

Chapter 1: The Respect Study

The Respect study (Youth values: identity, diversity and social change) was funded by the Economic Social Research Council as part of their research programme—‘Children 5–16: Growing into the 21st century.’

The overall aim of the Respect study was to document and understand the moral landscapes of young people aged 11–16 living in five different parts of the UK. The study sought to explore a number of key issues:

- What or who do young people recognise as sources of moral authority?
- How do young people perceive changes in values across generations? How do they cope and position themselves in relation to different, available value systems in contemporary society?
- How do young people understand the processes of their own moral development?
- What are the implications of the values which young people adopt for issues such as social inclusion and exclusion?

We were interested in how differences and similarities between young people in relation to these issues are affected by such variables as age, gender, ethnicity, religion, social class, type of family or household they are part of, and location.

As diversity was a key focus in the project we wanted to involve young people living in very different environments from each other. To this end, we took advice from educationalists, health and youth professionals in identifying the sample. Eight schools were recruited, four of which were located in one area in Northern Ireland. In addition to the school sample, the study also included a number of young people from residential care units, pupil referral units and specialist youth projects. The results from the questionnaires in the school sample will be the main focus of this report.

1.1 The Schools

Four of our schools are in England and four are in Northern Ireland. In the short description of the schools below, all names have been changed to protect confidentiality. Schools will be referred to by number in tables and by name in the report.

1.1.1 *The Schools in Northern Ireland*

While the physical distances between the four schools in Northern Ireland is not great, they are located in areas which reflect the diversity of traditions there and are attended by young people from across different religious, class and sectarian divides. Two of the schools are on a religious interface, one Catholic, one Protestant, one is a new designated integrated school and the fourth is a school whose religious make up has changed in recent years due to internal migration in the area.

Turnmill (School 1) was originally a Protestant school but is now attended by a higher proportion of Catholics due to the steady outflow of the Protestant community

from the surrounding area. The school is located in an inner city area and has a predominantly working class catchment.

Knowlands High (School 2) is located in a suburban area of the city, with a mixed class and religious (integrated) catchment. Young people are bused and driven into the school and come from within the city, the outskirts of the city, as well as rural hinterlands and neighbouring county.

St. Saviour's (School 3) is situated in an inner city community with a working class and religiously homogeneous catchment (Catholic). The school is located in a Catholic enclave—a community surrounded by 'the other side' and is a site for sectarian disputes and conflict.

Castleglen (School 4) is a Protestant school situated on the interface with St. Saviour's. It lies in the heart of a predominantly Protestant inner city area with a working class catchment. The area suffers from similar levels of deprivation and unemployment to that experienced by the community served by St Saviours. The visibility of a sectarian demarcation of space in this community is painted on the wall murals and the kerb stones

1.1.2 The English schools

North Park (School 5) is located in a large housing estate with a working class and ethnically homogeneous catchment. The estate is one of the largest in Europe, developed in the 1930s as a 'garden city' creating housing 'fit for heroes.' Today much of the accommodation is derelict and vandalised. Located several miles from the nearest city or town, the estate is both physically and socially isolated, offering few commercial or cultural facilities. Unemployment is high, as are levels of petty crime and drug use. A motorway physically divides the estate, public transport is poor.

South Park (School 6) is located in inner city London in a largely working class, ethnically diverse, and fast changing community. While up to 17 languages are spoken in the school, many young people live their life outside of school in small ethnically homogeneous communities. Estates in the area are notorious for drug use, joyriding and the crime rate is generally high.

Forest Green (School 7) is located in a commuter belt to London with a largely middle class and ethnically homogeneous catchment. The school is located in a greenbelt area, featuring picturesque villages as well as road and rail links to London. The area is mostly affluent although there are pupils from working class background at the school.

Crossways (School 8) is located in an isolated rural village with a mixed class and ethnically homogeneous catchment. The area is almost wholly agricultural. Some young people live up to 20 miles from the school in very isolated areas only seeing other young people and friends at school. Public transport is poor and local services for young people are limited. Traditionally many young people would have taken up

employment on leaving school in their family business or farm, although this is now in decline.

Accessing and understanding young people's values and moral framework is a complex and challenging task which no one method of research could wholly achieve. The Respect study employed both quantitative and qualitative methods by way of generating data on the underlying structure of values to which young people subscribe. Initial pilot focus groups were held to inform the design, content and language of the questionnaire. These were also productive in generating issues that were explored in more depth in subsequent focus groups, fifty-six of which were held in all of the project sites in both school and non-school locations. The focus groups were structured around a 'game', whereby up to six or seven, potentially contentious, statements were discussed. Over 90 statements were available for use, a sample of which can be found in Appendix 1.

Following the focus group discussions individual interviews were held with 52 young people, all were volunteers from the focus group stage. In these interviews young people were asked to reflect on the sources of influence on their own value system as well as considering issues around difference, moral authority and their plans for the future.

Research assignments were given out to all young people in the questionnaire phase of the study (except in Turnmill where the head teacher felt that doing so would jeopardise a home survey that the school was administering). The assignment was designed to produce material on social change, both from the interviewee and interviewer's perspective. It was not presented as obligatory or as homework and 272 were completed.

Class based exercises, developing some of the themes raised by young people in the questionnaire, particularly those emerging from the dilemma question (q 27), were completed by young people in four schools.

The results from the qualitative data are written up elsewhere. This report will concentrate on data generated from the questionnaire.

1.2 This Report

The questionnaire developed by the Respect team was informed by the literature and previous studies in the field and in consultation with young people. Demographic detail on sex, age, social class, and religious and national affiliation was collected, as were details on leisure activity and media consumption. Young people responded to questions on their hopes and fears for the future, the dilemmas they face, and the people they look up to. The questionnaire also contained a number of base line attitudinal questions used in other large surveys, including some from the European Values Study (EVS) (Ashford and Timms, 1992, European Values Group, London, 1992), the West of Scotland 11–16 study (Medical Research Council Sociology Unit), British Social Attitudes (Barnados, 1994), and the ESRC 11–16 Adolescent Identities

(Banks *et al.*, 1992). Questions from these studies were used to gauge attitudes towards institutional authority and access opinions and attitudes on moral and ethical issues. Respondents were not asked specifically about their own behaviour and so inferences about young people's values are made through the attitudes and opinions they express rather than the behaviour they display. In consultation with one school we agreed to omit questions related to sex for years 7 and 8.¹

The questionnaire was administered by members of the Respect team to young people in the different locations, and was completed and returned directly to a researcher. An information leaflet about the project was also handed out at this stage and young people were given the opportunity to volunteer for participation in focus group discussions and individual interviews. A copy of the questionnaire is included in Appendix 3.

Analysis and presentation of results

The results presented in this document are primarily from the school questionnaire data paying particular attention to areas of variance in responses across:

- school
- age group
- gender
- ethnicity
- religion
- social class
- authority orientation
- parental strictness

Chi square has been used to test for significant differences throughout this analysis. Significance has been concluded where values are equal to or less than 0.05. Significant statistical differences are shown in the text as follows:

p<0.05-probability is less than 5 in 100 that differences were caused by chance

p <0.01-probability is less than 1 in 100 that differences were caused by chance

p<0.001-probability is less than 1 in 1000 that differences were caused by chance

Percentage values reported have been rounded to the nearest whole number.