Title: Good Childhood Inquiry

Client: The Children's Society

Provided by: GfK Social Research

Date: 22<sup>nd</sup> May 2007

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1 Executive Summary

The survey was split into three sections, the first covered friendship, delving into the friendships of today’s children and also asking participants to reflect on their own childhood. It then covered issues about family life as well as an exploration of a good childhood. To conclude the survey, respondents were asked some demographic questions.

Family

Participants were given a series of words that other people have said are important to a good childhood. When asked what was the most important thing to a good childhood two thirds (67%) reported it was love, whilst one in eight (13%) thought that the most important thing was discipline. The remaining respondents cited stability (7%), support (6%), boundaries (5%) and freedom (2%).

A series of statements were then put to the sample and they were asked the extent to which they agreed or disagreed with each. When asked whether ‘When there are children involved parents should stay together even if they don’t get on’, a high proportion thought that this should not be the case, with seven in ten (68%) disagreeing with the statement.

Nearly all participants thought ‘Fathers should always play a part in their children’s life even when they don’t live with them’ (94%). Overall, just under four in ten (37%) agreed that that ‘A pre-school child is likely to suffer if his or her mother works’, whilst nearly a half (48%) disagreed with this notion. Women particularly likely to disagree with the statement (54% compared to 42% of men).

When the sample was asked whether they agreed or disagreed that ‘These days, more and more parents have to put their career first even if this affects their family life’; nearly a half (48%) agreed that this was the case. Working status did not influence perception on this issue.

The last statement was whether ‘Nowadays parents aren’t able to spend enough time with their children’. Six in ten (61%) agreed with the statement, with 22% agreeing strongly. It is worth noting that a third (32%) of participants disagreed that parents were not able to spend enough time with their children.
2 Introduction

The Children's Society's ‘Good Childhood Inquiry’ is the UK's first independent national inquiry into childhood. The Children's Society commissioned this study to look at views to a good childhood from an adult perspective. The findings from this research will be used to inform the publicity material to be released throughout the duration of the Inquiry to ensure that important issues around childhood are discussed and public interest remains high.

According to UNICEF, children’s well being, particularly mental well being, is lower in the UK than many European countries. Children are increasingly subject to influences which require them to consume, behave and achieve like adults. The Inquiry aims to renew society's understanding of childhood for the twenty-first century to inform, improve and inspire all our relationships with children. The Inquiry has 6 themes which are friends, family, learning, lifestyle, health and values.

The inquiry will:

- Listen to the voices and views of children, young people and adults about their experience and understanding of childhood in the UK today.

- Identify and address the most important issues facing children and young people in the UK today.

- Make recommendations to improve the way in which childhood is experienced and understood in the UK today.

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1 Children's society website (http://sites.childrenssociety.org.uk)
3 Methodology

A total of 1148 interviews were conducted with a representative sample of UK residents aged 18 or over. The sample was proportionately drawn, with the exception of Northern Ireland, Scotland and Wales where a booster sample was drawn to ensure we interviewed at least 100 people so as to allow for robust findings.

All interviewing was conducted by fully-trained interviewers from the GfK NOP field-force working to the criteria of the Interviewer Quality Control Scheme.

A questionnaire equivalent to a 6-minute interview was developed by the Children’s Society and GfK NOP Social Research. Interviews were conducted using Computer Assisted Telephone Interviewing (CATI). A pilot study was conducted to test the questionnaire and interview length. At the end of the pilot, respondents were asked a series of questions about the survey and how they interpreted some of the questions. After the pilot, the questionnaire was very slightly adjusted to reflect the pilot findings. A total of 15 interviews were conducted at the pilot stage.

The data was slightly weighted to ensure representativeness. In the three booster areas, the data was down weighted to make it nationally representative.

Fieldwork took place between 21 March - 4th April 2007.

3.1 Sampling

A random sample of telephone numbers was obtained for each region, the sample drawn was reflective of the size of the region (except in the booster regions where we drew more to allow for a 100 completed interviews). Respondents were asked to confirm their age prior to interviewing to ensure that only residents aged 18 or over were interviewed. Age, region, interlocked gender and working status quotas were set to ensure that the resultant sample was a reflection of the UK population.
4 Sample Profile

Just under six in ten of the sample reported that they were married, and living with their husband/wife (47%) or were living with someone as a couple (11%). The sample consisted of 28% of 18-34 year olds, twenty per cent were aged 35-44, a quarter (24%) were 45-59. Fifty one per cent of the sample was female, whilst 49% were men.

Two in five (40%) were in full time employed work, whilst around one in eight (13%) worked part time, the majority of those in employed part time work were women (21% compared with 5% of men). Three per cent indicated that they were looking after the family. The sample was representative of the UK in terms of social class.

A third (34%) of the sample reported that they were parents to children aged 17 or under, with women more likely to indicate parenthood (37% compared with 30% of men).

Chart 1: Have you got any children aged 17 or under?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Age Group</th>
<th>Total</th>
<th>Female</th>
<th>Male</th>
<th>18-34</th>
<th>35-44</th>
<th>45-59</th>
<th>60+</th>
<th>Base: All (1148)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>34%</td>
<td>37%</td>
<td>30%</td>
<td>45%</td>
<td>33%</td>
<td>27%</td>
<td>4%</td>
<td>66%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>63%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>70%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18-34</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>55%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>35-44</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>67%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>45-59</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>73%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>60+</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>96%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

As would be expected, parents were significantly more likely to be younger, with over four in ten (45%) of the 18-34 age group and two thirds (67%) of the 35-44 age group saying they had children aged 17 or under. The 45-59 age group and particularly those aged over 60 were less likely to have children aged 17 or under. The chart 1 gives a clearer illustration of the findings.
5 Main findings

Throughout this report, the findings refer to children. In this context, children are those aged 17 or under.

Participants were given a series of words that other people have said are important to a good childhood and asked which was the most important, the second most important, and the third.

When asked for the most important, two thirds (67%) indicated that it was love, around one in eight (13%) thought it was discipline, seven per cent said stability, six per cent support, five per cent boundaries, and two per cent freedom.

Chart 7: Which is the most important to a good childhood

Women (72%) tended to be more likely to think that love was the most important aspect to a good childhood (compared with just 61% of men). Age was also a factor, with those in the 35-44 age group (75%) were more likely to echo this sentiment, (compared with 66% of the 45-59 age group and 58% of those aged 60 plus+). Working status was also a determinant, with those in work more likely to say love was most important to a good childhood (72% compared with 59% of those not working). Those with children also shared this view, with three quarters (76%) saying love was the most important thing (compared with 62% of those with no children). Again, there were social class differences; the DE group (58%) was less likely to think that love was the most important thing to a good childhood.
(compared with 72% of the AB, C1 and C2 socio groups); however this finding could be a function of age.

When asked for the second most important thing to a good childhood, the responses were not as clear as those for love. Around three in ten (28%) thought stability was the second most important thing for parents bringing up children, around a quarter (23%) thought it was discipline, two in ten (19%) mentioned support, one in seven (15%) thought it was love, whilst around one in eight (12%) thought boundaries were the most important, and three per cent said freedom.

**Chart 8: Which is the second most important to a good childhood?**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Stability</td>
<td>28%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Discipline</td>
<td>23%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Love</td>
<td>15%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Boundaries</td>
<td>12%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Support</td>
<td>19%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Don't know</td>
<td>1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Freedom</td>
<td>3%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Base: All (1148)

Again, there were some notable subgroup differences. Women were more likely to think that stability was the second most important thing (32% compared with 23% of men). Those aged 60+ stood out as the group least likely to think that stability was the second most important thing (19% compared with 31% of those aged 59 or under). There were differences between those in work and those not working, with the former group more likely to say stability was the second most important (31% compared with 23% of those not in work), again this difference could be attributed to age, as a large proportion of those aged 60+ are no longer in work.

Parenthood also influenced views, with those with children aged 17 or under (33%) more likely to say stability was the second most important thing, whilst just a quarter (25%) of those with no young children shared this view.
Again the views on the third most important thing were not as concise as those for love. Support was
the most mentioned, with three in ten (31%) indicating this, two in ten (19%) thought it was discipline,
17% cited stability. Around one in seven (14%) thought boundaries were the third most important
thing to a good childhood, whilst eight per cent thought it was freedom, and the same proportion cited
love.

Interestingly, there were no subgroup differences for the most mentioned third aspect to a good
childhood (support).

**Chart 9: Which is the third most important to a good childhood?**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Aspect</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Love</td>
<td>8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stability</td>
<td>14%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Discipline</td>
<td>17%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Support</td>
<td>31%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Freedom</td>
<td>19%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Boundaries</td>
<td>14%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Don't know</td>
<td>1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Don't know</td>
<td>1%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Base: All (1148)

The first, second, and third most important things have been combined to give an overall picture of the
important things to a good childhood. As demonstrated in the chart below, love has maintained the top
position, a majority of 90% thought this was important to a good childhood. The proportion of
respondents saying **Support**, **Discipline** or **Stability** was roughly similar (56%, 55% and 52%
respectively). **Boundaries** were seen as important by a third (32%) of the sample and **Freedom** was
seen as the least with just 13% saying this was important to a good childhood.
Chart 10: Most important things to a good childhood

- Love: 90%
- Support: 56%
- Discipline: 55%
- Stability: 52%
- Boundaries: 32%
- Freedom: 13%

Base: All (1148)
A series of statements were put to the sample and for each, they were asked to rate whether they agreed or disagreed using a five point scale ranging from agree strongly to disagree strongly.

The first statement was ‘when there are children in the family, parents should stay together even if they don’t get along’. Overall, just under a quarter (23%) agreed with this statement, of which 8% agreed strongly. Around seven in ten (68%) disagreed that parents should stay together for the sake of the children even if they don’t get along, it is worth noting that 27% disagreed strongly with this view. Seven per cent of the sample had no strong opinion on this issue.

**Chart 11: When there are children in the family, parents should stay together**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Response</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Agree strongly</td>
<td>8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Agree</td>
<td>15%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Neither agree nor disagree</td>
<td>7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Disagree</td>
<td>42%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Disagree strongly</td>
<td>27%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Don't know</td>
<td>2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>All agree</td>
<td>23%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>All disagree</td>
<td>68%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Base: All (1148)

There were some very salient gender differences. As is illustrated in table 5, men were more inclined to think that when there were children in the family, the parents should stay together even if they don’t get on, a third (32%) thought this, whilst just 14% of women agreed with this view. On this issue, those in the 60+ age group tended to agree that families should stay together, with a third (32%) agreeing, whilst just two in ten (20%) of 18-59 year olds agreed with this view.

Those in work were more likely to disagree that parents should stay together even when they are not getting on (71%, compared with 64% of those not in work); it is worth noting that this finding could be a function of age as a significant proportion of those aged 60+ were in retirement. Interestingly, those with children aged 17 or under did not have opposing views to the rest of the sample.
Table 5: When there are children in the family, parents should stay together (age & gender)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>Age</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Total</td>
<td>Male</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unweighted base:</td>
<td>1148</td>
<td>535</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Agree strongly (+2)</td>
<td>8%</td>
<td>12%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Agree (+1)</td>
<td>15%</td>
<td>20%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Neither agree nor disagree (0)</td>
<td>7%</td>
<td>8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Disagree (-1)</td>
<td>42%</td>
<td>38%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Disagree strongly (-2)</td>
<td>27%</td>
<td>20%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Don't know</td>
<td>2%</td>
<td>2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mean score</td>
<td>-0.65</td>
<td>-0.34</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

When given the statement ‘fathers should always play a part in bringing children up, even if they don't live with them’, an overwhelming majority of 94% agreed this should be the case, of which 66% agreed strongly. Just three per cent disagreed, and two per cent neither agreed nor disagreed. There was an interesting gender difference on this issue; men were more likely to agree that fathers should play a part in their children’s lives even when not living with them, whilst women, perhaps the ones who would have primary responsibility of the child, were less likely to agree (96% of men compared with 91% of women). However, as the figures show the majority of women do think that ‘fathers should always play a part in bringing children up, even if they don't live with them’,
The next statement put to the sample was ‘A pre school child is likely to suffer if his or her mother works’. Overall, over a third (37%) agreed with this statement, of which 12% agreed strongly. Around a half disagreed (48%), of which 12% disagreed strongly. It is worth pointing out that one in ten were undecided on this issue, eleven per cent neither agreed nor disagreed.

Chart 12: A pre school child is likely to suffer if his or her mother works

- Agree strongly: 12%
- Agree: 25%
- Neither agree nor disagree: 11%
- Disagree: 36%
- Disagree strongly: 12%
- Don't know: 4%
- All agree: 37%
- All disagree: 48%

Base: All (1148 unweighted)

The 60+ age group had significantly different views to the 18-44 year olds, with 45% agreeing that children would suffer if their mother works (compared with 32% of 18-44 year olds).

Again there were gender differences. Women, the group whose working status was being debated were more likely to disagree, thus thinking that children of pre school age would not suffer because their mother works (54% compared with 42% of men). Table 6 gives a more visual picture of these findings.
Table 6: A pre school child is likely to suffer if his or her mother works

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Base: All</th>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>Working status</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Total</td>
<td>Male</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unweighted base:</td>
<td>1148</td>
<td>535</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>%</td>
<td>%</td>
<td>%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Agree strongly (+2)</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Agree (+1)</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Neither agree nor disagree (0)</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Disagree (-1)</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>32</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Disagree strongly (-2)</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Don’t know</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mean score</td>
<td>-0.12</td>
<td>0.08</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Continuing with the work theme, the sample was asked if they agreed or disagreed that ‘these days, more and more parents have to put their career first even if this affects their family life’. Nearly a half (48%) agreed that this was the case, of which 14% agreed strongly. Forty three per cent disagreed, of which 14% disagreed strongly, thus thinking that these days parents did not have to put their careers first. As with the other statements, there were differing views between men and women, with the women significantly more likely to disagree that there were more career pressures on parents (45% compared with 38% of men). On this issue, there were no other differing subgroup views.
Table 7: these days, more and more parents have to put their career first even if this affects their family life

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Total</th>
<th>Male</th>
<th>Female</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Unweighted base:</td>
<td>1148</td>
<td>535</td>
<td>613</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Agree strongly (+2)</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Agree (+1)</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Neither agree nor disagree (0)</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Disagree (-1)</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>31</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Disagree strongly (-2)</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Don't know</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mean score</td>
<td>0.06</td>
<td>0.17</td>
<td>-0.04</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The last statement put to the sample was ‘Nowadays parents aren’t able to spend enough time with their children’. Overall, six in ten (61%) agreed that this was the case, of which 22% agreed strongly. A third (32%) of the sample disagreed with the statement of which 8% disagreed strongly. On this issue, there were no salient subgroup differences.

Chart 13: Nowadays parents aren’t able to spend enough time with their children

Base: All (1148)
Appendix 1

Good Childhood Questionnaire

Good morning/afternoon/evening. My name is …. From GFK NOP Research. I am calling on behalf of the Children’s Society who are carrying out an important survey looking at matters that affect children in your local community. The survey will take approximately 6 minutes. Everything you say will be treated in the strictest confidence. Is this a convenient time to talk or would you like me to call back later? IF NECESSARY: It is not necessary that you have children to take part in the survey.

QA. First of all, can I check, are you aged over 18?
   If aged 17 or under-THANK AND CLOSE
   18 or over CONTINUE

QB. Can I just check, have you got any children aged 17 or under?
   Yes
   No

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Family</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

1. Now thinking about how parents bring up children, I am going to read out six things that people have said are important to a good childhood? And I would like you tell me which you think is,....

.....the most important

The second most important

The third most important

READ OUT AND CODE UPTO 3

1)....boundaries
2)Discipline
3)Freedom
4)Love
5)Stability
6)Support

Don't know
9. I am now going to read out a number of things that others have said. Could you tell me the extent to which you agree or disagree with each of the statements. Please tell me whether you agree strongly, agree, neither agree nor disagree, disagree or disagree strongly.

1 Agree strongly
2 Agree
3 Neither agree nor disagree
4 Disagree
5 Disagree strongly
Don't know

READ STATEMENT (ROTATE)

1) When there are children in the family, parents should stay together even if they don't get along
2) Fathers should always play a part in bringing children up, even if they don't live with them
3) A pre-school child is likely to suffer if his or her mother works
4) These days, more and more parents have to put their career first, even if this affects their family life'
5) Nowadays parents aren't able to spend enough time with their children.
Q10. At present are you...

..married (and living with your (wife/husband))
living with someone as a couple,
widowed,
divorced,
separated,
single and never been married
Refused

Q11. What was your age last birthday?

RECORD EXACT AGE

IF REFUSED
Which of the following age bands applies to you? READ OUT

18-24
25 - 34
35 - 44
45 - 54
55-59
60-64
65+
Refused

12. And how would you describe your ethnic origin? Are you.. READ OUT

White – British
    Irish
    Other White background

Black or Black British – Caribbean
    African
    Any other Black background

Asian or Asian British – Indian
    Pakistani
    Bangladesh
    Any other Asian background

Mixed – White and Black Caribbean
    White and Black African
    White and Asian

Chinese
Other ethnic group
Q13 Which of the following best describes your situation? Would you say you are...

1) ...employed full time (30+ hours)
2) Employed part time (8-29 hours)
3) Self-employed full time (30+ hours)
4) Self-employed part time (8-29 hours)
5) Still at school
6) In full time higher education
7) Retired
8) Not able to work
9) Unemployed and seeking work
10) Not working for other reason
11) Looking after the home

Refused

Q15 Code Sex

Male
Female

Q14. We need to speak to a broad cross section of people. Could you therefore please tell me what is the occupation of the chief income earner in your household?

JOB TITLE
JOB DESCRIPTION
INDUSTRY
QUALIFICATIONS
SIZE OF COMPANY
IF MANAGER/SUPERVISOR/SELF-EMPLOYED - NUMBER OF PEOPLE RESPONSIBLE FOR INTERVIEWER: RECORD SOCIAL GRADE

CODE SOCIAL CLASS

AB
C1
C2
DE

Thank and close