

# Essay on how the us has changed

[Family](#), [Parents](#)



In order to study the way that life in America has changed over the past fifty years or so, I interviewed David. David was the age that I am now in the year 1970. From speaking with David, I have learned that there are many differences between the youth that he led and the one that I am living today. In terms of family life and of living a care-free youth, David seems to have had a more positive, wholesome experience.

One of the things that stands out as different between David's youth and mine concerns personal freedom. When David spoke of what he used to do for fun with his friends, he told anecdotes of him and a group of young men playing practical jokes on each other in public, narrowly avoiding big trouble. When he talked of going out in the evenings, he never mentioned concerns about crime, for example of being mugged in the city late at night. This type of worry, however, has a regular impact on my daily life. My friends and I are careful about where we go, particularly at night, and would never dream of playing public practical jokes.

Crime has risen in America over the past fifty years, and there are many reasons for this. For example, the Mara Salvatrucha, otherwise known as the MS-13 gang, only properly formed in the 1980s (Mara). When David was twenty-one, what is now the most dangerous criminal gang in America, at that time, didn't even exist. This is just one example of how American society has changed over the space of two generations.

David told me that when he was twenty-one he was working as a bin collector, as he was trying to fund himself through college. He explained that it was fairly common for students to work in this type of employment. I was surprised by this as, among my friends, I don't know of anyone who works in

this type of job. Shamefully, many students today consider a job collecting refuse to be below them. However, when David was young, it wasn't so common to follow a long education and students worked hard to be able to follow their dreams. David came from a low-income family. His father died when he was a child and his mother did not work. He and his sister were brought up very frugally and there was certainly no money offered to him for education by his mother. It seems that in 2001, many more students come from affluent backgrounds, and have parents who can help them through education. Alternatively, for young people from poorer backgrounds, there are scholarships and other forms of funding more readily available.

Family life appears to have changed a lot over the last fifty years. When David was a child, most mothers stayed at home to look after the children and the home. Furthermore, most children had parents who were married; it was rare to meet a child with divorced parents. Of course, David was a little different to his peers as his father had died. However, his mother still stayed at home throughout most of her life, in a traditional house-wife role. Today, it is just as common to meet a young person whose parents has divorced as it is to meet one whose parents are still happily married. Additionally, the majority of women, even mothers, appear to go out to work now, unlike forty years ago.

David did not have a car when he was my age. In fact, he told me that it was unusual for someone so young to own a car, or even have access to one. His family did not have a car and his mother could not drive. He was interested in cars from a young age, however, and one of his goals was to have one of his own. Most people I know have their own car, and many families in

America now have several cars between them. This is another example of how affluence has increased over time and, possibly, how priorities have changed as well.

When asked what he was worried about at the time, David spoke of what the nation was worried about. He told me about the Vietnam War, and what an impact it was having, not only on the American soldiers who were deployed to fight out there, but also the Americans that were at home, hearing about the developments on the news. As the war took place from 1955 until 1975 (Learn), it was present during much of David's youth. Obviously, in recent years, America has had similar topical issues such as the wars in Afghanistan and in Iraq. However, these wars have not been on the same scale, in terms of deaths nor in terms of horror, to that of Vietnam. Nonetheless, all of these wars have raised controversy concerning the legitimacy of America's involvement and, furthermore, the overall goodness of America's conduct. In this way, both David and I have lived through similar, life altering events.

I am worried about terrorism and, like many Americans, this worry has existed since the dreadfulness of the Twin Towers attack in 2001, that killed nearly three thousand people (Terrorism). Although it was ten years ago, this occasion shaped America more significantly than any other event in my lifetime. When David was my age, terrorism was not a widely discussed, or thought about, topic. Most Americans will agree that the atrocities of 9/11 came as a shock. The attack was unprecedented and nobody could have predicted how they would feel in the case of such an event. However, now it seems to be on everyone's minds, a great deal of the time.

Having examined David's life at the age of twenty-one, and mine, and

compared them, I have learned that there are many differences. In terms of material wealth, America seems to have become a more positive place in which to live. However, there are areas of life which appear to have declined. For example, crime rates have increased and, in particular, those of violent crime. Crime is now something that most people worry about at times, where as it seems that it wasn't such an issue forty years ago. Overall, it appears that there are more issues to worry about nowadays, and that worrying also appears to start at an earlier age than it used to.

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