Purpose of the Survey

The European Commission declared 1997 the European Year against Racism. A key theme which emerged from 1997 was the issue of identity and belonging. To address this issue The Runnymede Trust, in partnership with the CRE and the Citizenship Foundation, and in association with the UK Race and Europe Network, organised the conference “Citizenship and Identity: What does it mean to be British in Europe Today?”. To complement the conference, new research on the attitudes of young people in the UK towards Europe, Europeans and the European Union and identity was undertaken.

In partnership with CRE, we conducted new primary research focusing on youth and Europe. In this report we present a “snapshot” picture of youth attitudes across the UK towards Europe and provide analysis which considers ethnicity and race as the main variable.

Introduction

As a result of the signing of the Maastricht Treaty in 1992 leading to the formation of the European Union as we know it today, European issues and the activities of the European Commission play an increasingly important role in our everyday lives. With the introduction of the idea of European citizenship, the European Commission hoped to bring Europe closer to the people. A driving idea behind the formalisation of European citizenship was the desire to unite the people of Europe and forge a shared European identity.

When considering issues of citizenship and identity there is a tendency to forget about the views of our young people. With the anticipated continuing expansion of the European Union in the future, it is important to look at how youth (the adults who will be living and working in times to come) feel and where they stand on this issue. We need to understand the current youth perspective in order to develop education and information provision that will take advantage of the opportunity for creating a sense of belonging and acceptance for all people in Member States that an integrated Europe might offer.

Throughout the 1990s, a great deal of youth research has been undertaken in the UK and other Member States. Large studies have been published recently which cover vast areas of research topics1. However, our preliminary research showed there was a notable lack of research on youth in relation to Europe in general, and an even greater void of research relating to black and ethnic minority youth with this focus.

The research we present here offers a first step towards redressing the lack of information on black and ethnic minority youth in the UK in relation to European issues. It provides general indicators of youth attitudes towards Europe, Europeans and the European Union and looks at youth identity. It also highlights the key areas of education and information provision and suggests areas for improvement and future work.

Method

The questionnaire was designed by The Runnymede Trust in conjunction with CRE. The fieldwork was undertaken by AC Nielsen for CRE. The analysis was conducted by CRE and this report was prepared by The Runnymede Trust.

505 young people were surveyed in street interviews across the UK2. 50.1% of the population was male and 49.9% female. The age range was from 14 to 25 years old. The respondents were asked to classify their ethnic origin themselves using selected categories which were shown to them3. The aggregated distribution of respondents was as follows:-

1 See for example, Speaking Up Speaking Out!, London: The Industrial Society, October 1997, and Young Europeans, Eurobarometer 47.2, July 1997.

2 We surveyed youth in Birmingham, Bradford, Bristol, Cardiff, Glasgow, London, Manchester, Milton Keynes, Newcastle and Plymouth.

3 The standard census categories of White, Black African, Black Caribbean, Black Other, Indian, Pakistani, Bangladeshi, Chinese, Other Asian (Pacific) and Other were used. We also added Black British, Asian British and East African Asian to this list.
The interviews were conducted between 29 December 1997 and 14 January 1998. From this data we are able to provide a snapshot view of youth attitudes and identify several key issues. The analysis compares views of youth by ethnicity and in some cases by gender as well.

Key Findings

Overall, the survey reveals a lack of enthusiasm towards the concept of Europe on the part of youth in the UK. Very few young people think of themselves as European and equally few find anything about Europe which manages to stir their emotions.

- The majority of youth participating in the survey identified their nationality as “British” and this finding was valid across all ethnic groups. In terms of ethnic origin black and ethnic minority youth favoured “Black British” and “Asian British” as personal descriptors over standard census categories.

- Perhaps the most striking result of this survey was the general lack of knowledge about the European Union. Over 60% of young people said they did not know much about the European Union.

- 69% of young people said they thought of Britain as being part of Europe. Further analysis reveals that youth seem to see Britain as part of Europe in a geographical sense rather than a social, cultural or economic sense.

- When asked if they thought of British people as Europeans, 60% of youth thought this to be the case. However, in contrast, 61% said they never or rarely identified themselves as European. South Asian youth were more reluctant than black and white young people to identify themselves as European.

- Generally, youth did not express interest in European issues and did not believe that decisions made at European level affected them.

- Youth felt that the information on European matters from school, the government, TV and radio and the press, was inadequate and in some cases misleading.

- The survey data suggests that there is a link between lack of interest and awareness and the provision of information from schools, government and the media.

Detailed Findings

Identity and “Britishness”

Generally, young people across all ethnic groups were more likely to identify themselves as British, both in terms of nationality and in relation to ethnic origin. As regards ethnic origin, the descriptors “Black British” and “Asian British” were more favoured by young respondents than the standard census terms.

Overall, almost three-quarters of respondents identified their nationality to be British. This result was consistent across all ethnic groups. Of the total white population (n=311) 73% identified themselves as British, the remaining 27% choosing to designate themselves as something other, including English, Welsh and Scottish. Generally, respondents from Scotland were more likely to indicate a designation other than British than other national groups within the UK. This result was not surprising given the recent Scottish devolution.

Of the total black and ethnic minority population (n=194) 75% identified themselves as British. Of the 25% that chose another national designation, a notable proportion of black respondents identified themselves as English and of the South Asian respondents, some identified themselves as British Asian, British Indian, British Pakistani, or Scottish Asian.

This finding is higher than the findings of the 4th National Survey of Ethnic Minorities published by PSI in 1997, which showed that overall just under two thirds of ethnic minority people thought of themselves as British in some way. However, given the differences in the two questions, the PSI data and our data are not directly comparable and the higher rate of 75% shown here is not unexpected.

The connection to Britishness with regards to ethnic origin is somewhat lower than that expressed in relation to nationality. Of black respondents, 55% identified themselves as Black British, with the remaining 45% choosing Black Caribbean (18%), Black African (16%) or Black Other (11%). Of the South Asian respondents, 50% identified themselves as Asian British, the others choosing an alternate designation from Pakistani (31%), Indian (14%), Bangladeshi (4%) or East African Asian (1%). This is not surprising given that South Asian youth (90%) and black youth (82%) were also

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4 Due to small cell sizes we were not able to compare regional differences or age differences by ethnicity.
significantly more likely to understand ethnic origin to mean something different to nationality compared to white youth (70%).

**Attitudes and Opinions about British Society and Culture**

When asked what images came to mind when they thought of the word “British” the responses were overall neutral. By and large, respondents across all ethnic groups mentioned formal institutions such as the monarchy and the government more so than anything else. There was also a strong tendency to relate “British” with the land mass of the British Isles in a geographical sense. Many youth, as expected, mentioned things like fish and chips, tea and various sports teams. Others mentioned more cultural based images, such as architecture and history. There was some mention of images related to economic activities, including manufacturing, the former British Empire and Britain as a world power.

Among white youth there were a few notable responses which identified “British” with white people generally. Only two respondents explicitly stated that their image of “British” included such racist elements as the BNP, Combat 18 and the National Front. Likewise, only two respondents saw “British” as meaning multi-cultural and made up of black and white people in a positive way.

Black and South Asian youth occasionally mentioned images of “British” as meaning white people generally and mentioned nationalistic tendencies in a few instances. Most notably, however, was that black and South Asian youth thought of “British” as meaning people of different cultures and ethnic backgrounds in a positive sense more so than their white counterparts.

This difference between white youth and black and South Asian youth in seeing multi-culturalism as part of “Britishness” became more apparent when asked to comment on the statement that Britain is often described as a multi-cultural society. South Asian and black youth tended to define multi-culturalism as a society where people from different cultures, countries and backgrounds are able to live together and are accepted by each other. The majority of black and South Asian youth felt that the UK was a multi-cultural society. The exception was with South Asian males and black males, who in a few instances, highlighted incidents of racial violence and white power structures, explicitly stating that multi-culturalism was not an accepted part of British society. The young women did not make comments such as these. It may be that violence is experienced more by males, and open aggression towards black and ethnic minority people is more often directed at the males than the females that accounts for this gender difference.

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White youth overall tended to agree with the idea that Britain is a multi-cultural society and defined what this meant in similar ways as the black and South Asian youth. However, both young men and young women in some instances did not think Britain was multi-cultural. Most notably, some white youth, both male and female, clearly did not believe that Britain should be multi-cultural and felt that there were too many people from other countries and cultures living here. In these instances there was a clear sense of resentment, hostility and expression of overt racism towards black and ethnic minority people.

**Knowledge about the European Union**

Perhaps the most striking result of this survey was the general lack of knowledge about the European Union. Over 60% of young people said they did not know much about the European Union.

The figures are more informative when broken down. South Asian youth were significantly more likely to say that they did know about the European Union with over half stating this, compared to only 36% of white youth and 30% of black youth.

**European Identity**

One of the stated aims behind the formalisation of European citizenship is to draw the people of Europe closer together and create a sense of belonging and shared identity. To see where youth in the UK stood we asked a series of questions relating to this idea.

69% of young people said they thought of Britain as being part of Europe. White youth were less likely to think this, with two thirds stating this compared to 69% of black youth, 74% of South Asian youth and 78% of others.

Interestingly, when asked if they thought of British people as Europeans, 60% of youth thought this to be the case. In contrast, however, 61% said they never or rarely identified themselves as European.

**see chart 4 (overleaf)**

When analysed in more detail, differences between genders and ethnicity are revealed. Young men were more likely than young women to never or rarely identify themselves as European across all ethnic groups. South Asian males (71.7%) were the least likely to identify themselves as European compared to white (59.9%) and black (66.6%) males, and all females. South Asian females (64.1%) were also less likely compared to their other female counterparts (57.7% for white and 53.1% for black females) to declare themselves to be European. Young black women and “other” females were the most likely to identify themselves as European than any other group broken down by gender and ethnicity. However, as the figures above show, the majority still never or rarely identify themselves in this way.

**see chart 5 (overleaf)**

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**Chart 2**

**Stated knowledge about the European union**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>No</th>
<th>Yes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>White Youth</td>
<td>36%</td>
<td>64%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Black Youth</td>
<td>29.6%</td>
<td>70.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>South Asian Youth</td>
<td>47%</td>
<td>53%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other Youth</td>
<td>43.5%</td>
<td>56.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>All Youth</td>
<td>38.8%</td>
<td>61.2%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Chart 3

Britain as part of Europe

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Group</th>
<th>Do see Britain as part of Europe</th>
<th>Don’t see Britain as part of Europe</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>White Youth</td>
<td>66.6%</td>
<td>33.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Black Youth</td>
<td>69%</td>
<td>31%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>South Asian Youth</td>
<td>74%</td>
<td>26%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other Youth</td>
<td>78.3%</td>
<td>21.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>All Youth</td>
<td>68.9%</td>
<td>31.1%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Chart 4

British people as Europeans

- British people are not European: 40%
- British people are European: 60%

Chart 5

Extent to which youth think of themselves as European by gender and ethnic group

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Group</th>
<th>Never / Rarely</th>
<th>Occasionally</th>
<th>Increasingly / Frequently</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Females</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Males</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>White Youth</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Black Youth</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>South Asian Youth</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other Youth</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Males</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
When looked at by ethnicity, a similar pattern emerges, with South Asian youth (68%) being more likely to never or rarely identify themselves as European. As with black and “other” females, black and “other” youth overall identified themselves as European more often than all other youth groupings.

Chart 6

**Extend to which youth think of themselves as European by ethnic group**

It appears that young people are more likely to think of Britain as part of Europe geographically, rather than socially, culturally or economically. This finding was further reinforced by young peoples’ images of Europe. Overall, youth were much more likely to identify geographical features when asked what the images the word “European” brought to mind. White males seemed to emphasise this perspective more than any other group and tended to list countries and discuss Europe as a continent. White females also concentrated more on geographical issues, albeit, less so than their male counterparts. Young women generally tended to mention more social and cultural features, such as different cultures, languages, peoples and food more than young men. South Asian males were similar to the white males in that they discussed geographical images, however unlike the white males South Asian males also focused to some degree on political/economic and cultural images. Black males tended to focus to a larger degree on the institutional and political side of things, being more likely to mention political structures and institutions than any other group.

This last point is particularly interesting. 70% of black youth stated that they had little knowledge about the European Union yet the images that came to mind for young black men were very much related to the European Union’s institutions and political interests. While it is difficult to make definitive correlations based on this data, it does highlight an anomaly worthy of speculation. Is it possible that young black men unconsciously play down their knowledge base out of low self-esteem or a sense of exclusion from political participation?

It is more difficult to understand why a majority of youth see British people as European and yet are reluctant to identify themselves as European. Part of it may be that they thought of this question in terms of geography to some degree. However, it is possible that there may be a connection between how young people see themselves compared to the “adult” society, and what kind of information they receive and / or have access to with regards to European issues and political process.

**Attitudes and Opinions about European Society and Culture**

Black and South Asian respondents and white females all discussed social harmony and the idea of Europe being made of people from different backgrounds in terms of ‘race’ and also in terms of culture more than white males and respondents from the ‘other’ category.
A large difference between the images described by the white respondents and young people from the other ethnic groups was that it was only the white males and females who used the word ‘foreign’. They talked about foreign people and also described Europe as consisting of foreign countries. This group talked about Europe as ‘other’ more frequently than any other group. That is they perceived it to exist outside of and for it not to include Britain, i.e., “countries next to Britain”. There were also some youngsters who outlined positive aspects about the European Union. The only mention of the word foreign was by a Black male who said that ‘Foreign Holidays’ was an image that he thought of. The only reference made to Europe not including British people by respondents from the other ethnic groups was that made by a male from the ‘other’ category who said he thought of “people from Europe – not British people”.

Positive and Negative Aspects of the European Union

The freedom of movement across borders or open borders in Europe was the thing that young people most frequently said is a positive aspect about Europe. Respondents from the white, South Asian and black ethnic groups all said that being able to travel easily from one part of Europe to another without a passport is a good thing. They also pointed to free trade between countries as another positive part to the UK being part of the EU.

A number of young people from all ethnic groups said that the unification of European countries is positive in relation to two main reasons. The first of these was military support where European unity was described as important in relation to international security. The second was for economic prosperity in a global economy. It seems that some young people favour a European Federation for political reasons.

Sport was another feature of Europe that was described as positive by some of the respondents from the white and black ethnic groups. These groups particularly mentioned football and the fact that “football holidays will be good”. Only one young person said that the way football fans are treated in Europe is a negative aspect of Europe.

While some young people favoured aspects of Europe such as the possibility of a European Federation and some European legislation, several young people said that they felt British sovereignty being undermined. One of the young people actually phrased his/her response by discussing sovereignty directly. Others however just talked about “Britain not being so great any more” and that “we should not have to follow European law”.

One of the main objections young people had to Europe was the ban on British beef. There were objections from respondents from each of the ethnic groups, but it was mainly white youth and also black youth to some degree who objected to these specific European measures.

European Issues of Concern to Young People in the UK

The Single Currency together with easier travel were the two most discussed issues. With regard to the Single Currency the majority of young people thought that this is actually a negative thing and disliked the idea of one monetary unit. There were a few young people who said that the Single Currency is actually a positive aspect of Europe, but generally respondents were not in favour of it.

By and large, European law was seen as another negative aspect of Europe and was described as such by white, South Asian and black respondents. Some young people said that they thought European legislation or at least some of it, such as that on “pollution” and “human rights” is actually good legislation. However this group was in the minority on this issue.

Although in the main respondents said that they were happy with being able to travel freely around Europe, a handful of white young people and one young person from the ‘other’ category objected to “letting people into Europe if they’re not white”. This young person was open about what he/she objected to and specified colour, however others just said that they “object to people from Europe getting jobs here” by which they meant work in the UK. One respondent actually said that he/she “hates foreigners”. A few of these young people felt that “just anyone” is able to come to Britain and “live off benefits”. This particular section objected to the mixing of different cultures and one person clearly said “different cultures shouldn’t mix”.

While the young people above were hostile at the very least and openly racist at the most, other young people stated in a frank way that they “dislike the racism” and “prejudice” in Europe. One of the white young people said that the prejudice against Muslim women that was recently highlighted in the media is negative. Others said different cultures and languages are a positive thing about Europe. One respondent said that “links between schools in different countries is good” because it helps to eliminate “prejudice”. These respondents welcomed the cultural and racial diversity that Europe offers. Other respondents even pointed to the different food in Europe being a good cultural experience.

A few young people said that they like the fact that Europe has so many different languages. Two young people said that this would encourage people to learn more languages. However there were some young people who objected to speaking a different language and several said that they thought it was good that English is spoken by most people in Europe.

Youth Interest in Europe and Access to Information

Given the increasing importance of decisions made at the European level to our everyday lives, it is worrying that more than three-quarters (77%) of all the young people surveyed said that they do not think that people their age are interested in Europe and nationality issues.

Although the majority of respondents felt that young people are not interested in European matters, there are significant differences between males and females. Overall, more young women believe that youth are interested in European matters than young men, with the greatest divergence in opinion between South Asian females and South Asian males (16.2pts) and black females and black males (12.7pts).

Given this clear lack of interest in European matters, it is not surprising that a large proportion (34.5%) of the young people participating in the survey said that they are not aware of the effect of legislation and decisions made at European level on their lives and almost one-third felt that they did not have enough information to enable them to comment or simply didn’t know.
Chart 9
Perceived youth interest on European issues and nationality by gender and ethnic group

When considered by ethnic groups, it is revealed that South Asian youth take a different perspective with regard to their perceived knowledge of effects of European level decisions on their lives. 18% of South Asian young people surveyed felt that decisions made at European level were not relevant to them, almost twice the average and close to 10% higher than black youth and white youth.

Furthermore, South Asian youth were less likely to indicate that they did not have enough information to make a comment with only 13% stating this, compared to over 21% of black youth and white youth.

Chart 11
Extent of young peoples awareness of effects of European-level decisions on their lives
Information provision was examined in greater detail when the respondents were asked ‘Are you given enough information about how decisions made at European government level affect Britain?’ which revealed interesting results in relation to those highlighted above.

Overall, all youth said that they did not receive enough information about how decisions made at European level affect Britain from school, from the government, from TV and radio or from the press. This was followed by a strikingly high proportion of youth saying they didn't know – that is, they couldn’t form an opinion on this question.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Information from School</th>
<th>Information from Government</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>33.1%</td>
<td>25.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17.6%</td>
<td>17.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8.1%</td>
<td>15.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>41.2%</td>
<td>41.6%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In relation to the results which indicated that South Asian youth were less likely to say that they did not have enough information to form an opinion about the effects of European level decisions on their lives, when it came to information provision, this same group was more likely to say that they are not given enough information about how decisions are made from the government, TV and radio and the press. The only exception is in relation to information from schools, where South Asian youth and white youth were about equal.

The most significant findings, however, relate to marked differences in opinions on information provision between black youth and white and South Asian youth. In all areas of information provision, that is, from schools, the government, TV and radio and the press, black youth were least likely to say that they got enough information and far more likely to say that they “didn't know” compared to the average and compared to white and South Asian youth. Most significant is the case of information from schools where black youth are highly more likely to respond with “don't know” – 49.3% compared to the average of 33.1%.
The respondents also felt that information provision from the press was more misleading than from any of the other sources with almost one-quarter stating this compared to only 8% who thought this about schools, 15.2% about the government and 19% for TV and radio.

There was remarkably little variation in opinion by gender with regards to information provision.
Conclusion

This unique snapshot view of youth attitudes provides us with useful information about how youth feel and what they think about Europe and the European Union, and where they see themselves fitting in that. It shows us that youth in the UK do not see themselves as Europeans, are not greatly interested in what is going on at that level and fail to see much relevance of European issues to their lives.

It also points out some areas that would benefit from further research, such as the following:-

- The apparent lack of knowledge of young people about European issues overall is worrisome given the growing importance of European issues and activities in our everyday lives. The data points to a need for more directed provision of education in relation to what the European Union is, how it operates and how decisions at that level affect people in the UK.

- The findings also suggest a correlation between young people’s lack of interest in European matters and the quantity and quality of information they feel they are getting from public sources. Young people don’t believe that they are receiving enough information about European decision making from schools, government, or the media. This lack of information seems to be having an effect on their views and perspective.

- Young people also strongly feel information gleaned from the media is misleading compared to the other sources examined. Some attention in this area is required.

- The survey also revealed a troubling anomaly with regard to young black men. Why do black males state they know little about the European Union and yet are more likely to relate images of “European” with political institutions and processes? Is there a connection to low self-esteem and school exclusion, or feelings of exclusion from the political process?