



Young women today: our lives, our school, our future

My name is Claire Maxwell and I work as a researcher at the Institute of Education, University of London. I am interested in how young women experience the world around them, and how schools, friends and family shape these experiences.

What is the study about?

Very little research has been done on the experiences of young women attending independent schools. Many people seem to assume that if a young person's education is being paid for, they must come from a very wealthy background or experience few difficulties in life.

This study hopes to give a more accurate and real account of young women's experiences of school, as well as exploring in which ways young women are acting powerfully, confidently, purposefully and in what instances they feel like they have fewer choices and less control over what is happening.

I am interested in understanding how you experience being a young woman through hearing more about your experiences of friendships, relationships and school, as well as your hopes for the future.

How will the study be undertaken?

at four different independent schools across X (location), talking to young women preparing to do their GCSEs and those in the Sixth Form.

First I will spend time experiencing the school day as you do – by attending some of your classes, extra-curricular activities and so forth.

I then hope to recruit around 30 young women in the school to talk to me about some of the following with a group of friends and/or through a one-to-one interview:

- life at the school
- how your school is different to the other independent schools
- why you decided to come to this school
- the different friendship groups that exist within the school
- who else you spend time with outside of school
- how young women and men at the school get on
- what expectations your families have of you
- what aspirations you and your friends have for the future

Why might you like to take part in this study?

In previous studies I have done, young women have said they really enjoyed the opportunity to debate and discuss their attitudes and thoughts about being young women today and about their experiences of school, friendships, relationships, either in a group or on their own.

A few young people have been told me that because I am independent from the school they feel more comfortable sharing their thoughts and ideas with me.

Another reason why you might feel taking part in the study is worthwhile would be to challenge the views some people might hold about young women and how they live their lives, and about young people who go to independent

Because we will be talking about personal issues – such as your experience of the school, what you and your family hope for you and your future, your friendship experiences and so on, it is important to make sure that you feel happy about taking part in the research. Remember - you can decide not to answer some questions or stop taking part in the discussion AT ANY TIME.

What happens next?

I hope to be spending time at your school over the coming few months....

If you are interested in taking part in the study or just finding out more about it, you can:

- Grab me when I come into school and we can have a chat
- Text or call me on 07977 140 575
- Send me an e-mail: c.maxwell@ioe.ac.uk

I can then tell you a little more about the study and answer any questions you have. If you are still interested in taking part in the study after we have spoken, we will discuss if you would like to take part in a small discussion group with some of your friends and/or a one-to-one interview.

You will then get to choose the date, time and place when our discussion takes place.

Confidentiality and anonymity in the study and sharing your views and experiences. What steps will be taken to ensure you can speak in confidence to me and that what you say will remain anonymous?

- I will not tell the school who has agreed to take part in the study – and the Head teacher has agreed to this.
- We will organise the group discussions and interviews somewhere reasonably private.
- Before we start the group discussions, we will agree some 'group rules', one of which will be that we don't share what is talked about with others outside the group.
- Everything discussed during the one-to-one interviews will remain confidential - the only time I might have to break this promise is if I think you, or someone else, might be at risk of being hurt. If this happens, I would aim talk to you about what options there are for dealing with this first.
- If you would like, I can give you a copy of the write-up of our discussion once we have finished. If you are unhappy or uncomfortable about anything we talked about, you can let me know and we can delete it from the transcript.
- Your name and the name of the school will not be revealed in any papers or reports I write.
- I will also change the names of other people, places or events you might discuss to ensure they are not identifiable (even by others at your school).

What if I change my mind... but taking part in the study at any time – after we have chatted about it, before, during or after the group discussions and/or interview...

Hearing about the outcome of the study I will write up what I have learnt from talking to you and others in a readable, not too long booklet and make sure I come back to the school next year to share this with you.

You might be interested to look at the booklet I put together from my last study to get an idea: <http://www.ioe.ac.uk/study/departments/tcru/5223.html> (download the 'Notebook for young people' on the right-hand side in the purple box).

I hope after reading this information sheet you are still interested in finding out more

