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## Chapter 1

### The 'Young People's Attitudes to Religious Diversity' Project in the Context of Warwick Religions and Education Research Unit (WRERU) Research

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#### **WRERU's Studies of Religious Diversity and Education**

Warwick Religions and Education Research Unit (WRERU) has undertaken externally funded empirical research on various aspects of religions and education since its foundation in 1994. From 1994 to 2013, WRERU was based in the Institute of Education at the University of Warwick. Since October 2013, WRERU has been part of the University of Warwick's newly formed interdisciplinary Centre for Education Studies.

The 'Young People's Attitudes to Religious Diversity' project continued a tradition of WRERU studies concerned with religious diversity in the UK. Most of these studies have been variously concerned with the experience of children and young people from a range of religious and cultural backgrounds. They have built on earlier ethnographic studies, such as Warwick's Religious Education and Community Project, involving children in Britain from Christian, Jewish, Muslim and Sikh backgrounds, and the first UK project on religion and education to be funded by the Economic and Social Research Council (ESRC) (Jackson and Nesbitt 1992; Nesbitt and Jackson 1992; Nesbitt and Jackson 1995; Woodward and Jackson 1993), together with studies of

children from a Hindu background funded from various sources, including the Leverhulme Trust (e.g. Jackson and Nesbitt 1993).

These early ethnographic studies were inspired by listening to the personal stories of children in schools and homes, and through meeting, spending much time with and interviewing their parents and members of their wider communities. Reflection on academic issues related to the study of religions ‘on the ground’ and methodological issues concerned with understanding, portraying and responding at a personal level to another’s religious life, together with issues related to the ‘transmission’ of religious culture, inspired the interpretive approach to religious education. This drew eclectically on methods and ideas from a range of sources and disciplines, including ethnography, social psychology, literary theory, religious studies and hermeneutical theory. Its key concepts of representation, interpretation and reflexivity provided a research framework which was also used pedagogically, as a basis for teaching and learning in other contexts: the learner’s challenges of comprehension mirrored those of the researcher (Jackson 1997, 2012c). This period also included experiments in producing texts for use in schools drawing on research material collected during ethnographic studies (e.g. Barratt 1994a, 1994b, 1994c, 1994d, 1994e; Barratt and Price 1996; Jackson and Nesbitt 1990; Mercier 1996; Robson 1995; Wayne et al. 1996).

WRERU’s subsequent wide-ranging qualitative research extended to school-based as well as family- and community-based studies. These included a longitudinal study of young people from a Hindu background (e.g. Nesbitt 1991; Nesbitt and Jackson 1992), research on the life histories of teachers and students of religious education (e.g. Sikes and Everington 2001), studies of pupil-to-pupil dialogue in the classroom (e.g. Ipgrave 2001, 2013; McKenna, Ipgrave and Jackson 2008) and religious

education for children with special educational needs (e.g. McKenna 2002). The Arts and Humanities Research Council (AHRC) funded research on the religious identity formation of young people in mixed-faith families (e.g. Arweck and Nesbitt 2010, 2012; Arweck 2013) and on the influence of Hindu-related ‘religious movements’ on classroom practice in various contexts (e.g. Arweck, Nesbitt and Jackson 2005, 2008). This period also saw further development of theory and pedagogy in religious education (e.g. Jackson 2004).<sup>1</sup>

In 2006, WRERU had the opportunity to broaden its research perspective in two ways: to work collaboratively with teams of researchers from across Europe interested in themes connected with diversity and to extend its repertoire of research techniques, e.g. introducing a mixed-method approach to research (e.g. Jackson 2012a). Thus WRERU participated in a large European project, the REDCo (Religion, Education, Dialogue, Conflict) project, involving researchers from eight European countries (see below).

### **Expansion of WRERU and the UK Government DCSF Project**

In 2007, considerable expertise in quantitative research was added to WRERU’s team, when Prof. Leslie Francis and other colleagues (Dr Mandy Robbins, Dr Emyr Williams, Dr Tania ap Siôn and Prof. David Lankshear) joined. As well as bringing huge knowledge and experience of quantitative methodologies, Prof. Francis’s deep experience in psychology (especially individual differences psychology) and practical and empirical theology complemented existing WRERU competence in fields such as

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<sup>1</sup> Further discussion and applications of the interpretive approach by WRERU research students and Associate Fellows are collected in Miller et al. 2013.

ethnography, sociology, inter-faith dialogue, religious studies and religious education, making large-scale collaborative mixed-methods research feasible.

The first major opportunity to use the new research team came in 2008 when WRERU won a competitive bid from the UK Government's then Department for Children, Schools and Families (DCSF) to investigate 'materials used in schools to teach world religions'. The project employed 29 staff, including WRERU researchers and Associate Fellows, experts in academic studies of religions, ICT and primary and secondary religious education as well as consultants from faith communities. The research included three strands: In strand 1, a sample of published materials (identified in strands 2 and 3) was reviewed by a panel of experts consisting of members of faith groups, academic experts and professional RE experts. Strand 2 was a quantitative survey of materials used in schools, in which subject leaders were asked to identify materials which were used by teachers in the preparation of lessons, by both teachers and pupils during lessons, and by pupils during their own independent researches. Strand 3 consisted of qualitative case studies conducted in ten primary and ten secondary schools, selected from maintained and independent schools of all types. Case study research included: documentary analysis (e.g. the RE syllabus used by the school); visual ethnography (e.g. observation of visual images in the school relating to religion, religious diversity and community cohesion); lesson observations (e.g. to see how materials were used); semi-structured interviews with key staff and pupils; focus group interviews with pupils. Throughout the project, there was consultation between the research groups involved in the three strands, the schools involved in the case studies and the experts from the different faith communities. Project publications included the main report to the DCSF (Jackson et al. 2010). However, the key

significance of the project for WRERU was its leap forward in terms of capacity to design and conduct large-scale mixed-methods research in religious education.

### **The REDCo Project**

WRERU's participation in the European Commission Framework 6 REDCo project produced a body of research on young people in eight European nations, including WRERU's studies in England. These comprised qualitative (e.g. Ipgrave and McKenna 2008) and quantitative (e.g. McKenna, Neill and Jackson 2009) studies of the views of 14–16-year-olds as well as qualitative studies of classroom interaction (e.g. O'Grady 2009). One of WRERU's distinctive contributions to REDCo was an experiment in using key principles from the interpretive approach (Jackson 1997) in a series of school-based action research studies conducted through the ongoing work of a collaborative community of practice, including teachers, teacher trainers and a religious education adviser (Ipgrave, Jackson and O'Grady 2009). The key concepts of the interpretive approach were used not as a formal theoretical framework but as a theoretical stimulus and the basis for a check list for researchers working in the field (Jackson 2011, 2012b).<sup>2</sup>

The REDCo project set out to explore whether religious education in Europe was a factor contributing positively to religious dialogue or, on the contrary, a potential source of conflict. The main aim was to establish and compare the potentials and limitations of religion in the educational fields of the selected European countries and regions (England, Estonia, France, Germany, the Netherlands, Norway, the Russian Federation and Spain). Another aim was to identify approaches and policies that might make religion in education a factor which promotes dialogue. Qualitative, quantitative

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<sup>2</sup> The theoretical background to the issues different European countries faced in the field is in Jackson et al. 2007.

and classroom interaction studies were carried out in the eight nations and various complementary studies were conducted.

The REDCo project was innovative in that, while a cross-European project, data analysis was enabled at both national and European level. Its data can be viewed nationally or as part of the wider dataset from the eight European countries, providing collections of examples of religion in education in a variety of northern, southern, western and eastern European countries (e.g. ter Avest et al. 2009; Knauth et al. 2008; Valk et al. 2009). Moreover, because qualitative and quantitative studies across participating nations used the same research methods, comparisons, such as between the English and the Dutch data (Bertram-Troost and O'Grady 2008), could be made between countries of diverse historical and socio-cultural backgrounds, including different histories of religion and state. Reports of a cross-section of the REDCo studies can be found in Jackson (2012a), while detailed findings of different project strands are presented in particular collections (e.g. qualitative studies in Knauth et al. 2008, quantitative findings in Valk et al. 2009 and classroom interaction studies in ter Avest et al. 2009).

Despite contextual differences between and within the participant countries, the main findings of the REDCo project included the following (based on information at: [http://www.redco.uni-hamburg.de/cosmea/core/corebase/mediabase/awr/redco/research\\_findings/REDCo\\_policy\\_rec\\_eng.pdf](http://www.redco.uni-hamburg.de/cosmea/core/corebase/mediabase/awr/redco/research_findings/REDCo_policy_rec_eng.pdf)):

- The majority of pupils appreciated the religious heterogeneity in their societies, although a range of prejudices was expressed.
- The most important source of information about religions and worldviews was generally the family, followed by the school.

- The school population included a sizeable group of pupils for whom religion was important in their lives, a sizeable group for whom religion was not important and a sizeable group who held a variety of occasionally fluctuating positions between these two poles.
- Irrespective of their religious positions, a majority of pupils were interested in learning about religions in school.
- Pupils were well aware of and experienced religious diversity mostly in, but also outside, school.
- Pupils were generally open towards peers of different religious backgrounds. At the same time they tended to socialize with peers from the same background as themselves, even when they lived in areas characterized by religious diversity.
- Pupils often expressed a tolerant attitude at an abstract rather than practical level. The tolerance expressed in classroom discussion was not always replicated in their daily life-worlds.
- Those who learnt about religious diversity in school were more willing to enter into conversations about religions and worldviews with pupils from other backgrounds, compared to those who did not have this opportunity for learning.
- Pupils desired peaceful coexistence across religious differences and believed that this was possible.
- Pupils believed that the main preconditions for peaceful coexistence between people of different religions were knowledge about each other's religions and worldviews, shared interests and joint activities.
- In most countries pupils supported the right of adherents to a moderate expression of religious faith in school. For example, they did not oppose in school the wearing of unobtrusive religious symbols or objected to voluntary acts of worship for pupils who were adherents of a particular religion.
- Pupils for whom religion was important in their lives were more likely to respect the religious backgrounds of others and valued the role of religion in the world.



- Most pupils wanted to see school dedicated more to teaching about different religions than to guiding them towards a particular religious belief or worldview; however, pupils tended to favour the model of education about religion with which they were most familiar.
- Pupils wanted learning about religions to take place in a safe classroom environment governed by agreed procedures for expression and discussion.
- Pupils generally wished to avoid conflict on religious issues and some of the religiously committed pupils felt especially vulnerable.
- Dialogue was a favoured strategy for teachers to cope with diversity in the classroom, but pupils were more ambivalent about its value since, in practice, not all pupils were comfortable with the way diversity was managed in schools.

Many of these findings are reinforced by the ‘Young People’s Attitudes to Diversity’ project, although the latter is able to provide more nuanced findings because it is based on bigger samples (see below).

### **Critical Feedback on the REDCo Project**

Some criticisms have been advanced against REDCo, some of which could equally have been directed at the ‘Young People’s Attitudes to Religious Diversity’ project (see below). Two criticisms, in particular, have been made by Liam Gearon (2013).

The first is the assertion that research using theory and method grounded in the social sciences and psychology is inherently secularist and therefore exhibits an anti-religious bias. The basis of this criticism is the association of such disciplines with the European Enlightenment and its legacy, especially the association of disciplines with ‘founding’ intellectuals whose work, in effect, attempted to explain religion away. Sociology is associated by Gearon with Durkheim, while psychology is linked to its Freudian ancestry. Thus, Francis’s work is placed in a vague and cover-all ‘psychological–experiential paradigm’, along with that of others who make a strong use of psychology, regardless of the type of psychology they employ or the nature of its use

in their research or pedagogy (Gearon 2013, 115–122). Jackson’s work (coupled with that of WRERU colleagues Nesbitt and Arweck) is seen to occupy its own distinctive ‘socio-cultural paradigm’. Regarding Jackson’s interpretive approach, Gearon claims that ‘the origins of this approach lie in the founding sociological work of Emile Durkheim and especially *The Elementary Forms of the Religious Life*... From Durkheim’s analysis of what were then regarded as religion’s primitive origins, it was surmised that religion itself originated in society’s self deification’ (ibid., 127). But Jackson’s work *never* refers to Durkheim as an influence; the only reference to Durkheim in *Religious Education: An Interpretive Approach* is a critical one (Jackson 1997, 31). Jackson’s interpretive approach has multiple influences from a variety of disciplines (see above), including the use or adaptation of *methods* associated with certain strands of social or cultural anthropology (but not sociology). The resultant, eclectically sourced methodology (Jackson 2012c) aims to help researchers and learners (whatever their own religious or cultural backgrounds) to *understand* and *reflect upon* (partly through processes of ‘participation’ and ‘distanciation’) the *religious* meanings of others. Similarly, Francis’s psychological research is grounded in a specific mix of psychological theory and dovetails with his work in practical and empirical theology. To claim that all of such work is inherently secularist because of the origins of the family of disciplines it uses ignores theoretical diversity within the subjects concerned, including ongoing debates by those actually working in the fields about their nature and assumptions (e.g. Evans-Pritchard 1962; Jackson 1997, 30–32, 2012d).

The second is the claim that participation in any *research* relating to religious education having an instrumental social or political aim (for example, being concerned with the contribution that studies of religion might make to social cohesion or

addressing issues of dialogue and conflict) implies that those researchers and the users of their research regard the *process* of religious education as having a single ‘political’ aim (e.g. Gearon 2013, 132–134). This claim is linked to others. The argument can be summarized as follows: democratic states, responding to their increased religious and cultural diversity, have an interest in promoting tolerance (e.g. through promoting democratic values or human rights) and therefore develop policies to support it.

Researchers collude with governments or their agencies through accepting funding from such sources to conduct research that supports this (e.g. *ibid.*, 36). REDCo researchers focused entirely on issues raised by the young, which determine a religious education pedagogy aiming to increase tolerance through classroom ‘dialogue’ (*ibid.*, 133). In the research itself, and in pedagogy that relates to it, conflict is filtered out, profound differences are not taken seriously and truth claims are not considered. Moreover, there is an assumed underlying pluralistic theology – ‘a theological notion of religious pluralism in which all religions represent cultural variations of one ultimate reality’ (Gearon 2013, 134).

Gearon’s claims are highly questionable. First, it does not follow from the fact that a piece of research focuses on a ‘social’ issue, namely handling the topic of religion in pluralistic classroom contexts, that the researchers involved in this inevitably subscribe to a *single* ‘historical–political’ aim for religious education. For example, social aims (such as increasing tolerance) are closely inter-related with *personal* views and commitments, which – in the case of pupils from religious backgrounds – also connect with the wider teachings of religious groups and traditions. Moreover, participants in research could also support other aims, such as regarding the study of religion and values as intrinsically worthwhile.

Second, Gearon asserts a dubious relationship between the controlling agendas of political bodies (e.g. national governments or the European Commission) and funding for particular research projects, such as REDCo: the political body provides the funding on their terms; the researchers apply for it (e.g. Gearon 2013, 36). But why should not the priorities of a political body accurately reflect actual social need? Researchers (like any other citizens) might share some current governmental concerns, such as social cohesion in increasingly complex and diverse democratic societies. Moreover, shifts in policy with regard to religion in schools may be in *response* to lobbying from citizens, including educators or researchers.

Third, it does not follow that research findings concerned with young people's views and experiences spawn a form of religious education that is *entirely* based upon young people's views and experience. REDCo researchers were interested in issues surrounding pupil-to-pupil dialogue, but there was no assumption that such dialogue should *constitute* religious education. The goal of having *well-informed teachers*, able to provide authoritative information about religions and beliefs, was regarded as essential (e.g. von der Lippe 2010). Teacher competence in this field requires *both* subject knowledge *and* skills enabling civil pupil-to-pupil interaction (Jackson 2014).

Fourth, there was no agenda to play down or filter out conflict in pupil exchanges in the REDCo project. Despite some pupils' stated wish to avoid conflict, an overview of REDCo research argues for the constructive *use* of 'conflict' in teaching and learning (Knauth 2009; von der Lippe 2011; Skeie 2008), while accounts of classroom interaction gives concrete examples of such use (e.g. Kozyrev 2009; O'Grady 2013).

Fifth, there was no universalist or pluralistic theology underpinning the REDCo project and no expectation that pupils should be encouraged to adopt such a theology. Many pupils with conservative religious theologies participated in REDCo research and showed no signs of changing their views. REDCo researchers came from a variety of religious and non-religious backgrounds and did not share a common theological viewpoint.<sup>3</sup>

Where REDCo could have been criticized legitimately was in the limited scale of the studies within particular nations; however, they were never intended as *national* indicators. WRERU researchers were thus keen to follow up REDCo with a larger scale and more representative study in the United Kingdom.

### **The Religion and Society Programme: Young People's Attitudes to Religious Diversity**

An opportunity to design such a large-scale mixed-methods research project came through the Religion and Society Programme. This strategic research initiative, funded by two UK Government-funded research bodies, the AHRC and the ESRC, ran from 2007 to 2012. The Programme funded 75 projects across UK universities, investigating various aspects of the complex relationships between religion and society, both historical and contemporary. The Programme was co-ordinated by Prof. Linda Woodhead of Lancaster University, supported by a Steering Committee, on which Jackson was invited to serve.

WRERU's project 'Young People's Attitudes to Religious Diversity' (AH/G014035/1) or 'the Diversity project' was conducted between October 2009 and December 2012. It sought to extend and expand the earlier English REDCo study across

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<sup>3</sup> Liam Gearon's arguments are replied to in detail in Jackson 2015a and 2015b.

the UK. Thus it combined findings from qualitative focus group interviews among 13–16-year-old pupils with a large-scale quantitative survey of nearly 12,000 pupils aged 13–15 years attending different types of schools (with and without a religious character). Both qualitative and quantitative studies were conducted across all four nations of the UK and London. London was treated separately because its population is considerably larger than that of each of Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland and it presents a different pattern of diversity from England as a whole. The strategy also allowed due attention to English regions outside London. The project thus aimed to provide empirical evidence of the attitudes of young people towards religious diversity across the whole of the United Kingdom.

### **Project Proposal**

The project proposal was drafted by Jackson and Francis, in consultation with other WRERU colleagues who became members of the project team. The proposed research was intended to build on the earlier REDCo studies in a variety of ways, including:

- extending the research to all four UK nations and adding London as a distinctive case
- using the pupils' own perspectives to frame the expanded research questions
- checking the findings against much larger UK samples
- giving greater visibility to the different attitudes of members of minority religious groups
- exploring the influences of a variety of contextual factors on pupils' patterns of thought
- contributing to research by European partners
- providing stakeholders/end users with information relevant to policy, practice and academic debate on religious education and community cohesion issues

The proposed project also connected closely with aspects of two themes in the Religion and Society's 'youth call': Education, Socialization and Identity; Community, Welfare

and Prosperity. It responded to significant developments in the personal, social and cultural landscapes of the UK, including:

- growing visibility of religious plurality in both conventional and unconventional forms
- changes to traditional patterns of religious socialization through home, school and faith community
- growth of certain forms of religious intransigence
- increasing public recognition of religion's social significance
- increasing attention to international research on the above

The proposed project was relevant to developments at the interface between religious education and citizenship education (Jackson 2003a; DfES 2007) and to debates about separate faith schooling (Jackson 2003b). It was argued that more detailed knowledge and understanding of young people's attitudes to religious diversity would provide reliable information relevant to the development of policy and important data to inform academic discussion.

The proposal included interrelated research questions to be addressed by qualitative fieldwork and a quantitative survey informed by the findings of the qualitative study. The main research questions were:

1. Using qualitative methods, what are the key issues 13-16 year old pupils identify with religious diversity and how do they respond to these? (The plan was to use pupils' own experiences and perspectives to frame and expand the following research questions.)
2. Using quantitative methods, how widespread are the responses identified by the qualitative methods?
3. Drawing on insights from individual differences psychology, how far can quantitative approaches, using recognized measures of personality and other individual-level variables (emotional intelligence, self-concept, empathy), explain attitudes towards religious diversity?

4. Drawing on insights from social psychology, how far can social and contextual factors (school, family, media, local neighbourhood) explain individual differences in attitudes towards religious diversity?
5. Drawing on insights from empirical theology, how far can religious affiliation, beliefs, practices and views of transcendence explain individual differences in attitudes towards religious diversity?
6. Drawing on insights from qualitative research, how can attitudes towards religious diversity be more adequately operationalized in quantitative studies?

Once WRERU researchers were informed that their proposal had been successful, steps were taken to establish a research team and begin work. The main project team consisted of Prof. Robert Jackson (Principal Investigator), Prof. Leslie Francis (Co-investigator), Dr Elisabeth Arweck and Dr Julia Ipgrave (qualitative research), Dr Mandy Robbins (2009–2010) and Jennifer Croft (2011–2012) (quantitative research), Dr Ursula McKenna (processing qualitative and quantitative data) and Alice Pyke (PhD student working on both quantitative and qualitative aspects of the project). Regular team meetings were held throughout the project period. More colleagues were brought in later to assist with the analysis and interpretation of quantitative data.

From the start, the project team worked with local education advisers, education inspectors and colleagues in teacher education from across the UK in order to identify schools to participate in the project in both qualitative and quantitative strand. In some cases these contacts assisted in the initial approaches to the schools. In addition, school managers and religious education teachers were actively involved in the research helping to identify groups of pupils to take part in the qualitative and quantitative research and taking on the organization and time-tabling of the research days.

### **Qualitative Strand**



Qualitative research took place in 21 schools spread across the four nations of the UK and London, capturing for each a diversity of localized patterns of religion and religious plurality. The schools selected covered various religious, cultural, ethnic and socio-economic contexts to accommodate a variety of experiences and perspectives. The selection included schools of a designated religious character. The diversity of local contexts covered in the research is reflected in chapters 4–8.

Semi-structured group interviews (in effect ‘focus groups’) were used with three to six groups of around six pupils in each of the participating schools. These groups were selected from each school to ensure as far as possible a range of ages in the 13–16 age bracket and sufficient flexibility about the mix of gender, religious affiliation/no religious affiliation and ethnicity to access a wide diversity of views. Group interviews gave greater agency to the pupils as they responded to each other’s views on their shared contexts. Pupils were asked for their views on experiences of religious diversity in their own localities and awareness of religious diversity in the national and international context and to express their predictions of the role religion would have in shaping society in the future. The group interviews created detailed pictures of young people’s thinking about religious diversity in their different settings. They were used to identify themes and to generate hypotheses in order to inform the design and focus of the quantitative research. Thus young people had a voice in the research questions that guided the rest of the project.

### **Quantitative Strand**

The quantitative survey was informed by two components. First, insights from the qualitative study provided information from which psychometrically sound measures of attitudes towards religious diversity could be generated, reflecting the ideas, language

and themes of young people themselves. The qualitative survey also posed theories and hypotheses to be tested by quantitative methods. Second, the quantitative study drew on established measures and theories within empirical theology and psychology relevant for exploring individual differences in attitudes towards religious diversity. Thus, the questionnaire covered themes directly arising from the initial qualitative studies (many of them dealing with issues similar to the earlier REDCo studies), together with themes related to Francis's earlier quantitative studies.

The quantitative survey was UK wide, intending to establish a representative sample of 10,000 pupils from state maintained, independent and faith-based schools, building on Francis's previous studies, such as the 'Teenage Religion and Values' project (Francis and Robbins 2005), with large samples in order to give minorities reliable visibility. The survey employed established psychometric instruments and specially originated scales, thus enabling creative use of various statistical techniques to facilitate the development and testing of multivariate models.

The survey explored topics such as: pupils' contact with different religions; whether they had friends/family members belonging to different religions; their views on the discussion of religious issues in class; school visits to places of worship; the wearing of religious symbols and celebration of religious festivals in school. Other questions emerged from the qualitative studies and elicited factors related to pupils' attitudes. The original target of 10,000 pupils was exceeded resulting in a database of around 12,000 and data were entered on computer for analysis. Interim analyses were undertaken to provide material for presentations at specific conferences and to prepare the project's first publications.

### **Synergy of REDCo and Diversity Project**

As indicated above, many findings from the Diversity project reinforce the generic REDCo findings summarized above but employ a wider and more detailed selection of qualitative studies and draw on much bigger samples in the quantitative research. Moreover, more diverse educational settings across the UK are covered in the Diversity project than in the English contributions to the REDCo project. As later chapters in this book show, the qualitative studies in the former reveal the high importance and relevance of *context*, especially in schools with a dominant religious tradition or sub-tradition, while the quantitative findings, drawing on large samples, are able to present a more detailed and nuanced picture than the REDCo findings.

For example, REDCo found that, generally speaking, in the participant countries, pupils for whom religion is important in their lives were more likely to respect the religious background of others and value the role of religion in the world. The Diversity project provides a more nuanced picture for the UK. For example, in a preliminary analysis of 5,000 questionnaires from 13–15-year-old pupils attending state-maintained schools without a religious character across England, Northern Ireland, Scotland and Wales, 70% who described themselves as having no religion agreed that ‘studying religion at school helps me to understand people from other religions’, with the proportions rising to 82% among pupils self-identifying as Christian, 84% among pupils with a Sikh background, 85% among Muslim pupils and 92% among Hindu pupils.

In a second example, REDCo found that pupils in the participant countries generally wished to avoid conflict on religious issues, with some religiously committed pupils feeling especially vulnerable. The Diversity project provides a more refined picture for the UK. In the same preliminary analysis reported above, 11% of the pupils

who described themselves as Christians said that at school ‘I am bullied because of my religion’, with the proportions rising to 18% among Hindu pupils, 23% among Muslim pupils, 32% among Jewish pupils and 42% among Sikh pupils. (WRERU 2013)

The Diversity project can also give a more sophisticated picture of the internal diversity of religious traditions than was possible in the REDCo project, as exemplified in Chapter 10 in this volume, reporting research on young people in Catholic and Protestant schools in Northern Ireland and Chapter 11 illustrating the internal diversity of the Catholic community.

### **Conclusion**

The ‘Young People’s Attitudes to Religious Diversity’ project marks a significant recent development in WRERU’s work. It continues a tradition of empirical research concerned with religious diversity and education going back over 20 years that is relevant to educational policy and practice, building on the earlier work of the Warwick Religious Education and Community Project. WRERU’s early ethnographic studies concentrated on religion in the life-world of children and young people, including the context of family, especially young people from a variety of minority religious backgrounds. WRERU’s participation in the REDCo Project enabled international research collaboration, capacity building (especially through the participation of research students), and the introduction of mixed-methods research.

WRERU’s use of combined qualitative and quantitative methods was extended through the appointment of new staff, enabling the design of a project for the UK Government on ‘materials used to teach about world religions in schools in England’. Finally, the Diversity project enabled the strengthened WRERU team to undertake a major study of young people’s attitudes across the UK, using an integrated mixed-

methods approach. WRERU staff are pleased to present some of the findings of the research in this book. Further publications from the Diversity project will appear and from the follow-up of the REDCo project (McKenna et al. 2014), but WRERU's work continues in new directions, through involvement with further international projects, for example, with the Council of Europe and the European Wergeland Centre (e.g. Jackson 2014), a range of European universities, including the 'Religion and Dialogue in Modern Societies' (ReDi) project with the Academy of World Religions at the University of Hamburg, the 'Religious Education at Schools in Europe' (REL-EDU) project with the University of Vienna (e.g. Rothgangel, Jackson and Jäggle 2014), the 'Life Skills' project with the University of Stockholm, and 'Religion Educators: Stress and Work-related Psychological Health' project, together with a range of partnerships with colleagues in countries such as Australia, the USA and South Africa.

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