YOUTH VALUES STUDY.

Analysis of Research Assignments.

Introduction.

The majority of adults (n=193) interviewed for the Research Assignments were clustered in the 30-50 age group, with 11 interviewees over 60, and 28 between 20 and 30. 146 of these were pupils' mothers: 44 were their fathers, and of the rest most were female relatives (grandmothers, aunts), friends, or unspecified females.
Totals from each area: School 7=96, School 5=25, School 8= 6, School 2=30, School 4=21, School 6=19 and School 3=77 (n=274).

The skew in distributions, in terms of gender and age of those interviewed and in favour of certain research sites above others, makes it impossible to carry out any simple but meaningful statistical analysis on the research assignments. Going through them myself, I was unable to identify any real patterns in terms of age and/or gender except obvious differences as when, for example, older respondents talked about the Second World War or horse-drawn milkfloats. The only thing that stood out was that both young people and adults in school 7 were obsessed with increases in cars and car travel. Instead, in what follows I have drawn out key themes/discourses around which responses were developed, and have done some basic descriptive statistics to get a more quantitative angle on these.

Changes then and now: Adults.

10 adults said that "everything" had changed from when they were young. On the whole, grown-up respondents felt that social changes had been for the better: "My mum would have liked to have been born now. Life's a doddle !" (g18: mother, 30-40 (school 7)). However, others believed that not all changes had been for the better, and some thought that things were more serious today for young people than in the past: "My mum commented that she was glad that she was 25 in the 1960s !" (g70 (school 7)).

Education.

Adults most often mentioned changes in *education*. They referred to diverse ways in which schooling had altered from when they were young. Most often (20%, about half of which were from school 3), they talked about the corporal punishment they used to face in school which young people today no longer encounter. Assignments mentioned caning and getting the strap, and in general adults said that schooling had been much stricter when they were young. A number told how harsh punishments

were given out for very minor offences. However, a key theme here was that pupils in the past also had more respect for teachers and the education system in general.

Other substantive educational changes focused on processes of teaching and learning. Here, adults mentioned the shift from grammar schools to the comprehensive system, the introduction of the National Curriculum, an increase in the number and choice of subjects for young people and an increased emphasis on science education. Some also mentioned the introduction of sex education. A good few noted that the emphasis on rote learning when they were young had disappeared. Some (all school 7, all female) talked about gendered changes, with much more encouragement today for young women to get a good education, and less sexism so that now, as one said, girls can do woodwork and boys cookery. Adults also described how schools today had far more and better resources and equipment, especially with the use of computers.

For almost all the adults who talked about education, such changes were seen as positive and beneficial. There was a general discourse here around *improvements* in educational standards and forms of learning from when these respondents were pupils themselves. Only four suggested that the quality of education had declined since they were young, due to increased administrative pressures on teachers and increased pressures on young people to achieve.

Adults' responses also developed another key discourse around the increased *importance* of education for young people today. This focused on notions that schooling was considered far less relevant for kids in the past than getting a job (14%). Then, "Getting work and contributing to the home were very important" (b18 (school 2)), which some linked to the lack of welfare benefits when they were young. Many adults (11%) mentioned their much lower school leaving age and said they had been expected to go out and earn an income for the family. Some made the point that their education had then inevitably been of a lower standard than that of young people today. Linked to this were stories that it had been far easier to get a job after leaving school in the past, so that education was less vital to getting employment which, some suggested, was as much about who you knew than the exams. you had passed. By contrast, these adults felt that young people today needed far higher levels of education and far more qualifications to find a job. This was linked to increasing unemployment and declining job security, even for those with decent credentials. Here, adults occasionally talked about the increasing pressure on young people today at school, who are forced to work much harder and face greater anxieties around education than when these respondents were young.

Family relationships and values.

Another key focus in adults' responses was on shifts in family relationships and values. These centred on two key areas: relationships between kids and their parents, and family relationships and values more widely.

10% told how parents were far more strict when they were young, and there were tales here of corporal punishment, especially from fathers. Some linked this decline in parental strictness to a wider discourse of declining parental values and duties, in

which parents today were constructed as refusing to take responsibility for their kids' behaviour. Several (n=12) suggested that young people today were far less respectful and obedient to their parents. However, a significant number of adults (16) saw a more positive side to increasingly relaxed and open parent-child relationships: "more openness now in talking about problems and not suppressing feelings" (g73 (school 7)). They welcomed the fact that young people could talk more easily to their parents than they had been able to themselves, particularly about formerly taboo subjects such as relationships and sexuality.

A good number of adults (12%) also talked more generally about changes in family relationships. A key theme here was the break-up of the nuclear family unit, with higher divorce rates and more single parent families. A recurrent theme was that "divorce was almost unheard of then" (b28 (school 2)). Many adults also spoke of how sex before marriage, a taboo when they were young, was now acceptable. Here, respondents developed a wider discourse on the family that spoke of a detrimental decline in family relationships, significance and security, and which descried the loss of "family values". Adults often invoked a "golden era" of the past in which family bonds were more enduring and family was viewed as far more important than today. Many suggested that families were closer and stronger in the past with far more shared time and activities, and talked very negatively of an increasing gap between parents, and between parents and young people.

Young People.

Adults' talk of "kids today" developed a key discourse around young people's greater freedom in contemporary society (27%). Many described how strict parenting had restricted their leisure time and social lives: they described how they had not been allowed out to socialise until they were much older, and also had to be home much earlier. As one assignment quoted, "life seems to be more carefree" (c7 (school 3)) for kids today. For some, these changes were gendered, with girls being allowed to socialise platonically with boys far more than in the past. A number of adults talked in general terms of having had more "responsibilities" when they were young than their counterparts have in the 1990s. Others stated more specifically that they had had to find work to earn money for the family, help out more with household chores, and look after young siblings. A key focus in this discourse was on young people's increasing "voice" in social life, a shift from the belief in the past that "children should be seen and not heard": "Children/young people have a stronger voice/place in society" (g41 (school 7)). Very few adults (n=10) took up the opposing discourse that kids today have far *less* freedom than in the past when the world was a safer place for young people, free from the fear of child molesters or abduction.

Young people's increased freedom, of movement, leisure and voice, was linked to another discourse around how kids today are "growing up faster" (9%). Here, some adults mentioned changes such as girls wearing make-up much younger, but the key focus was on shifts in young people's relationships. Many said that kids were free to have (hetero)sexual relationships at a younger age, and that in the past children matured much later. There was a stress here on the increased pressures young people today face in and around having relationships, particularly sexual ones. Adults said

that under-age and pre-marital sex were heavily taboo when they were young (although one grandmother, 70-80, said that teenage sex was common in her day !), and often mentioned the contemporary prevalence in teenage pregnancies as a significant consequent change.

A further key discourse in adults' talk around kids today was that young people are far more troublesome and unruly now than in the past (24%). Many suggested that young people are far more likely to drink, smoke and take illegal drugs, and at much younger ages. In particular, however, adults spoke of how "trouble" among young people was far more serious and prevalent than in the past. They described a different kind of "trouble" when they were young that was relatively minor and included behaviour such as knocking on people's doors, stealing apples from orchards, truanting, swearing, being cheeky and staying out late. By contrast, young people's "trouble" today was seen to be both different in nature and far more serious in its effects, with more anti-social activities and vandalism, more fighting in the streets, and more crime and violence (8%). Here, there was a sense of the *normality* of drugs and crime for kids today: "Young people accept violence and drugs as part of their everyday lives" (c17 (school 3)). Again, this was linked to the notion that young people have far less respect for and fear of adults and the authorities (6%). As one said, "Children get away with more crime now. Policemen used to smack the kids" (g78 (school 7)). Others too suggested that a policeman was an individual to be feared when they were young, but no longer. Here, adults' accounts constructed a past world of innocence, where young people did little worse than cat call, the horrors of drink, drugs and violence were unknown and a basic respect for law and order kept the peace. The world of their childhoods was viewed as a safer place. (There are similarities here with Pearson's thesis that fears of a new crime wave among young people are recycled by successive generations).

Finally, adults' responses developed a discourse around changes in young people's leisure pursuits and forms of fun. Crucially, this focused on changes in the *meaning* of leisure for young people. There was nostalgic talk of playing games such as hop-scotch, skipping and marbles, of building camps, fishing and walking, and of passing the time reading or knitting. The key here was adults' notion that "we made our own fun" in the past, and that young people today have more organised forms of leisure such as swimming pools, theme parks and leisure centres. Many said that young people today have more places to go, and that their social activities had shifted towards this kind of provision rather than making up their own pastimes. Contrasts were also drawn between the outdoor focus of leisure pursuits in the past, and kids today who spend their free time indoors, in front of the TV or computer. As one young person put it, "They had a different idea of what fun is" (d16 (school 4)). Some also suggested that perceptions of young people's leisure activities had shifted, so that what was viewed as harmless fun in the past, such as hanging around on the street corner, was now viewed as "trouble" by the police.

Nature and quality of life.

Adults also talked about changes in both the form and quality of daily life from when they were young. Here, their responses focused in particular on technological developments such as computers, TVs, CD players, and household equipment such as washing machines and dishwashers (15%). Others described the increasing sophistication of leisure pursuits, with better quality films and more high-tech equipment for activities and hobbies such as fishing. Changes in transport were also mentioned, especially an increase in the number of cars: many adults described walking much more in the past, especially to school, as well as cycling and using public transport to a greater extent (7%). Older respondents remembered the trams, carriages and carts of their youth. 10 talked about how improvements in health care and services and medical advancements had brought positive changes to the length and quality of life. A few cited the introduction of the welfare state. More generally, adults mentioned more and better housing and housing opportunities, bigger and better shops such as supermarkets, improved sports and leisure facilities and better working conditions and wages. Changes were thus above all seen as positive, and here respondents developed a wider discourse around the benefits of progress. They spoke of how scientific, technological and social advance had brought substantial and worthwhile improvements to our quality of life, in terms of better health and living conditions and more choice of goods and employment.

Some adults also mentioned changes in styles of fashion, music, money and food from when they were young. Often, these were linked to wider themes around materialism, consumerism and commercialism that developed a discourse of the negative side of progress. For example, a number stressed the greater importance today of having the "right" clothes and designer labels, especially for young people. 9% said that kids now have far more material goods and possessions and take money for granted: "children today have everything" (c42 (school 3)) and fail to appreciate the value of things. This more general theme of the commercialisation of the world, where all that matters is having the "right" consumer goods, was contrasted with a past golden age where, because material possessions were fewer and less important, more fundamental and precious aspects of human life and values were significant: "Money was short so the simple things in life were very important e.g. friendship" (d19 (school 4)). Here, there is a persistent notion that in the past, individuals had no need of particular possessions to be happy and that materialism is destroying the quality of life today: "People now are very discontented and always looking for more material things in life" (c1 (school 3)). Greater choice takes on a more sinister and destructive aspect in this discourse, interrupting what is important and valuable to social life and relationships in a world where we are "spoilt for choice" (h1 (school 8)). Advances in technology are seen to have brought a faster pace of life and increasing social alienation and stress: "There seems to be more of everything e.g. money, cars, houses, problems, people, temptations, pressure etc." (d9 (school 4)). Again, this was contrasted with the community spirit which some adults suggested characterised life in the past, a happier, less troubled age when people looked out for and after each other and life was "more easy going" (c49 (school 3)): "Shopkeepers knew everybody, as did the policemen who patrolled a village" (g79 - 70-80 (school 7)).

Wider discourses.

Adults' responses also developed some wider themes or discourses that cut across the categories discussed above. One of these focused on social changes around *gender* roles and behaviour. Here, adults described how, in contrast to when they were young, girls' education is now valued on a par with that of boys, and neither sex is restricted to particular subjects because of their gender. Some talked of the sexism in schools when they were young and felt that kids today are encouraged into diverse areas and professions regardless of whether they are boys or girls. A few also suggested that gender roles had changed within the family, with women and mothers more likely to go out to work and some male partners taking on more housework. Women were also seen to have greater choice in and opportunities for employment. In terms of social life, a number of adults felt that girls today have more freedom to go out and socialise, especially with members of the opposite sex, than in the past. A few said specifically that it was now considered far more acceptable for young women to drink alcohol than when they were young. Most seemed to see these changes as positive ones for society.

Another key discourse centred on the notion that young people today have less or no *respect* for adults or authority. 8 said that pupils have far less respect for teachers and the education system now that when they were young. 14 felt that in the past, children had more respect for their parents and elders and always did what they were told, constructing the youth of today as disobedient and abusive. Assignments described a "poor attitude to authority" (c67 (school 3)) among young people today and adults said that respect was at the core of being a child for them. The discourse that young people no longer have respect for their superiors was invoked most often to support and explain increases in young people's social and legal transgressions, their crime, drinking, drug-taking, violence and generally anti-social behaviour. Decline in young people's respect was thus viewed as a very negative social change. Some adults also spoke more generally about how people's respect for one another had decreased, with more intolerance of other groups and individuals and increasing selfishness, racism and sexism.

Finally, it is possible to identify a third discourse around an increasing *openness* in society. This focused in particular on greater candour around sex and sexuality. Here, adults talked about the introduction of sex education in schools, and increasing levels of sex, both heterosexual and homosexual, on TV and in films. They also described how parent-child relationships were becoming more open, in which issues around relationships and sex(uality) could be shared far more easily than in the past. This was linked to a greater tolerance in society, particularly for homosexuals.

What was left.

A few (n=5) adults from Northern Ireland mentioned improvements in the Troubles, with more equality between religious groups and positive benefits from peace agreements.

In some assignments (n=7), questions of change were understood at the personal level. Here, adults described feeling more mature and behaving more responsibly, as

well as changes in personal appearance and shifts in family relationships and positions.

What remains the same: Adults.

This section of the assignments was far less often completed than adults' perceptions of change. A few adults suggested that "everything" had changed since they were younger.

Again, in what follows, I will draw out key themes around which adults' responses were focused.

Education.

Adults talked in general terms about what had remained the same about going to school, such as methods of discipline, for example getting a detention, rules, homework, uniform and school dinners (22%). A key theme here however was that then as now, education was viewed as important. 9% suggested that education is fundamental to society and has always been a significant part of an individual's life. In the past and today, they said, working hard at school came before having fun for young people.

Employment.

8% of adults said that employment, like education, was of enduring importance in our lives. In a sense, these ideas contradict those assignments that propose jobs came first for young people in the past and that school work is key for them today, but some respondents drew on divergent discourses at the same time. The idea of the persisting significance of both education and employment seems to refer to more fundamental human values which stress that both lie at the core of social life.

Family relationships and values.

Adults also drew on ideas of basic human values in talking of similarities in family relationships then and now. 26% suggested that relationships between people, whether family, sexual partners or simply friends, are an intrinsic part of human life. They spoke of how relationships between parents and children are always similarly contoured: "The way parents care for and worry about their children" (g95 (school 7)), or how adults still think they are always right. Family responsibilities were also seen to remain unchanged. Some talked of how parents will always work hard for their kids, and teach them the difference between right and wrong. Many said that young people are still brought up to respect and honour their parents and face the same kinds of punishments, such as being grounded, when they misbehave. These

accounts spoke of the persisting meaning and value of family and of the importance of love, care and affection in our lives.

Being a young person.

15% said that what was basic about being a young person had changed little from when they were young. They talked about similar attitudes to parents, and of "adolescent moods". The theme here was the perennial concerns of the average teenager, such as spots, girl/boyfriend relationships, being bullied, worrying about yourself and questions of fashion. In contrast to those who suggested that young people are far more troublesome today, some adults here took a broader view to argue that there have always been rebellious gangs and kids who get into trouble for fighting, smoking, shoplifting, drinking and vandalism. A few talked of the persistence of cultural subgroups which remain a feature of teenage life even as fashions shift, such as Mods and Rockers in the past.

Leisure and pleasure.

Another key theme was that young people have always enjoyed themselves in similar ways across the generations. 25% spoke of how they enjoyed the same forms of fun when young as their counterparts today, especially through sports: football, rugby, cricket. Similarly, adults described talking and going out with friends, listening to music, going to the cinema and youth clubs and playing in the streets just like young people now. Even the oldest respondents talked about going to see films and having film stars as icons in their youth. Those who were youngest (less than 40), however, saw the greatest similarities here, for example enjoying pop music and going to discos. Overall, these accounts developed the idea that young people have always enjoyed themselves in similar basic ways, hanging out with friends and playing games.

Social values, attitudes and issues.

Adults also spoke about how different aspects of a basic "human nature" persist in social life (8%). Some were negative, talking about how there will always be bigotry and intolerance; others, more optimistically, felt that notions of respect for others was an enduring social value. Questions of right and wrong were seen to have altered little. A few adults talked of people's fundamental driving forces and desires, such as ambition or "keeping up with the Joneses". Persistent social problems were also mentioned, such as wars, poverty, homelessness, famines, global inequalities, sickness and death (5%).

Northern Ireland: the Troubles.

A common theme (n=17) in the assignments from Northern Ireland was of the persistence of the Troubles, of sectarianism and friction between different religious

groupings. As one said, "There is still mistrust between the two communities Catholics and Protestants" (c7 (school 3)), so that a number of adults described similar social restrictions, for example on staying out late, today as when they were young. For one respondent, this was the only thing that had endured: "The troubles is the only thing that springs to mind" (c70 (school 3)).

And finally...

On a lighter note, adults also told how the weather, topics of conversation, democracy, traditional events, money and the monarchy were still key features of our social life today.

Changes then and now: Young people.

Only a couple of kids felt that all or most changes in society had been for the worse, and they were more likely to say that social life has in general improved: "Things have got better and easier for the family in most cases" (g19 (school 7)), and "All changes have been good for society" (b10 (school 2)). A number felt that it was far more fun being young today than in the past: "I would prefer to live as a 12 year old in 1997" (b5 (school 2)).

Young people's responses coalesced around similar themes to those of the adults, and in what follows I organise the analysis into broadly the same categories.

Education.

In line with adults' responses, young people most often mentioned changes in corporal punishment within schools (18%). Here, the majority (75%) felt that doing away with the cane and the strap was a Good Thing. Their responses were not simply about fears of getting hurt, however. A few simply felt that education should not be carried out in an atmosphere of terror. Some drew on a prevalent contemporary social discourse against the physical punishment of children, and their opinions were often strong here: "I am against the idea of hitting a child. I think it is ridiculous and I will never approve of it" (c15 (school 3)). Others called up a wider discourse against any form of physical violence: "We should be taught that hitting is wrong and physical punishment does not reflect this" (g83 (school 7)). Often, this developed ideas around the sanctity of the body: "people's bodies should not be damaged" (g83 (school 7)).

The remaining 25%, however, felt that corporal punishment was in fact a good idea and lamented its demise. They felt that it might prevent young people from making trouble at school and deter classroom disruption which they believed had increased: "I think it was a bad idea to ban canes from school because there would be a lot less fighting and bullying if they had one" (b21 (school 2)).

28% took up the discourse prevalent in adults' accounts that education has improved considerably. Many young people said preferred the greater choice of subjects and improved teaching and learning methods they could enjoy today. In particular, they mentioned better resources, equipment and technology, especially computers. Most valued increased educational opportunities as a route to better employment: "people want as good education as they can get so that can get the jobs they want in higher positions" (?). They welcomed the chance to get more qualifications and so a decent job. Others took a wider view of the benefits of improved educational standards: "I think that better standards of education are a better change because more people can help the world to get more technology" (g19 (school 7)).

Here, some young people took the lead from adults to argue that education is more important today for getting employment. However, young people were more likely than adults to mention the increased pressures on them today to work harder, do well at school and get decent qualifications so that they can get a job. For young people, this discourse of the greater importance of education today was strongly linked to high levels of unemployment in contemporary society, especially among young people. For some, this negated the value of an education: "I think that unemployment has been bad as many people have got the qualifications but there is not enough jobs for them and what's the point of working hard when the chance of getting a job is unlikely with the qualifications that you have" (g24 (school 7)).

Family relationships and values.

6% of young people took up the adults' discourse around declining family values and relationships. They descried the deterioration and breakdown of the family unit, talking of increases in unmarried mothers, divorce and single parent families. This discourse was re-spoken from the perspective of young people themselves, emphasising how kids suffer when families fall apart: "children get really traumatized by it" (b28 (school 2)). Linked to this was a general feeling among these respondents that relationships between young people and their parents are breaking down with a collapse of communication. Many saw this as problematic because it prevented kids from being informed about issues such as drug-taking and relationships.

The same number of young people, however, took up an opposing discourse that family relationships have in fact changed for the better. This focused on ideas that today there is far *more* communication between parents and their children, mainly because parents are far less strict and authoritarian. Young people felt that this brought kids, parents and whole families closer together, suggesting that families today are more loving and spend more time together. The increased openness between parents and children was seen as a particularly beneficial change as it enables young people to talk through the dilemmas they face today around relationships, sex and drugs and gives them the chance to make an informed choice: "I think parents are a lot more open with their children, and can talk about sex and relationships much more easily. This is definitely a good change" (g72 (school 7)).

Young people.

Young people (9%) told a similar discourse to adults about the increased freedom of youth today. About half saw this as a beneficial change. They welcomed the freedom to do fewer chores, to dress freely, to go out more and stay out later. Above all, however, these young people emphasised the value of young people's increased *voice*. They rejected the past where kids were seen and not heard, and said that children should not be "shoved in a corner and ignored" (b17 (school 2)). This was linked to a contemporary discourse around the basic rights of children: "young people should be treated fairly (as humans)" (g22 (school 7)). Here, young people talked about changes in the law to improve child protection and the development of outlets for young people to talk about abuse and other problems.

There was a real conflict in the assignments here with an opposing discourse in which young people argued that kids' increased freedom is a social ill. This drew on ideas that where young people are allowed out younger and later, they will get up to more crime and violence. This was linked to ideas that young people today are not punished enough and so cause more trouble: "it means that people can be rude and get away with breaking the rules" (g79 (school 7)). Some suggested that it was this kind of freedom that had resulted in detrimental increases in teenage pregnancies, as well as relationships at a much younger age which they saw as harmful. There was a more general feeling here that a decline parental strictness and punishment had resulted in a decline in young people's morals and behaviour, who no longer respected their superiors or contributed to family life: "Even younger children again seem to be able to demand whatever they want from their mothers" (b12 (school 2)). These respondents wanted to see young people's voice and power diminished. Here again, the decrease in physical punishment was seen to have contributed to young people's deterioration: "Children's behaviour: they get away with far too much they should be allowed the odd slap on the wrists every now and again" (c30 (school 3)). (It's interesting to note here how these young people distance themselves from those "other" kids who don't respect their elders and make trouble - the use of "they" here allows the speaker to avoid being seen as like "them").

Only a few young people suggested that children today grew up too soon: they suggested that the youth of today is thereby losing a sense of meaning in life and the innocence of kids in the past.

A further, if less prevalent, discourse appeared in young people's responses proposing that kids today have far *less* freedom than in the past. It developed wider discourses around an increasingly unsafe society, especially for young people. Here, parents were constructed as far stricter today than formerly, forced to keep children inside and monitor their activities for fear of paedophiles and abduction. As one young person said, "I think it's a shame we don't have as much freedom, but I understand why" (g6 (school 7)). A few noted the knock-on effects of keeping young people under close observation: "I think that when they were young they had more freedom, was good because it encouraged you to get out of the house and get fitter and this has changed badly because we don't get out as much" (g26 (school 7)).

Young people also often linked increases in violence, crime and vandalism to young people's behaviour. Here, they picked up on adults' ideas that kids today were getting

away with more crime, speaking of a deterioration in law enforcement around young people: "More children are committing crime and getting away with it" (g78 (school 7)). Most often, however, they told of an increasing and widespread drug and alcohol abuse problem among young people (17%). Many felt that it was easier for young people to get hold of drugs today, and described the development of drug cultures. Here, however, young people were more likely than adults to talk in more general terms about increases in drugs, crime and violence that were not directly linked to young people: "With a growing drugs problem throughout the province there is a lot of attacks taking place, these activities are mainly taking place for individuals to feed their habits" (c3 (school 3)). A few talked of increases in guns and there was a general fear that it was less safe to go out of the home in today's society.

Nature and quality of life.

Like the adults, many young people took up a discourse of the positive benefits of progress. 12 mentioned the gains from improvements medical science and better health care. Others talked about positive developments in housing, wages and working conditions, community facilities and job opportunities. Advances in technology (8%) were seen to have made life easier and more enjoyable, especially computers, and domestic appliances relieving the burden of housework. Here, some talked about how technological progress has improved industry and communications, as well as leisure time, for example by providing higher quality films and TV programmes. Improvements in transport were a key focus, "because I would have been tired walking that much" (c76 (school 3)), as were better shops: "Shopping facilities have been changed and updated as they have installed moving stairs, lifts for both able and disabled people to move about easily. They also have more complex varieties of stores such as clothes, food, shoes chemists which they hadn't got before" (?). Here, increased choice was viewed as a positive advance, with a wider range of material goods and personal styles. In particular, however, young people talked about improvements in leisure, with TVs, computers, clubs and more holidays abroad. A key theme here was that these kids reckoned they would be bored in days of yore without all the facilities they enjoy today to pass their spare time.

However, 8% of young people (sometimes the same ones) also spoke through discourses of the social ills that progress brings. Again, this in part developed ideas around increasing materialism and consumerism: "The world now is full of greedy people" (g28 (school 7)). Young people also described the downside of technological advance. They talked of the decline in family values with new forms of leisure such as TV, computers and video games that destroy conversation; the loss of those forms of leisure that in the past got children out of the house and ensured they had enough physical exercise; the absence of a "human touch" and individuality, destroyed by mechanisation and technological advance; and decreased employment: "Computerisation has caused the loss of many jobs as machines can be programmed to carry out a job" (d14 (school 4)). In particular, and in contrast to adults, a number of young people talked about increases in pollution and damage to the environment, with asthma - as well as accidents - and the loss of countryside due to increased car use. The latter was also thought to have damaged young people's levels of fitness, as they no longer have to walk to school or the bus stop. Here, young people also linked

an increased pace of life in contemporary society with greater stress, more intolerance and increased selfishness. They drew on adults' talk of the loss of community spirit, which "means everybody is out there for themselves and are less willing to help others" (g79 (school 7)).

Wider discourses.

Those over-arching discourses that could be traced through adults' accounts were also apparent in young people's comments. First, again, young people talked about gendered social changes. They mentioned increased equality between the sexes at school, which was seen as more "fair": "Boys and girls have the same chance of a good education" (c1 (school 3)). They also talked of how women were increasingly entering the workplace and diverse forms of employment, and saw the benefits for individuals: "Mums got to work now so that is better because they can get out of the house and be more independent" (g19 (school 7)). None of those who mentioned shifts in attitudes towards gender roles and behaviour saw these changes as in any way negative: "It's good that women get more of a say and men and women are more equal now" (g74 (school 7)).

Young people's responses also focused on questions of a decline in kids' respect for adults and authority. This was again linked to increases in the amount and level of trouble young people get involved in today. It was here that young people called for a return to corporal punishment, at school and within the family. There was also talk more generally (n=9) about a decline in respect for other people, with more intolerance exhibited in racism and road rage.

Finally, young people too talked around a discourse of an increasingly open society that talks more freely about issues around sex and sexuality. N=9 saw sex education as a key improvement, and others spoke more generally about the benefits of young people being better informed about relationships as well as other taboo issues such as drugs: "We know more about sex, drugs and smoking and their after effects so people know what they're letting themselves in for" (g43 (school 7)). Here, the increased openness of parents with their children was seen as a particularly important and valuable change. This was linked to a more general openness in society, with greater tolerance for diverse social groups and "More open feeling about things people getting opportunity about expressing their views, opinions and problems etc." (c7 (school 3)).

What was left.

In contrast to adults, 7 young people from Northern Ireland said that the Troubles had worsened, and only 2 suggested that they had improved, with more mixing of communities.