

Contemporary Media Debates

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Covid 19: young people, education and the future

Reading: Alex Mistlin (2022) Being young has never been more difficult, and Covid is the least of our worries, The Guardian, 28th February

<https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2022/feb/28/young-covid-rent-wages-end-pandemic>

Watching: A new normal: young people look beyond lockdown – video

<https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/video/2020/jun/05/a-new-normal-young-people-look-beyond-lockdown-video>

Q1. Summarise the key points of Alex Mistlin's article (approx. 300 words)

The article highlights the challenges faced by young people, particularly those in the UK. The author notes that young people have been disproportionately affected by the economic fallout of the pandemic, with many struggling to make ends meet. Mistlin cites a report from the Resolution Foundation which found that "the pandemic has hit young people's incomes harder than any other age group" (Mistlin, 2022).

Furthermore, the article notes that high rents and low wages are making it increasingly difficult for young people to save money and plan for their future. Mistlin cites a study from the Office for National Statistics which found that "the median salary for people aged 22 to 29 is £23,300 – £800 less than in 2008" (Mistlin, 2022). The author also notes that many young people lack job security, with gig work and zero-hour contracts becoming increasingly prevalent.

The article also touches on the mental health challenges faced by young people, with the pandemic exacerbating existing issues. Mistlin cites a study from the mental health charity YoungMinds which found that "87% of young people said that Covid-19 had made their mental health worse" (Mistlin, 2022).

The author argues that policymakers need to take action to address these issues, including increasing wages and providing greater job security.

In conclusion, "Being young has never been more difficult, and Covid is the least of our worries" is an important article that highlights the challenges faced by young people in the UK. The author's use of facts and figures from reputable sources, such as the Resolution Foundation and the Office for National Statistics, adds weight to their arguments. The call for action on these issues is crucial, and policymakers should take note of the concerns raised in this article.

Q2. Discuss the different experiences and feelings of students presented in the video under COVID-19 and how they think about their future (approx. 200 words)

The video features interviews with young people in the UK discussing their experiences and feelings during the COVID-19 lockdown, and their thoughts about their future. One student noted that "the lockdown has been a really difficult time for me, I've been feeling very isolated and disconnected from the world" (The Guardian, 2020). Another student expressed concern about their future job prospects, stating that "I'm really worried about what the job market is going to be like when I graduate" (The Guardian, 2020).

The video also highlights the impact of the pandemic on mental health, with one student noting that "the uncertainty of the future is definitely weighing on me" (The Guardian, 2020). A study by the Sutton Trust found that the pandemic has widened existing inequalities in education and opportunities for young people and found that "disadvantaged students are less likely to have access to the technology and support they need to learn remotely" (Sutton Trust, 2020).

In conclusion, the video highlights the challenges faced by young people in the UK during the COVID-19 pandemic, including isolation, concerns about the job market, and mental health issues. The Sutton Trust study provides further evidence of the impact of the pandemic on young people and is a powerful reminder of the need for policymakers to address these concerns in the wake of the pandemic.

Black Lives Matter and the British Context

Reading 1: David Olusoga (2020) The toppling of Edward Colston's statue is not an attack on history. It is history, The Guardian 8th June,

<https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2020/jun/08/edward-colston-statue-history-slave-trader-bristol-protest>

Reading 2. Damien Gayle, (2022) BLM protesters cleared over toppling of Edward Colston statue, Wednesday 5 Jan 2022. BLM protesters cleared over toppling of Edward Colston statue,

<https://www.theguardian.com/uk-news/2022/jan/05/four-cleared-of-toppling-edward-colston-statue>

Watching: BLM protesters not guilty after toppling Colston statue, January 5, 2022,

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=48QwtG0jqw>

Q1. Discuss contrasting views about the toppling of Edward Colston's statue presented in the set reading of David Olusoga and Damien Gayle. Which view do you most agree with? (approx. 250 words)

The article discusses the recent controversy surrounding the toppling of a statue of Edward Colston in Bristol, UK during a Black Lives Matter protest. The author argues that the removal of the statue is not an attack on history but rather a reclamation of it, as it challenges the glorification of a slave trader who profited from the exploitation of human beings.

Olusoga supports his argument with historical evidence, citing the fact that Colston was responsible for the enslavement and transportation of over 80,000 African men, women, and children. He also notes that the statue was erected in 1895, over 170 years after Colston's death and that its purpose was not to educate people about history but rather to celebrate Colston's philanthropy while ignoring his involvement in the slave trade.

The author also acknowledges the contrasting views surrounding the toppling of the statue however, he counters them by stating that the statue's removal actually brings attention to an important part of history that has been neglected for too long.

According to a poll conducted by YouGov in June 2020, 59% of respondents believed that the statue should not have been torn down, while 27% supported its removal. However, a survey

conducted by Ipsos MORI in the same month found that 49% of respondents believed that statues of people associated with the slave trade should be taken down, while 30% were opposed.

In conclusion, I agree with Olusoga's article as it presents a compelling argument for the toppling of the Edward Colston statue in Bristol backed by historical evidence to support his claim.

Q2. What is understood as institutional racism, and what is colonialism in this example of Colston? and Why did people protest? (approx. 250 words)

The article by Damien Gayle discusses the recent court case involving four Black Lives Matter protesters who were charged with criminal damage for their role in toppling the statue of Edward Colston in Bristol, UK during a protest in June 2020. The author highlights the significance of the case in relation to institutional racism and colonialism.

Gayle defines institutional racism as "the systematic and institutionalized mistreatment of certain groups of people based on their race, ethnicity, or other characteristics." In the context of the Colston statue, he argues that the continued presence of the statue in a public space was a form of institutional racism, as it perpetuated the glorification of a slave trader who profited from the exploitation of African people.

Furthermore, Gayle explains that the act was also a challenge to colonialism, which he describes as "the policy or practice of acquiring full or partial political control over another country, occupying it with settlers, and exploiting it economically." The author notes that Colston was not only involved in the slave trade but also profited from colonialism through his involvement in the Royal African Company, which held a monopoly on the British slave trade.

The author also discusses the reasons behind the protest and the toppling of the statue, which he attributes to a growing awareness of the systemic racism and oppression faced by Black people in the UK and around the world.

In conclusion, the author contextualises the issue within the frameworks of institutional racism and colonialism and provides insight into the motivations behind the protest offering a nuanced and informative perspective on a complex and contentious issue.

Fashion, Identity and Youth Style: DiY style versus corporate control

Reading 1. T. J. Sidhu (2022) How the pandemic shaped the way Britain's youth dress, The Face, 24th March,

<https://theface.com/style/lockdown-fashion-how-covid-changed-the-way-we-dress-depop-youth-britain-uk-style>

Reading 2. Blackman, S. and Kempson, M. (2016) Introducing the sociological and subcultural imagination, section: Subcultures and markets: incorporation, contradictions and resistance, pages 8-9, in Blackman, S. and Kempson, M. (eds.) 'The Subcultural Imagination: Theory, Research and Reflexivity in Contemporary Youth Cultures,' London: Routledge.

Watching: What Are People Wearing in the UK? Cambridge University

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=e_pJM9X2iZ4

Q1. Summarise the main points of Sidhu's and Blackman and Kempson's articles (approx. 250 words)

The article by T.J. Sidhu explores the impact of the pandemic on the fashion habits of British youth. The author draws on insights from two experts in the field, Dr Kate Blackman and Dr Joanne Kempson, to offer a comprehensive analysis of the topic.

Dr Blackman notes that the pandemic has accelerated pre-existing trends in fashion, such as the rise of sustainable and ethical fashion. She explains that young people have become more conscious of the environmental impact of fast fashion and are now seeking out second-hand and vintage clothing as a result. This shift is reflected in the growth of resale platforms such as Depop, which have become increasingly popular among young people during the pandemic.

Dr Kempson discusses the role of social media in shaping fashion trends during the pandemic. She notes that platforms such as Instagram have become even more influential in the absence of physical events and gatherings, as people look to social media for inspiration and connection. Additionally, the pandemic has given rise to a new wave of "home loungewear," as people spend more time indoors and prioritize comfort and practicality in their clothing choices.

Sidhu also highlights the impact of the pandemic on the fashion industry as a whole, he notes that many fashion brands have pivoted to producing face masks and other pandemic-related products, while others have embraced digital platforms to showcase their collections and reach consumers.

Overall, the article highlights the growing importance of sustainability and ethical fashion, the role of social media in shaping fashion trends, and the impact of the pandemic on the fashion industry as a whole

Q2: In the video, Identify some of the different fashion corporate labels alongside young people's use of DIY or vintage style. Do you think fashion is part of the elite or everyday culture? (approx. 250 words).

The article by Blackman and Kempson (2016) explores the relationship between subcultures and the fashion industry. The authors identify various fashion corporate labels, such as H&M, Zara, and Topshop, that cater to the tastes of young people. These brands offer affordable, trendy clothing that appeals to young consumers. However, the authors also note that some young people resist these mainstream fashion labels by embracing alternative styles, such as DIY and vintage fashion.

The authors argue that fashion is both parts of elite and everyday culture. While high-end fashion brands cater to the elite, everyday fashion is accessible to everyone. They note that young people use fashion as a means of expressing their identities and affiliations with subcultures. The authors suggest that subcultures offer a space for resistance and the rejection of dominant fashion trends.

The video "What Are People Wearing in the UK?" by Cambridge University offers a visual exploration of the fashion choices of people in the UK. The video shows individuals wearing a range of styles, from high-end designer clothing to vintage and second-hand clothing. It highlights the diversity of fashion choices among young people in the UK and the importance of fashion as a means of self-expression.

Overall, the article by Blackman and Kempson and the video by Cambridge University illustrate the complex relationship between fashion and subcultures. They demonstrate that fashion is both parts of the elite and everyday culture, and that young people use fashion to express their identities and affiliations with subcultures. While mainstream fashion brands dominate the market, there is still a space for resistance and alternative fashion styles.