

*Schools in the USA and the UK compared***WAYNE A. PAYNE****A transatlantic study
of health-related behaviour**

The following article describes a comparative study, using the Health Related Behaviour Questionnaire, of a secondary comprehensive school in the west of England and a "middle school" in Indiana, USA. In each school, approximately 100 pupils aged 12+ and 13+ completed the questionnaire (total sample 179 and 200 respectively).

In Professor Payne's original report, the data for the two years were combined. However, we are presenting them here separately, to reveal some interesting differences between them.

One point needs to be emphasised. The English school survey was carried out in February, the American one in May. Some questions are more strongly season-dependent than are others; for example, it would be difficult to relate television-watching of one population in winter with that of the other in summer. Perhaps

questions 9, 11, and 12a (which refer to washing and the use of deodorant) should also be viewed with caution.

The Schools Health Education Unit hopes to be arranging further comparative studies of this kind. Some schools in the UK have already expressed interest.—Ed.

Upon learning of the Health Related Behaviour Questionnaire during a 1981 visit to the University of Southampton, the idea of conducting a comparative study involving American and British students was advanced. As the result of discussions with John Balding, it was decided that students enrolled in an American public (state supported) middle school would be of the age best matched to a British sample for whom data were already available. A middle school close to the writer's home was chosen, not only

for its proximity but also for its "Middle America" nature.¹

Beyond the difficulties normally associated with obtaining background information on American public school students and the administering of a lengthy questionnaire to young students, the only challenge faced by the writer in carrying out the project was that of "Americanizing" the instrument. In this latter regard, many questions dealing with food items, medicines, recreational activities, and the use of alcohol needed to be modified or carefully clarified.

Once the above mentioned changes were made, the revised version of the Health Related Behaviour Questionnaire was administered to 200 students who attend a middle school in Fort Wayne, Indiana, USA. Completed forms were sent directly to John Balding for data processing.

Having now had an opportunity to study the data that were returned to me by John Balding, I can share with you my impressions of responses made by the American students, particularly on some items for which there is an observable difference between the groups. The reader is, of course, reminded that these assessments are mine alone, and may or may not be similar to ideas gleaned from other sources regarding the lifestyle of American pre-teens.

In order to provide some structure to my interpretations of the responses made by the Fort Wayne students, I will present selected questions from the Questionnaire by number, content, and the numerical values for student responses to a particular aspect of the question. In each case a brief interpretation will follow.

2. How many hours did you spend doing homework yesterday?

Nine out of ten of the Fort Wayne children in the two years combined had homework to do during the evening prior to the administration of the Health Related Behaviour Questionnaire. Whether this is a typical report, I do not know, but in comparison with the nearly 30% of the English students who reported not having

© J W Balding 1983	Boys				Girls			
	USA		UK		USA		UK	
	12+	13+	12+	13+	12+	13+	12+	13+
None	7	12	34	33	12	7	33	24
Up to 1 ^h	58	52	40	43	58	42	56	50
Up to 2 ^h	32	17	24	14	24	33	10	21
More than 2 ^h	4	19	3	10	6	16	0	5
Mean (hours)	1.3	1.5	1.0	1.0	1.3	1.7	0.8	1.1
Sample no.	57	48	38	42	50	45	57	42

Question 2: How many hours did you spend doing homework yesterday?

homework on the prior evening, it might be assumed that Fort Wayne young people have less unstructured time during the evening than do their English counterparts.

When the average amount of time spent engaged in homework is compared, it is noted that for those children who did have homework assigned, approximately one hour was required to complete the day's assignments.

3a. Do you work around the home (e.g. housework, gardening)?

Of all the questions asked in the questionnaire, I believe that question 3(a) exposes a dynamic within American homelife that is not uncovered by any of the other questions — The Working Mother. In the United States approximately 50% of all mothers are gainfully employed in the workforce, while 70% of mothers whose youngest child is in school are working outside the home.

This daily absence of the mother requires a commitment on the part of

© J W Balding 1983	Boys				Girls			
	USA		UK		USA		UK	
	12+	13+	12+	13+	12+	13+	12+	13+
Every day	37	25	13	10	38	33	18	15
Most days	33	46	10	17	30	44	28	37
Sometimes	30	29	74	73	32	22	54	49
Sample no.	57	48	38	41	50	45	57	41

Question 3a: Do you work around the home (e.g. housework, gardening)?

the older children and their fathers to "pick up the pace" in terms of household tasks. Doubtless, many of the Fort Wayne children, both boys and girls, begin the evening meal, care for younger siblings, or simply "pick-up the house" in the hours following the end of the school day at 2.30p.m. The modern American mother, fatigued by a day at work, demands, and is increasingly receiving the support of her children and her spouse.

3b. If you do a regular job during term time please describe the work you do as accurately as possible.

American girls of pre-adolescent age do have exposure to young children. In point of fact, girls (and many boys) between the ages of 10 and 15 babysit at least once a week. Many middle schools offer classroom instruction in child care and, in an unofficial way, "certify" babysitters. Families new to a neighbourhood often call a school to inquire about girls who might be available to "sit".

9. Last week, how many times did you have a bath or a shower?

11. How many times in the last 7 days have you washed your hair with soap or shampoo?

12a. Do you use an anti-perspirant/deodorant?

Taken collectively, questions 9, 11, and 12a point out something more American than motherhood and apple pie. Whether

© J W Balding 1983	Boys				Girls			
	USA		UK		USA		UK	
	12+	13+	12+	13+	12+	13+	12+	13+
Not at all	0	0	3	2	0	0	0	2
Once	2	4	24	17	4	0	18	17
2 or 3 times	18	19	32	57	20	9	56	55
4 or 5 times	21	38	32	17	16	27	18	21
6 or 7 times	59	40	8	7	60	64	9	5
Mean (times)	5.3	4.8	3.0	2.8	5.2	5.6	2.9	2.8
Sample no.	56	48	37	42	50	45	57	42

Question 9: Last week, how many times did you have a bath or a shower?

The next issue of Education and Health will include articles by speakers at the Exeter meeting of the Association for Science Education. There will also be a report on plans for a new version of the Health Related Behaviour Questionnaire.

© J W Balding 1983	Boys				Girls			
	USA		UK		USA		UK	
	12+	13+	12+	13+	12+	13+	12+	13+
Babysitting	12	0	0	6	91	94	43	20
Shop assistant	4	0	0	0	0	0	0	10
Paper round	12	38	62	76	9	6	29	30
Farm/garden	56	56	0	0	0	0	0	0
Miscellaneous	16	6	38	17	0	0	29	40
Sample no.	25	16	8	17	11	16	14	10

Question 3b: If you do a regular job during term time please describe the work you do as accurately as possible.

© J W Balding 1983	Boys				Girls			
	USA		UK		USA		UK	
	12+	13+	12+	13+	12+	13+	12+	13+
Yes	84	92	38	50	100	96	68	90
No	16	8	62	50	0	4	32	10
Sample no.	56	48	37	42	50	45	57	42

Question 12a: Do you use an anti-perspirant/deodorant?

© J W Balding 1983	Boys				Girls			
	USA		UK		USA		UK	
	12+	13+	12+	13+	12+	13+	12+	13+
Not at all	9	0	8	0	4	2	0	0
Once	7	0	43	21	12	16	16	12
Twice	9	17	27	48	14	2	53	50
3 times	16	23	14	19	2	9	23	24
4 times	5	6	8	10	12	14	5	7
5 times	9	17	0	2	12	11	2	7
6 times	16	8	0	0	12	9	0	0
6+ times	30	28	0	0	31	36	2	0
Mean (times)	4.4	4.6	1.7	2.2	4.5	4.7	2.3	2.5
Sample no.	57	47	37	42	49	44	57	42

Question 11: How many times in the last 7 days have you washed your hair with soap or shampoo?

this obsession with being clean and smelling good (by our definition) had its origins in the "hygiene" of early school health education, I am not certain. Regardless, health educators do not have to direct much attention to the values of regular bathing, hair washing, and anti-perspirant use. Americans of all ages spend their lives in the bathroom.

19a. Have you been vaccinated against Rubella (German Measles)?

The above data would suggest that Fort Wayne girls were markedly less well protected from Rubella than were the English girls. This interpretation would, however, be incorrect in that all children in the schools of Indiana (including Fort Wayne) must have required immunizations completed within 30 days following their initial enrolment as first graders (age 5-6). School health service personnel at the Indiana State Board of Health report that the Fort Wayne schools are, without exception, 98 to 99.5% fully compliant. Thus, Fort Wayne students do not know about the completeness of their immunization status and, as a consequence, have presented a faulty picture of this important dimension of their health.

Summary

With the completion of my comments

© J W Balding 1983	Boys				Girls			
	USA		UK		USA		UK	
	12+	13+	12+	13+	12+	13+	12+	13+
Yes	54	51	26	25	67	62	95	95
Don't know	41	45	46	40	31	36	2	2
No	6	4	29	35	2	2	4	2
Sample no.	54	47	35	40	49	45	57	41

Question 19a: Have you been vaccinated against Rubella (German measles)?

on item 19a, I leave you with the task of finding some value in a comparative study such as ours. Perhaps it will help you in more clearly seeing your own students of this age. Or, perhaps, it can be used as a reference point against which you can assess American health education curricula should they be available to you. For me, the opportunity to interact with colleagues from the United Kingdom is always stimulating, and I look forward to additional contact with John Balding and others.

¹For those readers who are familiar with the Lynds' classic American sociological studies, *Middletown* and *Middletown Revisited*, the town featured was Muncie, Indiana. Fort Wayne, Indiana, is a city of 200,000 population only 69 miles north of Muncie. Besides being close to Muncie, Fort Wayne is similar in terms of its economic base and social stratification. Little difference would be expected to be found in its schools and student population.