience described as 'emerging adulthood'—the time of experimentation and discovery—may only be available to the middle class.[132]

The future we are considering will value the advantages of education, family and community even more than the present does. One estimate from Deloitte and the University of Oxford suggests 35% of jobs in the UK will disappear in the next 20 years, due to automation.

126 Natasha Porter and Jonathan Simons, *Higher, Further, Faster, More: Improving higher level professional and technical education*, Policy Exchange, 2015

127 *Apprenticeship Statistics: England*, House of Commons Library, 25 January 2018

128 UK data from UnLtd, 70% increase in number of company founders aged under 35, Enterprise Nation, 2014; US data from "High School Careers Survey"—Milennial Branding 2014, reported in 'The generation game: how to win with Centennials', *Your Ready Business*, 12 October 2017

129 Schools should be doing more to prepare young people for the world of work, Ofsted, 24 November 2016

130 *Broke, not broken: Tackling youth poverty and the aspiration gap*; Prince's Trust 2011

131 Keith Kintrea et al., *The influence of parents, places and poverty on educational attitudes and aspirations*, Joseph Rowntree Foundation, 2011

132 Leo Hendryand Marion Kloep, 'How universal is emerging adulthood? An empirical example' *Journal of Youth Studies*, 2010

Meanwhile, the growth arising from technological development will, probably, create more jobs—the same report estimated that for 800,000 jobs already lost to automation, 3.5 million new ones have been created. Crucially, however, the effect has been the replacement of low-skilled jobs by high-skilled ones. The new roles pay on average £10,000 a year more than the old ones but they require a far higher level of technical and personal competence.[133]

As this review suggests, some young people will be fine in the future, prospering in the uncertain world ahead. They will tend to be blessed with many advantages, including: the emotional resources of a stable and supportive family, the educational resources of a good school and university, the network resources that this family and education bring, and the financial resources necessary to get on the housing ladder. However, growing numbers will lack these resources, and will not prosper. Over a quarter of poor young people believe that 'few' or 'none' of their career goals are achievable, compared to just 7%of those from wealthy families.[134] They may be right. This highlights the tension between a 'national' training agenda to increase productivity, and the needs of individuals to find employment and career opportunities that are personally productive and remunerative.

The clear danger is of a widening social divide between those young people equipped to benefit from the new opportunities and those left behind as low-skilled work is abolished. The challenge is for our social, educational and training systems to ensure as many adolescents and emerging adults are ready for the new world.

CONCLUSION

The environment in which adolescents grow up has a major impact on their current and future wellbeing. For too many young people, this environment is not serving them as well as it could. Many need more support within the family, community and school environment. For many others, the overall education system needs to provide them with a pathway to meaningful employment and a sense of purpose as an adult.

Any efforts to improve the wellbeing and mental health of adolescents will need to account for the interconnected nature of their environment. The next section looks at how one such effort has had significant impact.

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133 *From brawn to brains: the impact of technology on jobs in the UK*, Deloitte, 2015

134 Research cited in *Social Attitudes of Young People*, HM Government Horizon Scanning Programme, December 2014

CASE STUDY: THE ICELANDIC MODEL

We have argued that the post-millennial generation is uniquely well qualified to make a good future for themselves and all of us. Nevertheless, it is also clear that they will do so only if we create the right environment for them. If post-millennials are to benefit from the explosion of innovation and opportunity that our age is seeing, we need a corresponding effort to root their lives in the relationships and institutions that make people safe and happy.

For a start, we need to recognise that the age of adolescence and emerging adulthood needs deliberate attention. As we shall argue, this attention should come from society as a whole, not just from government. To affect a generation positively, everyone—family, civil society, schools, government and businesses—needs to be committed. While this may seem far-fetched, there is evidence from other countries that such a holistic approach can make a real difference.

'YOUTH IN EUROPE': EVIDENCE-BASED HEALTH PROMOTION

Youth in Europe is an evidence-based health promotion project targeting youth substance abuse. It was initiated in 2005, and since then has been implemented in over thirty municipalities in fifteen countries across Europe (including Spain, Italy, Romania, Bulgaria, Ukraine, Ireland, Finland, and Estonia).

The programme[135] started in Iceland, in the mid-1990s. At that time, adolescents in Iceland and other Nordic countries were more likely to get drunk than other European teenagers, and also more prone to alcohol-related accidents or injuries. In response, policy-makers, field-based practitioners and social scientists at the Icelandic Centre for Social Research and Analysis (ICSRA), a non-profit research institute in the capital Reykjavik, collaborated to understand better the societal factors influencing substance use among adolescents and potential approaches to prevention. The resulting programme combined three core elements:

- Evidence-based approach, combining data-collection and research
- Collaboration between researchers, policy makers and people in the field
- Community-based work

EVIDENCE-BASED APPROACH

"We have the obligation to make good use of what [children] tell us, react and constantly try to make their lives better" [136]

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135 Much of the description of the programme is drawn from the following: Inga Dora Sigfusdottir, Thorolfur Thorlindsson, Alfegeir Logi Kristjansson, Kathleen M. Roe and John P. Allegrante, *Substance use prevention for adolescents: the Icelandic Model*, Health Promotion International, 24(1), December 2008; *Evidence based primary prevention: The*

Icelandic Model, Jón Sigfússon, presented at Gothenburg | Förebygg.nu, November 2013

136 *Evidence based primary prevention: The Icelandic Model*, Jón Sigfússon, presented at Gothenburg | Förebygg.nu, November 2013

The main categories, along with background factors and rates of substance use, include the following:

- Relationship with parents and family, friends and peer group influences,

- Emotional wellbeing and physical health status,

- Participation in sports and organised youth work, and

- School attachment.

Repeated measures were used in the Icelandic data collection process to assess substance use. Examples of these measures include:

- 'How often have you become drunk during the last 30 days?' and

- 'How often, if ever, have you used hashish in your lifetime?'

Examples of questions that refer to relationships with significant others include:

- 'How easy or hard would it be to receive caring and warmth from your parents' and

- 'How many of our friends smoke cigarettes on a regular basis.'

Finally, participation in extracurricular activities was assessed, for example, by the response to:

- 'How often do you participate in sports outside compulsory lessons in school'

- 'How often do you engage in organised school work'.

In 1992, the Icelandic Government started an annual study to collect data from 15-16 year old students, to examine how such information could benefit policy-making. The survey includes the same set of questions about background factors and substance use annually (see box). Data was collected from 80%-90% of 14- to 16-year-old age cohorts attending school. The value of such systematic sampling was that it has been possible to provide meaningful and specific information for each local community. Policymakers had recognised that incorporating local information into all levels of prevention work would be a critical benefit. Local information is available within 2-3 months of data collection each year. As a result, local schools get access to their data in a timely manner.

A key part of the work has been the effort to develop an evidence-based programme that complemented the regular data collection. They conducted both scientific research and practical research: meta-studies, and intensive surveys into schools and children, analysing physical and mental health, relationships and community networks, substance use, violence, and delinquency.

The research showed that certain circumstances and behaviours were strongly associated with substance use among adolescents. These could be grouped into four elements: Family factors, extra-curricular activities, peer groups and social capital:

1. **Family Factors:** Parental support, responsible monitoring and the amount of time spent with children decreases the likelihood of substance use among adolescents, and affects friendship choices. The more time adolescents spend with their family outside of school, the less likely they are to use drugs. Adolescents who used drugs were less strongly attached to their parents and spent less time with them.

2. **Extracurricular activities:** Participation in supervised youth work and sports deters adolescent substance use. Adolescents who used drugs were also generally more likely to participate in unstructured activities without adult supervision.

3. **Peer group effect:** The peer group is important in the formation of adolescent society and lifestyle. Adolescent substance use is strongly influenced by the use of drugs, tobacco and alcohol by friends.

4. **Social capital:** Strengthening the ties between parents and children in the local community constitutes an important

deterrent to adolescent substance use. The school is an important venue for building social capital. Where parents know the school-friends of their adolescent children, and have relationships with their parents, all students benefit, whether or not their parents are a part of the network.

COMMUNITY-BASED INTERVENTION DESIGN

The policy goal was to change the actual behaviour of adolescents, and not just their attitudes. This involved interventions at both a national and local level. The development of specific approaches involved a wide set of stakeholders participating at a community level to combine insights from international research together with data and observations about individual and local societal factors. The model included iterative cycles of evidence, reflection and action.

1   The scope of the problem and the broad approach was identified at a national level by a core team of researchers and policy makers.

2   The national analysis was reviewed at a local level by a broader group of participants, including practitioners, parents, schools and other community organisations.

3   Locally tailored solutions were developed, informed by the national data, but owned and refined by the neighbourhood.

4   At regular intervals, local activities and outcomes are reviewed and analysed in light of national level data, to identify improvements to the process.

The model is based on timely action, community empowerment and cooperation. It requires a constant dialogue between all those who are responsible (from national to local political leaders, and among community stakeholders) and local information fuels this dialogue.

The resulting interventions focused on changing their lifestyle environment through a two-fold effort involving both reducing known risk factors for substance use, and strengthening protective factors. The policy included a number of features that directly addressed supply and access, including:

1   Co-operative work groups against drugs

2   Anti-smoking/drinking campaigns

3   Restrictions on the sale of alcohol and tobacco (Age limits, regulations restricting access and visibility, and advertising ban)

4   Legal age of adulthood raised from 16 to 18 years

The approach also stressed the importance of building around the individual in order to positively influence behaviour. Hence, it emphasised the importance of the family and community. It emphasised the role of parental support, monitoring and time spent with parents, in preventing unattended parties in the local community. It also encouraged

participation in organised youth activities, such as sports or recreational and extracurricular programs. Finally, it strengthened parent organisations and cooperation, by linking parents together through the school and building social capital through collective engagement.

The approach was not a 'project' in the usual sense, but rather a consistent and comprehensive ongoing partnership that sought to reduce adolescent substance use by getting guardianship, community attachment and informal social control on the public agenda. An important component of the approach is community visibility and fostering 'community buy-in.' Presentations are given each year providing survey results in local schools and community centres. This has fostered an alliance between local schools, parental groups, local authorities and recreational and extracurricular workers, with the mutual goal of decreasing the likelihood of adolescent substance use in the community.

IMPACT

Following the implementation of the programme, there have been two demonstrable impacts. Firstly, substance decreased more in Iceland than in any other Western country, and secondly, there has been a marked strengthening of protective factors. From 1997 to 2007, there was a steady decline in the proportion of adolescents reporting:

- Being drunk during the last 30 days (from 42% to 20%)

- Having alcohol-related accidents or injuries (14% in 1995, to 4% in 2003)

- Smoking one cigarette or more per day (from 23% to 10%)

- Having ever tried marijuana (17% to 10%)

Protective factors also strengthened, with increasing proportion of adolescents reporting that:

- They often or almost always spent time with their parents during working days (23% to 31%)

- Their parents monitored whom they were spending time with in the evenings (49% to 67%)

- They almost never spent time downtown during the evenings (29% to 51%)

- They participated in organised sports four times or more per week (24% to 30%)

Furthermore, fewer adolescents reported they had been outside after 10 pm, four times or more often during the previous week (36% to 30%).

> *"We believe that the decline is in large part due to the assiduous efforts by Icelandic authorities to both reduce risk factors and strengthen a broad range of parental, school and community protective factors."*[137]

137 Inga Dora Sigfusdottir, Thorolfur Thorlindsson, Alfegeir
     Logi Kristjansson, Kathleen M. Roe and John P. Allegrante,
     Substance use prevention for adolescents: the Icelandic Model,
     Health Promotion International, 24(1), December 2008

CONCLUSIONS

Given the success of the initial programme in Iceland, it has been extensively researched and reported on.[138] In Iceland, the decline in risky behaviour has been matched by an increase in pro-social and positive behaviour. Iceland has not suffered the steep rise in mental ill health other countries have. This is because those 'protective factors' were deliberately put in place. Between 1997 and 2012, the percentage of young people aged 15 and 16 who reported often or almost always spending time with their parents on weekdays doubled—from 23% to 46%– and the percentage that participated in organised sports at least four times a week increased from 24%to 42%.
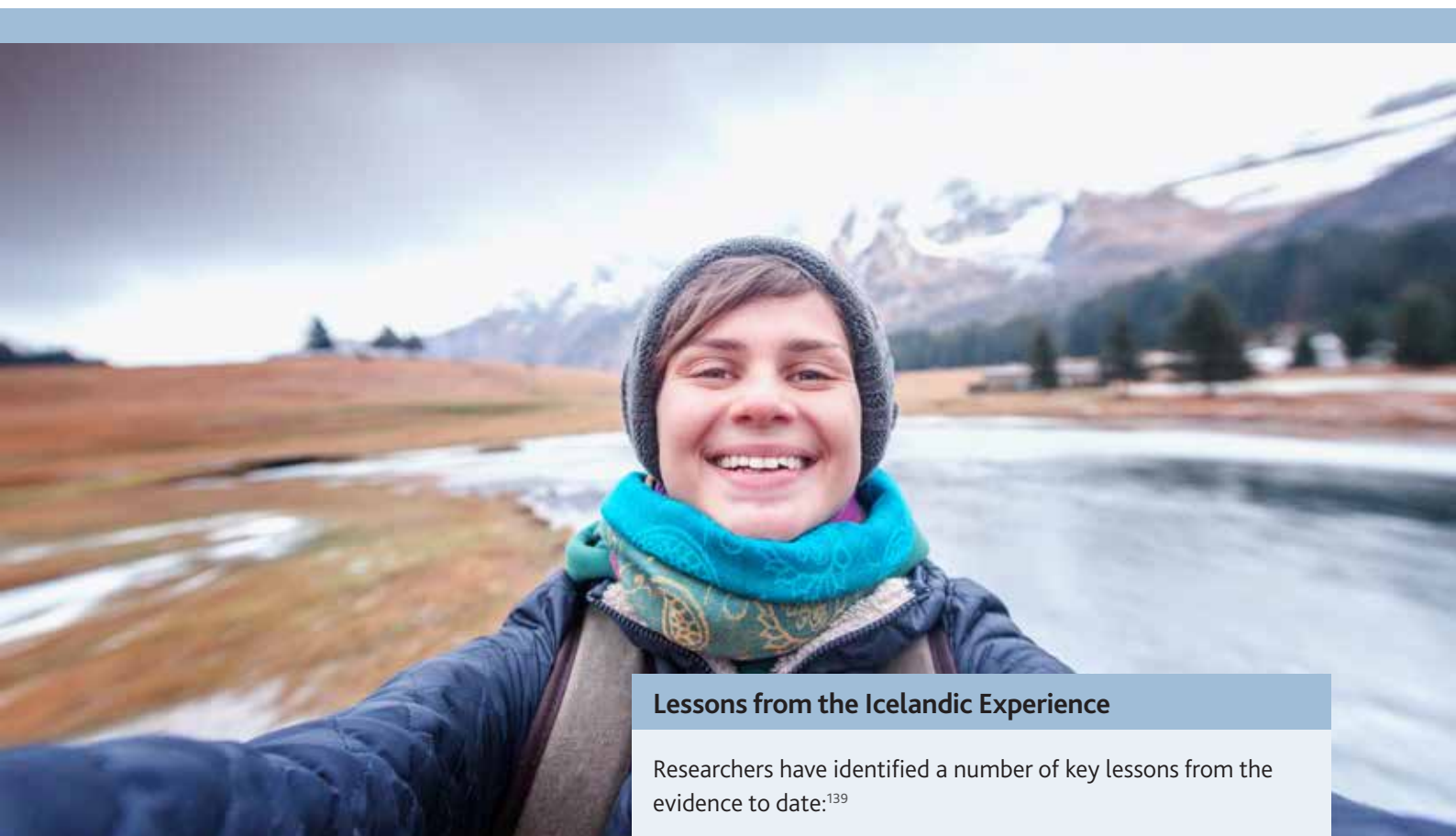
Analysis of these shifts revealed clear differences between the childhood lives of those who took up drinking, smoking and other drugs, and those who did not. A set of factors emerged as strongly protective, and are applicable more broadly:

- **Family:** Parents are the first and most important influence, even on adolescents and young adults. The study showed the positive impact from increasing the total time spent with parents during the week and not being outdoors in the late evenings. Furthermore, parents need support, encouragement and expectation to do their job well.

- **Community:** young people need meaningful communities and peer groups, not just a social network online; this usually means a strong geographical community. For example, there was a measurable benefit from participation in organised activities—especially sport—three or four times a week.

- **School:** the importance of social capital and the convening power of schools as a venue for strengthening it should not be underestimated. In particular, students benefited from feeling cared about at school.

Many of these developments are not the responsibility of government. Society as a whole pulled together. Nevertheless, there was a clear sense of national leadership, expressed in some simple measures such as keeping children indoors late at night, even in the Arctic summer. Government also made clear what it thought parents should be doing, for instance by designing templates for home-school agreements. This combination of political leadership and national engagement is key.

Iceland represents a good example. Of course, it is a far smaller country than the UK but this approach has already been considered and adopted by over 200 European cities (including mid-sized cities, such as Gothenburg and Cork). The experience in these cities provides more supportive evidence that what was done there could be done anywhere in the UK.

138   Paul North, 'What lessons can the UK learn from Iceland to
        decrease drug use among its young people?', *Volteface*, 2017

Lessons from the Icelandic Experience

Researchers have identified a number of key lessons from the evidence to date:[139]

1. "Prevention efforts need to simultaneously activate the peer group, the school, the family and those who organise youth activities to reduce substance use"

2. "Relationships with peers and parents and participation in organised youth work are key to substance use prevention." There is an "enduring importance of social relationships, parental social support and social control in particular and the importance of meaning in the everyday social world of adolescents."

3. "Substance use prevention efforts need to be started early, at around the age of 12 or 13, when intervention has the best possible chance of interrupting experimentation and stemming use."

4. "Reaching young people early in their school years, as well as the parents of younger adolescents, is critical to success."

5. "It is possible to work effectively with both known and emergent community-level risk and protective factors for a particular behaviour without attempting to prove a direct causal relationship."

The relevance of this example to the UK is because it demonstrates an effective community-led approach to addressing challenges of adolescents in an evidence-led and programmatic way. Rather than seeing it as just a model for addressing substance abuse, these researchers have concluded:[140]

> "The result is a model of intervention that has been grounded in efforts to address adolescent substance abuse, but could be applied to a wide range of emergent health issues."

The following chapter will consider how these principles could be applied to the emerging mental health challenge identified earlier.

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139 Paul North, 'What lessons can the UK learn from Iceland to decrease drug use among its young people?', *Volteface*, 2017

140 Inga Dora Sigfusdottir, Thorolfur Thorlindsson, Alfegeir Logi Kristjansson, Kathleen M. Roe and John P. Allegrante, *Substance use prevention for adolescents: the Icelandic Model*, Health Promotion International, 24(1), December 2008.

MAKING THE RIGHT FUTURE

In the brief history of adolescence sketched above, we referred to the role of adolescence in traditional societies, whether settled or nomadic. In both, young people had clear, demanding and rewarding roles that served the community and prepared them for adulthood. Industrial society partly undid those roles. 21st century society, however, could recreate them in new forms. Our society is both settled and nomadic in its characteristics. The challenge of our times is how to combine people's need and desire to belong to a place—the settled community where they live, raise their children and grow old—and the opportunities and demands of a globalised, digital economy and culture. In dealing with this challenge, young people have a range of possible roles to play, in both the economy and the community, which could be of immense value.

One feature of the future we can predict with confidence is the steady transformation of employment. Increasingly, machines will do the work of harvesting, processing and sorting. The roles human beings specialise in will be the ones for which humans are particularly well suited: roles requiring creativity, community and care. We will need people with an appetite for invention, innovation and enterprise, for risk and exploration and we will need people with an impulse to compassion, who will build community, nurture the young, look after the sick and elderly, and help manage society as it undergoes the 'great acceleration'.[141]

These are the roles that young people should be preparing for—and for which they already demonstrate an aptitude. Rather than seeing adolescents as overgrown children or inadequate adults, we should see them as what they are: strong, resourceful people, distinct from both children and adults and with their own distinct qualities, capabilities and needs. They are inexperienced and prone to risk-taking, but they are also the guides our society needs as we navigate the internet age and build a new economic and social model for our times.

We will only be able to realise this opportunity if the upcoming generation of adolescents are prepared for adulthood in the best possible way. In light of all this evidence, we believe that there are three broad policy questions that need to be addressed:

- What needs to be done to strengthen the support families can give to adolescents?

- How can we ensure that adolescents have access to meaningful communities and peer groups, not just a social network online?

- What is the role for schools in supporting the emotional wellbeing and mental health of adolescents?

We look at each of these arenas in turn and explore what is needed for new policy and practice to give effect to positive change.

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141   UK Commission for Employment and Skills, *The Future of Work: Jobs and skills in 2030*, 2014

PARENTAL INFLUENCE

The primary responsibility of helping young people grow up rests ordinarily with their parents. The job of parents is to shepherd their children into adulthood, steadily releasing them into larger and larger spheres of responsibility and adult interaction. Some questions that need addressing:

- How do we support parents in creating the home environment that is both nurturing and challenging?
  - How do we help parents find the right balance between abandonment and over-control?
  - What advice can be given to parents, and in what form?
- What type of expectations can and should be usefully established?
  - In addition, what is the role of community in doing so?
  - What political and cultural leadership is necessary in this space?

MEANINGFUL COMMUNITIES

Giving people the power to build community should be the objective of government, business and civil society. For this is the job of society as a whole. Young people need to be enabled—as in Iceland—to participate in positive activity, with their peers and outside the home. The delivery of structured and unstructured activity for young people is a clear social responsibility of a neighbourhood.

- How do we invigorate the engagement of youth in local communities?
  - How can an asset-based approach be applied to the whole generation of young people growing up today?
- How do we better understand the effects of children's online experience in social media and gaming?
  - How can the damaging effects of social media be moderated?
  - How can social media support the mental health of adolescents?
  - What is a realistic policy response to this challenge?

SCHOOLS AND TRANSITIONAL INSTITUTIONS

We have argued that parental responsibility is the foundation of a good adolescence and that young people also need 'meaningful communities', which mostly means geographical communities, to belong to. They also need a set of formal institutions that help them make the transition to adulthood. Schools play a critically important role given their significant direct engagement with pupils and also given their convening power for parents and seedbed for community social capital.

- How can schools support the emotional wellbeing and mental health of pupils?
  - What is the 'job' of a school in relation to that of a parent?
  - How can we ensure that young people develop the mental resilience needed to thrive and confidently contribute in the modern world?
- How can schools prepare students for what they will actually need?
  - How do we help school leavers can both understand, and navigate the myriad routes that face them on leaving school?
  - How do we align the models of further education with local businesses' demand for workers?

CONCLUSION

Just as no past generation could predict the future, neither can we. The great technological acceleration that is upon us presents a bewildering array of opportunities and threats to young people entering adulthood. Much needs to change in our public institutions and in our political and social conventions to maximise the potential of the next generation, and to mitigate the risks they face. This task needs to start with a recognition of their role as 'makers', to a degree unprecedented in any previous generation.

We have argued that for them to prosper, and to help society as a whole to prosper, society needs to equip young people with a set of skills and tools with which to 'make' as benign a future as possible. This is the great challenge for public policy, for business, families and communities in the years ahead.

As the psychologist Erik Erikson put it, the main task of the adolescent is to answer the question 'who am I?' He or she is searching for identity, both as an individual and as a member of a group. The end of the process is when 'the person develops a well-defined and positive sense of self in relationship to others.'[142]

In developing societies, individual identity, group membership, social function, and mores and beliefs tend to be more clearly given. In the developed world, and in particular in the West, all of these things are more open. Rather than given, they are chosen.

This choice represents much opportunity and with the freedom proffered by social media, young people approaching adulthood today have more access to information and choices than ever before. With any opportunity, however, there are risks. To manage these risks, strong and supportive communities, be this family or society, and institutions, will be required to equip young people for adulthood. Otherwise, we risk worsening the adolescent mental ill-health, which is detailed in this paper.

In modern Britain, the phase of modern adolescence and emerging adulthood is marked by a profound cultural confusion, in which the traditional 'role experimentation' of adolescence is made dangerous by a failure of adult society to clearly articulate the nature of adulthood and the values and expectations of the community. Young people need the stability of belonging to a society that, although confident of its own identity, welcomes people of different opinions and also allows adolescents this freedom. Our young adults are strong, resourceful people with their own ambitions, and it will be our job to make sure their unique experiences and skill sets are utilised to the best extent.

However, in order to answer these questions we also need to ensure that the challenges are properly assessed and the causes diagnosed. As part of the Legatum Institute's work on adolescent mental health, we will continue to assess the challenges and opportunities facing this emerging generation. This exercise will be conducted in partnership not only with academics and practitioners but also with wider groups such as marketeers, whose analysis will provide some of the most useful insights into young people's attitudes and behaviour.

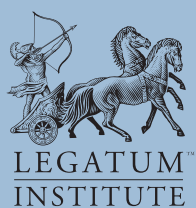142 E.H. Erikson, *Childhood and society*, 1963

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Philippa is CEO of the Legatum Institute. Prior to joining the Institute, she was Chief Executive of the Centre for Social Justice (CSJ), a think tank she co-founded in 2004. Between 2010 and 2015, Philippa served as Special Adviser to the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions. In this post she played a key role in devising and implementing the government's social justice agenda, advising the Prime Minister on the introduction of Universal Credit and other key reforms, including measures to increase social investment and alleviate child poverty. Philippa's early career was spent in the voluntary sector, working to rehabilitate drug addicts and former triad gang members in Hong Kong and Macau. In Britain, she has founded and run numerous social justice projects, including serving as Executive Director of the Bridge Project, a voluntary sector project that provided supported accommodation for homeless men and women. Philippa was made a life peer in 2015 in recognition of her work tackling poverty and social breakdown.

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