



This paper is taken from

*Human Rights and Citizenship Education
Proceedings of the eleventh Conference of the
Children's Identity and Citizenship in Europe
Academic Network*

London: CiCe 2009

edited by Peter Cunningham, published in London by CiCe, ISBN 978-0-9562789-6-8

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Ross, A. & Holden, C. (2009) "I like to be fair - it's grown up": English young people playing the Ultimatum Game, in Ross, A. (ed) Human Rights and Citizenship Education. London: CiCe, pp 38 - 55

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Lifelong Learning Programme

This project has been funded with support from the European Commission. This publication reflects the views only of the authors, and the Commission cannot be held responsible for any use which may be made of the information contained therein.

Acknowledgements:

This is taken from the book that is a collection of papers given at the annual CiCe Conference indicated. The CiCe Steering Group and the editor would like to thank

- All those who contributed to the Conference
- The CiCe administrative team at London Metropolitan University
- London Metropolitan University, for financial and other support for the programme, conference and publication
- The Lifelong Learning Programme and the personnel of the Education and Culture DG of the European Commission for their support and encouragement.

“I like to be fair – it’s grown up”¹: English young people playing the Ultimatum Game

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This paper reports on the English results of the Ultimatum Game (see Ross *et al* in this volume, for description). These were conducted with the support of a British Academy grant.

Abstract

We worked with children and young people aged 11, 14 and 17 to examine their predispositions to act pro-socially and altruistically, using a mixture of urban and rural schools used. Pupils were questioned to gain insights into the reasons behind their actions and decisions. Initial findings for the UK will be presented, focusing on understanding young people’s economic and altruistic decisions.

Pupils playing each other in the same class

We report first on our largest England sample, of 330 pupils playing 165 games. Approximately half the pupils attended schools in Exeter, a medium sized town in the south-west of England, using a primary school and a secondary school. The other pupils came from schools in London: two primary schools (one inner London, one suburban), an inner-London secondary school, and some 17 year olds attending a further education college. The school’s authorities were made aware of the nature of the experiment, and were content with this. Written parental permission was obtained for all pupils under 16: the parents were informed that the experiment did not involve gambling, or a game of chance, but that there might be a small monetary reward for their child as a result of the game.

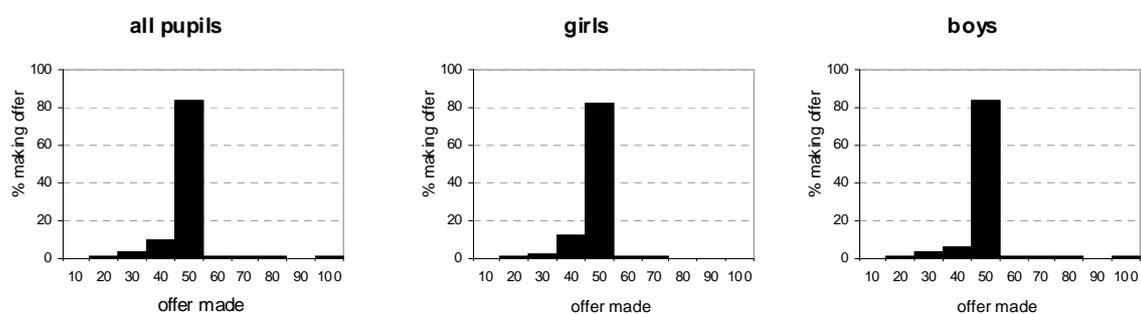
All the games were played between pupils attending the same class, thus minimising disruption to the school, so pupils knew each other well, though we attempted not to select close friends to play together. The game was played with the class over a single lesson, so there were no opportunities to discuss tactics or outcomes while the games were in progress. Each pair of pupils was taken to a secluded area close to the classroom, and shown the power-point explanation of the game, and asked if they understood the procedure, and questions were answered (though not occasional questions about the tactics of playing the game). It was emphasised that the game was a matter of individual choice, and that they should not reveal details about how the game had gone, nor should they discuss it, until after all the class had played. In each case a coin was tossed to determine who would be the proposer, and who would be asked to receive the proposal. Ten fifty-pence coins were put on the table. Two researchers were present for each game: one administered the game, and then both briefly interviewed and transcribed the two pupils’ responses.

The offers

We found that 83% of the pupils made an offer of £2.50, half the amount (hereinafter ‘50’). Nine % offered 40, 13% less than 40, and 4% more than 50. Of the 165 games played, 162 resulted in the sum offered being accepted: there were only three rejections. The mean offer was of 49. In the discussion and analysis that follows, it should be understood that most responses were of 50:50, and that comparisons are being made between mean offers. The differences between groups that are discussed are essentially the variant behaviour of a minority of individuals in each group.

There were some very small variations between the way that boys and girls played across the England sample: more of the boys were more generous in their offers than the girls: the mean of the boys offers was 49.6, compared to the girls’ mean offer of 48.3. This was only partly accounted for by one boy offering the entire amount. Figure 1 shows the results for all of England, and then broken down by gender.

Figure 1: all England: all pupils, and by gender



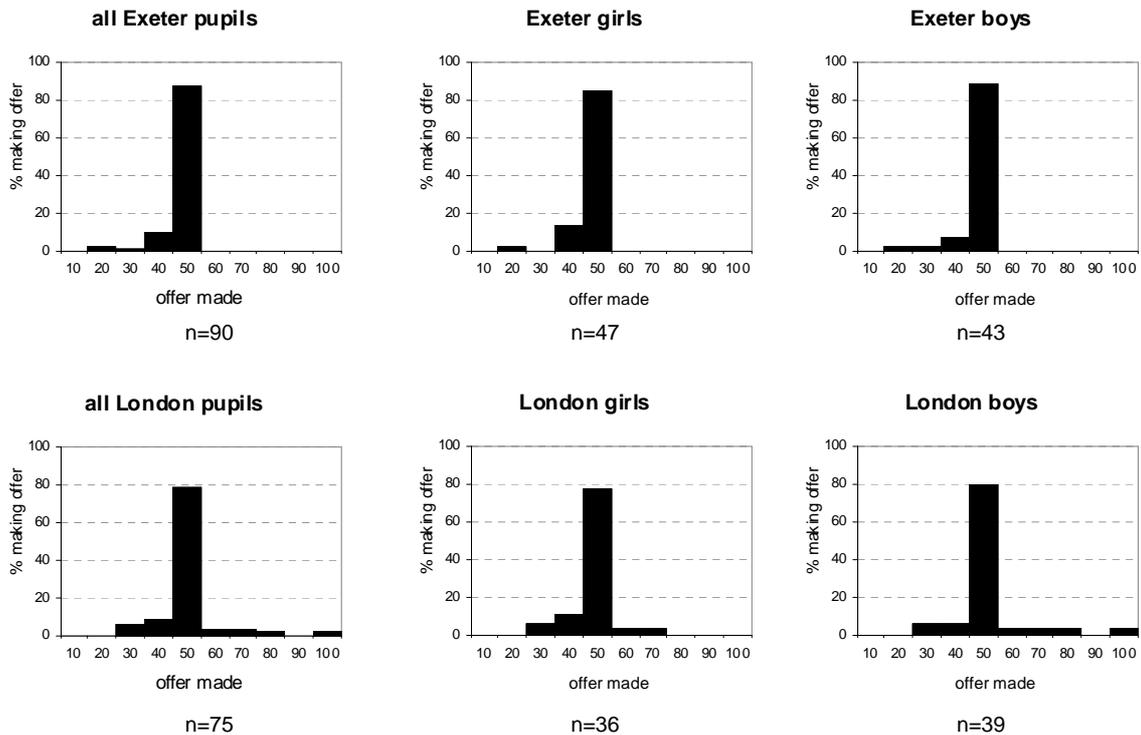
n=165

n=83

n=82

There were more significant differences between London and Exeter, and between the three different age ranges (Figure 2). None of the Exeter pupils offered more than 50, while 8% of the London pupils made offers of between 60 and 100. More of the London boys made larger offers, and some of the offers themselves were larger, than the London girls. None of the London pupils offered less than 30; two Exeter pupils offered only 20. The mean offers from each group were London: 50.0 (girls: 48.6; boys 51.3) and Exeter: 48.1 (girls and boys: both 48.1).

Figure 2: Exeter and London pupils, each city and by gender

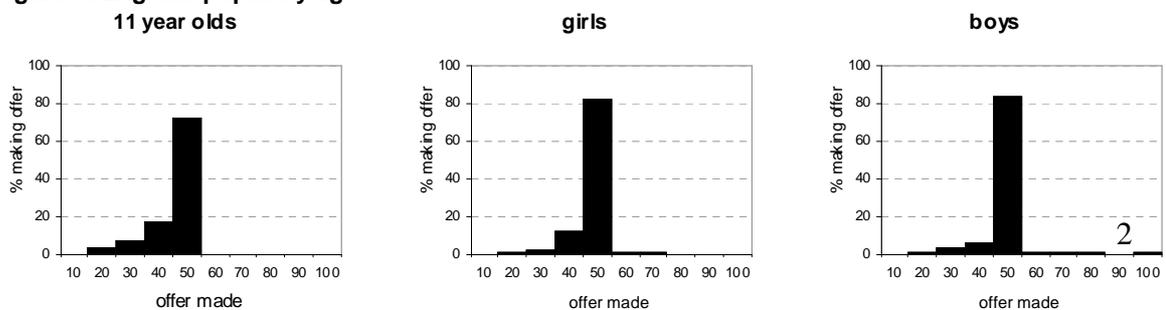


Another gender variable that it was possible to monitor in this iteration of the game was whether the gender of the potential acceptor was an influence on the proposer: did boys make similar offers to boys as they did to girls, and did girls make the same offers to girls as they did to boys? We were unable to ensure an equal number of pairs in each of the potential categories, but the data we have suggests that boys may make more generous offers to girls (mean offer 51.4, n=21) than they do to other boys (mean offer 49.7, n=59), while girls make larger offers to other girls (mean offer 48.7, n=55) than to boys (mean offer 46.3, n=30).

Analysis by age shows further variations. In broad terms, the 11 year olds made the least generous offers (mean offer 45.9), while the 14 and 17 year olds were more generous (51.0 and 50.2 respectively) (Figure 3).

But 72% of the 11 year olds made offers of 50. None offered over this, and 17% offered 40. There was very little difference between the boys and the girls in terms of offers. The 14 year olds were the most generous: this was the only age group that made offers over 50 (8.5% of the age group did so), and only 5% offered 40 – no 14 year old offered less than this. Again, there was little difference between boys and girls at this age. The 17 year olds were, of all the age groups, most likely to offer 50: nearly 92% did so. One offered 100, another 30, and two offered 40.

Figure 3: England pupils by age



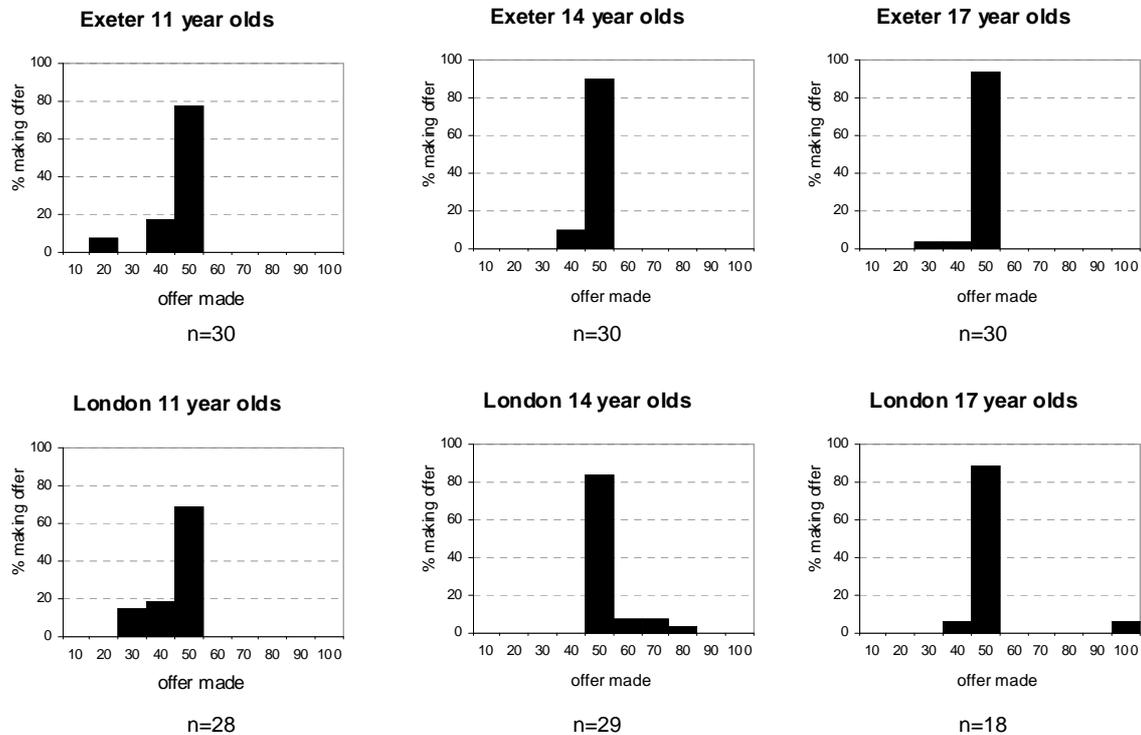
n=58

n=59

n=48

There were more pronounced variations between London and Exeter, with a higher proportion of the two older groups being more generous than their Exeter peers: but some caution should be exercised in attaching significance to these, as the numbers in each group are relatively small (Figure 4).

Figure 4: comparison of Exeter and London pupils by age group



The average offers were: 11 years olds (mean offers: all 45.9; Exeter 46.3; London 45.4); 14 years olds (mean offers: all 51.0; Exeter 49.0; London 53.1); 17 year olds (mean offers: all 50.2; Exeter 49.0; London 52.2).

Rationale for making offers

The great majority of these young people made an offer of 50% of the sum available. Relatively small numbers made larger offers, and these were London-based older pupils. Some younger pupils were rather less generous in their offers. How did these young people explain why they decided to offer particular amounts? Each pupil was asked to explain their offer immediately after the game was over.

Offers that were equal

It was particularly striking that a very large proportion of those who made an offer of 50% used such terms as 'fair' and 'equal' in their accounts. From the 137 pupils who offered 50%, we were able to transcribe comments from 115 of them: 87 of these (76%) used the words 'fair' or 'equal', or both of these in explaining their decision. Seventeen pupils (14%) described their offer in terms such as 'half', 'the same', 'down the middle', etc (some of these also used 'fair' or 'equal'. Examples of comments of those offering 50 were:

Because it's fair, and it would be selfish to give her [10] and keep the rest (girl, 11, Exeter)

It's fair to split equally (girl, 17, Exeter)

Because it's a fair offer –each gets a half in the end. It makes me happy (boy, 14, London)

It's nice and fair. I might have been able to offer him a bit less, but it wouldn't have been fair. I'd have done the same if it had been a stranger, because it's fair (boy, 14, London)

Some responses indicated that this decision also involved some calculation or anticipation of how their partner might react:

She won't reject an equal offer (boy, 17, Exeter)

So we can both get a fair share and keep the money. There was no point in offering less as she may have rejected it. Now we can both go and buy chips (boy, 11, London)

It's too risky to offer lower. It's guaranteed to get something if it's equal (boy, 11, London)

If I kept 90 and offered her 10, if she'd accepted I'd get a lot but she'd only get 10, it isn't that much. She'd rather neither [of us] get anything than she just got 10. I think this [50:50] is the safest bet – it's completely fair. If it wasn't fair, she might reject it (boy, 14, London)

Because I knew he might screw me over if I didn't offer equally (boy, 17, Exeter)

I didn't want him to say no, so we'd [both] leave with no money (girl, 14, Exeter)

A few also referred to their friendship with their partner:

He's my friend, I wanted to be fair. If it was stranger, I'd do the same, unless they looked mean (boy, 14, London)

There were also some wider considerations of equity:

I'm a fair person and a socialist: I believe in equality (boy, 17, Exeter)

The world needs equality (girl, 17 Exeter)

Some children referred to how they, or the person they were playing with, might feel about an inequitable split. Greed, or the appearance of greed, was undesirable:

It's best to split it – it's fair, It wouldn't feel right taking more (boy, 14, London)

It's fair – I don't want to steal from her, I'm not a thief. I'm a kind person. I decided to be equal. (girl, 14, London)

I wouldn't want to be greedy (girl, 11, London)

I didn't want to be selfish (girl, 17, Exeter)

Some referred to the money not being theirs in the first place, or not being of great value:

It's fair – I don't need it, anyway (boy, 14, London)

It's not my money in the first place, so why not share equally? (girl, 17, London)

To be nice and fair – I don't care about the money, and I'm not a selfish person (girl, 17, London)

Of course, many decisions were based on a complex mixture of reasons:

It's the most logical one, the best way to split. Simple, neutral, not greedy and not too generous (boy, 11, Exeter)

Offers of less than half

But not all of those taking part decided to make an offer of 50. Why did some of the offer less, or more? Twenty-seven pupils (13% of the total) offered less than half. Most of these (15) offered 40, proposing to

keep 60 for themselves. Many of the explanations offered for this behaviour showed a clear strategic calculation to maximise their result:

If it was too low he would reject it, and I wanted to get something (boy, 11, London)

I don't know, I chose a tiny bit more, I was going to give him 50 (boy, 11, Exeter)

I thought it was the sensible option, to keep as much as possible (boy, 14, Exeter)

I thought he'd accept it as better than nothing (boy, 14, Exeter)

Some acknowledged the inequity, but justified it as being minimal, or relatively small (there were further examples of this rationale in the subsequent iterations of the game (below):

50:50 would be completely fair, there'd be no conflict. I can't be too greedy. If it was 40:60 he would probably accept – but [he would] not lower than that (boy, 11, London)

I was feeling generous, but I [made sure I] got 20 more (girl, 14, Exeter)

Some explanations referred to being in a position of relative power, or to showing that they had made a decision, rather than accepting equity as a default:

I have control (girl, 17, Exeter)

I knew it would be accepted and wanted to do something different to an equal split (girl, 11, London)

A small number offered less than 40. Those who offered 30 admitted to being greedy:

I wanted to get back at him by being tight (boy, 11, London)

Because I knew she would accept it because it was more than she had originally (boy, 11, London)

Both of these above offers were accepted, but with evident disappointment from the person they were playing with. Both boys then volunteered and gave them [10] more (ie, in effect raising their offer from 30 to 40). Another miscalculated:

Because I thought it was fair and I thought he'd accept it. I thought that 30 was better than nothing (boy, 17, Exeter)

and found his offer rejected.

Two offers were of just 20. Both of these seemed to consider this a reasonable offer:

Because I'm friendly (girl, 11, Exeter)

I offered him 20 because it's quite a lot, and I'd have 80 because it's fair. I chose it because I thought it would be a good amount (boy, 11, Exeter).

Offers of more than half

Finally, 4% offered more than half the sum: as noted, all of these except for one were London 14 year olds. Sometimes this was a rational calculation:

I thought that there was a better chance of her accepting if I offered this, and she'd keep more (girl, 14, London) (offer of 60)

It was fair – I thought of offering 50, but I wouldn't offer less, as he wouldn't accept (boy, 14, London) (offer of 60)

It was common sense (boy, 14, London) (offer of 80)

Another offer of 70 was not straightforward, being in reality an offer of 50:

It's fair, and I owed him 20 from earlier (boy, 14, London)

One was generosity, justified by a lucky number:

Three's my lucky number, so I kept 3 coins [30] – she's my friend, and I wanted to give her more. She needs the money (girl, 14, London) (offering 70)

The final 'high' offer appeared to be irrational:

I'm greedy! (boy, 17, London) (offering 100).

Rejections

In this iteration of the game, there were only four occasions where an offer was rejected. These were all rejections made by boys, for offers of 20, 30, 50 and 100.

It wasn't a good offer (boy, 11, Exeter) (to an offer of 20)
Asked how he felt about the result, he said 'It doesn't surprise me – I know him'; while the boy offering 20 was indignant: 'I thought he would have accepted it, because it was a good amount for him. Don't we get another go?'

Because it wasn't enough money. I'd rather have nothing than not be equal (boy, 17, Exeter) (to an offer of 30)

The rejection of 50 was by a boy who said his Muslim faith made him wary of accepting money in this situation, though he admitted that the offer was fair. His opponent (also Muslim) tried to persuade him to accept without success.

The rejection of the offer of 100 was, it seems, based on suspicion:

It's not fair, because for example maybe he had most money, he doesn't share - if he was a manager he wouldn't do this to his staff who work for him (boy, 17, London)

Pupils playing pupils in different towns in the same country

The next game was also by pupils in Exeter and London schools, but with a different set of pupils. In this round, each pupil played against another in a different location: London 11 year olds played Exeter 11 year olds, and so on. Ideally, we would have organised this with a real-time link (either by phone or Skype), but the practicalities of getting two classes coordinated were too complex. Instead, the experimenters in one location collected offers from their set of pupils, sent them to the researchers in the other location, who put the offers and collected the responses, and sent these back to the first location to be relayed to the pupils, and their responses collected. This iteration of the game approximated more closely to the classic Ultimatum Game, in that the participants were unknown to each other.

The whole class was first shown the power-point explanation of the game, and questions were answered (though not occasional questions about the tactics of playing the game). The location of the other school was described as either in London or in Exeter. It was emphasised that the game was a matter of individual choice, and that they should not discuss in advance how they might play, nor reveal how the game had gone until after all the class had played. It was not always possible to strictly enforce this.

Then individual pupils were taken from the class, and the ten coins put before them. In the case of the proposers, the pupil was invited to split the coins, and the result noted, and then the pupil was asked to explain the division. The offers were sent to the other class: here, each pupil in turn was told the forename and gender of the pupil making the offer, and the coins were split in the proportion of the offer. The decision as to accept or not was recorded, and the money given to the pupil if they accepted, and their reason for accepting/rejecting recorded, and then their feeling about the game as a whole. The responses were sent back to the first school: each pupil in turn was then called to a side room, reminded of their offer with two piles of coins. They were told the forename and gender of the pupil who had made the decision to accept or not, given their money if appropriate, and asked for their feelings on the game.

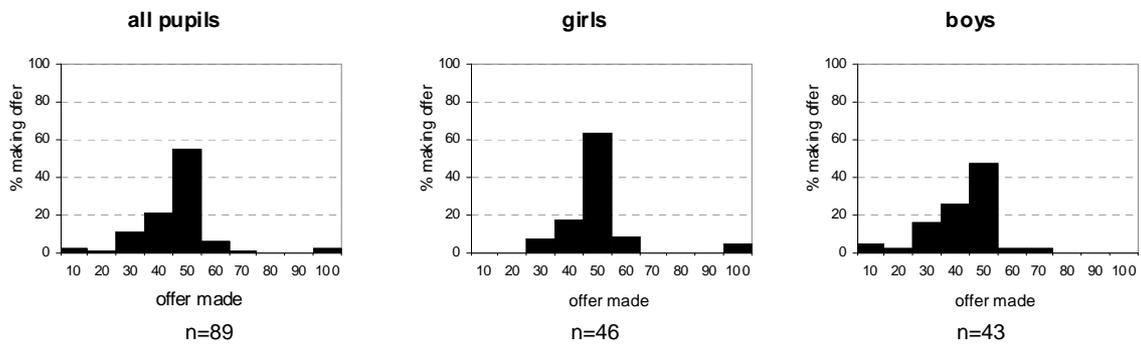
Generally, it was observed that the pupils accepted and had some interest in their opponent: the names were noted, and the gender of the opponent used in describing their reactions to the game.

This iteration of the game took place with fewer pupils: one London class of 11 year olds made offers to an Exeter class of the same age, while two Exeter classes of 14 And 17 year olds made offers to two London classes of the same age. Thus there were in all 179 pupils taking part, in 89 games. The smaller size makes the possible analysis less extensive – there were only London 11 year olds making offers, for example, and only Exeter 14 and 17 year olds. No pupils making an offer knew the gender of the person that they were playing against.

The offers

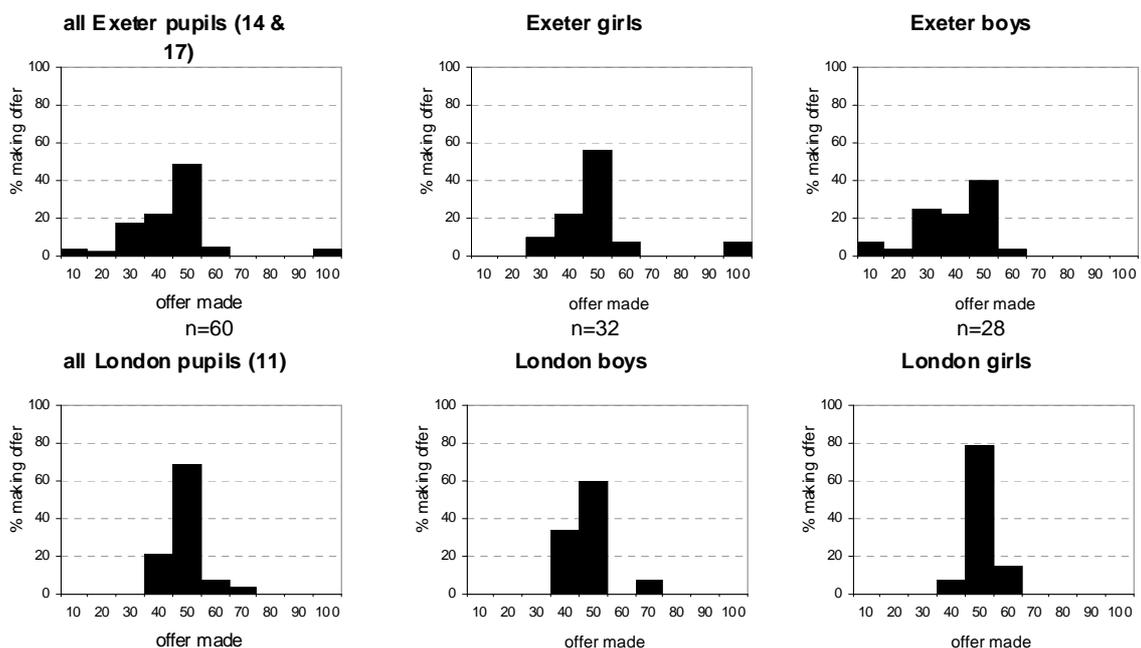
The modal (most common) offer was still 50 (49 offers of 50 out of a total of 89 offers; 55%), but the mean offer was less than when the young people were playing face to face (46.3, down from 49.0). Figure 5 shows the distribution, and should be compared to Figure 1.

Figure 5: Exeter and London: all pupils, and by gender



The boy’s mean offer was significantly lower than when playing face to face (42.3, down from 49.6), while the girl’s mean offer was up a smaller amount (50.0, up from 48.3). But these mean values conceal the much wider distribution of offers, and that there was a much smaller proportion of offers of 50, by both girls and boys. Some boys were making very much lower offers. We can only analyse this to a limited degree. Firstly, it again appears that the Exeter young people made less generous offers than the Londoners, but we are here comparing 14 and 17 year olds from Exeter with 11 year olds from London. Figure 6 shows the two locations by gender.

Figure 6: Exeter and London: by city and by gender



n=29

n=14

n=15

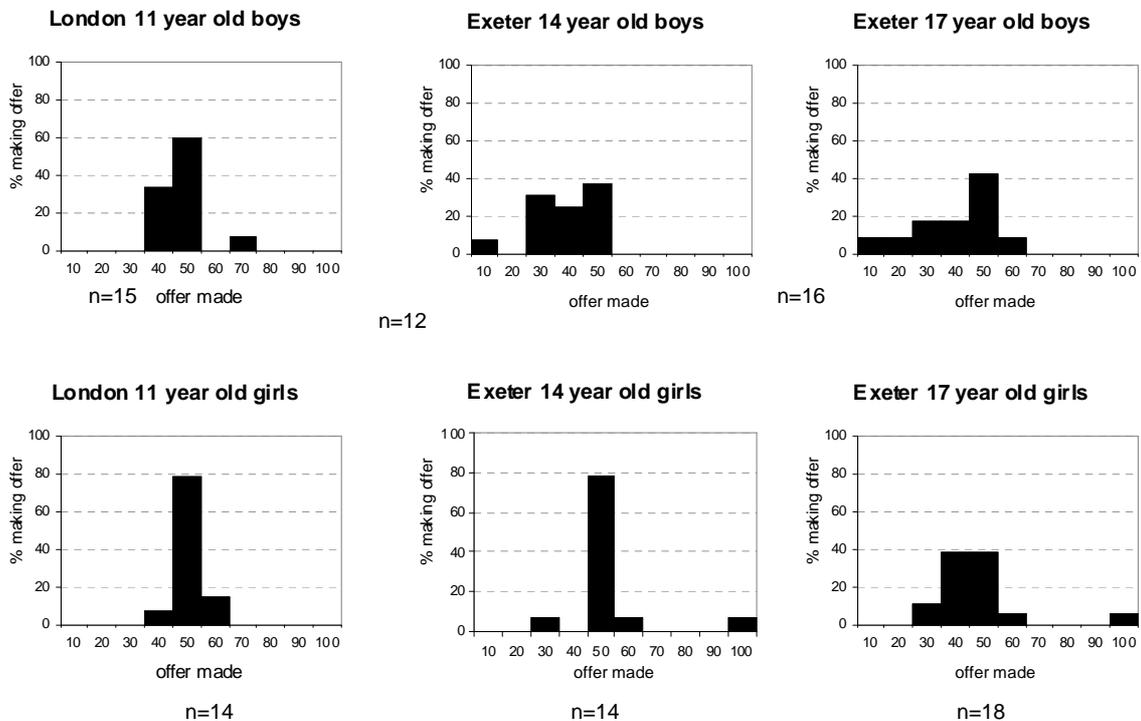
This shows that while the boys were generally making less generous offers than in the previous context, some of the Exeter boys in particular were making low offers (Table 1).

Table 1: Mean offers by group

Context	Group	Mean offer	N
Playing face to face			
	All	49.0	165
	all boys	49.6	82
	all girls	48.3	83
	Exeter		
	boys	48.1	43
	girls	48.1	47
	London		
	boys	51.3	39
	girls	48.6	36
	11 year olds	45.9	58
	14 year olds	51.0	59
	17 year olds	50.2	48
Playing between Exeter and London – not face to face			
	All	46.3	89
	all boys	42.3	43
	all girls	50.0	46
	Exeter		
	boys	39.3	28
	girls	49.7	32
	London		
	boys	48.0	15
	girls	50.7	14
	11 year olds	49.3	29
	14 year olds	45.3	30
	17 year olds	44.3	30

This can be seen when we examine the age and gender distribution, as shown in Figure 7.

Figure 7: Exeter and London: by age group



Rationales for the offers

Offering less than half

As we have noted, there were a significant number of low offers – 36% of all offers made were less than 50. As before – but more frequently – there were attempts to qualify the idea of fairness, as though they knew that they were expected, in some way, to be fair, but nevertheless offered less, and needed to justify their behaviour as not being too deviant from this.

I offered slightly less- they're still getting some money ... I was thinking of halving it, but I wanted to keep more (boy, 11, London, offering 40)

It's enough to be reasonable (boy, 11, London, offering 40)

It's a bit fair – keeping 90 would be greedy, but 60 is OK (girl, 11, London, offering 40)

I felt this was fair enough, near enough to half (boy, 11, London, offering 40)

This is a fairly decent amount of money for myself, whilst enough money to try and secure a deal (boy, 14, Exeter, offering 30)

I believe this is reasonable, and it's not too low for them to reject. It's just under half (boy, 17, London, offering 30)

It's relatively fair (girl, 17, Exeter, offering 40)

The fifth and sixth examples above also show an element of calculation about how much could be got away with in taking more than half, particularly with older pupils.

I think 30 is a useful amount. Any lower and they may reject, any higher is a waste (female, 17 Exeter, offering 30)

I'm taking a bit of a risk to maximise what I can get without insulting the other (boy, 17, Exeter, offering 40)

Others identified themselves as being in a controlling position, and therefore entitled to take a larger share.

Because I am in control and I have the option to give them everything or nothing, but I want to give them something to be fair (girl, 14, Exeter, offering 30)

I made the offer, so I should have more – it's reasonable, as it's money for nothing (female, 17, Exeter, offering 40)

And a few admitted to being greedy:

Because it's 70 for me, and I love money (boy, 14, Exeter, offering 30)

Because I want money (boy, 14, Exeter, offering 10)

People will like 10 better than nothing. They should feel lucky to get anything at all (boy, 17, Exeter)

Offering an even division

Of those pupils who offered 50, it was again very striking that a very high proportion used words such as 'fair', or 'equal', or 'even' in their accounts. But there was also – more than in the earlier iteration – an anxiety in some pupils about how their actions might be perceived by their unseen partners in the game.

If I took more money ... they might think I'm greedy (boy, 11, Exeter)

They might think I wasn't being fair if I offered less than 50 (girl, 11, London)

It's even and fair on both of us. Also if I offered a smaller amount, I would feel guilty and selfish (girl, 14, Exeter)

This offer won't insult anyone ... (boy, 17, Exeter)

There was also a degree of calculus involved in several accounts.

... they're more likely to go for it. I wouldn't accept less, so I didn't offer less (girl, 11, London)

If I am too unreasonable, I will get nothing (male, 14, Exeter)

... we'll both get something as they are unlikely to reject the offer (female, 17, Exeter)

And in many of these 50:50 pupils' minds there was evidently a mixture of motivations

If I kept 60, they might think it's not fair. It's a bit of both about making sure we both get [some] money, but also what they will think if I'm unfair – I didn't want to appear greedy (female, 11, London).

Offers of more than half

The proportion of pupils offering over half was 9%, higher than in the face to face situation. A number of these offers also showed evidence of a calculation about the likely response.

Offering them a bit more, they are more likely to accept (girl, 11, London, offering 60)

I thought about 60:40 and finally did 70:30, offering them 70. I was worried that 50:50 would be rejected, and what they would think about me. I don't really care much about money. (boy, 11, London, offering 70)

... if they reject this offer, it will be their fault and not mine (boy, 14, Exeter, offering 60)

... giving them more is an incentive to take it (boy, 17, Exeter).

There were two offers of 100.

I don't need the money, and I'd rather someone else had it and put it to good use (girl, 17, Exeter)

I don't really care, to be honest (girl, 14, Exeter)

Acceptances and Rejections

Although there were only half as many games played than in the first round, there were 6 rejections (6.7%; 2.4% in the face to face games). We first consider which offers were rejected, and why, and what the response was to these rejections.

Rejections

The rejections were made by the 14 and 17 year olds. Three offers of 50 were rejected.

I don't understand – I don't trust taking money (boy, 17, London)

I don't need the money. I already have money (boy, 17, London)

It's fair to reject it – it just is. I wouldn't accept anything (girl, 14, London)

These rejections were received by those making the offers with varying degrees of understanding

It goes to show that everyone thinks differently. But they were stupid to reject it when it was split evenly (female, 14, Exeter)

It's pretty unfair, but it's their choice whether they wanted to be selfish or not (boy, 17, Exeter)

This person was either full of morals or just spiteful (boy, 17, Exeter)

An offer of 40 was rejected:

It's unfair – I feel kind of bad ... It's not fair. It should be 50:50 (girl, 14, London)

The person making the offer was aggrieved:

Really disappointed, because some people accepted this amount (boy, 14, Exeter)

An offer of 40 was also rejected:

I don't understand where the money came from: I would rather give it back (boy, 17, London)

One of the offers of 10 was rejected:

It's a bit mean and a bit tight (female, 17, London)

('Chin up', responded the Exeter boy making this offer).

Acceptances

Accepting offers of less than half

What of those who accepted offers less than 50? What were their rationales?

The other offer of 10 was accepted:

Maybe he didn't get a present for Christmas? It should have been 50:50. I'm a bit disappointed (girl, 14, London)

('I'm incredibly happy', said the boy who had made this offer).

Generally, acceptances of less than half were seen as better than nothing, though sometimes there was evidence of disappointment or resentment.

I said yes to get some money – I would have liked more, but it was OK (girl, 11, Exeter, offered 20)

It's better than nothing (boy, 11, Exeter)

You only get this chance, so I said yes, and we both got money (girl, 11, Exeter. Offered 40)

It was bit unfair, but better than nothing ((boy, 14, London, offered 30)

Well, I accepted, but it was a bit mean (boy, 14, London, offered 30)

It was fair, but it would have been better if he'd offered it in half (boy, 14, London, offered 40)

I was tempted not to take it, because he's an arsehole for offering me so little (boy, 17, London, offered 20)

Because it's free money. He's not offering enough – I was tempted to reject it. I'd have gone halves myself (boy, 17, London, offered 30)

Some rationalised that the person giving the offer was entitled to offer less than half – the obverse of the 'power' rationale described earlier:

If this was a business offer he's got a good deal – they should have offered me less (boy, 17, London, offered 40)

I would probably have done the same as him – it's a hard decision (boy, 17, London, offered 40)

There was sometimes an attempt to excuse the lack of equality in the offer.

It's fair, in a way. Just 10 more is going to him, it's not a big deal (boy, 14, London, offered 40)

It's OK, generous – she could have been greedy and taken it all (girl, 17, London, offered 30)

Accepting more than half

Those offered more than half all accepted their offers.

It's a good offer – I wouldn't have offered 100! (boy, 14, London, offered 100)

It's very generous of A***. If I'd been offering, I'd have offered half. I'm ecstatic – can I have her phone number so I can thank her> (boy, 17, London, offered 100)

It benefits me – it's generous. It's not fair; 50:50 would be fair. I'd expected less (boy, 17, London, offered 60)

I thought this was kind, thank you (boy, 14, London, offered 60)

I accepted it because it was very kind, and if I rejected it they wouldn't get anything. I felt a bit guilty to have more (boy, 11, Exeter, offered 70)

I accepted it, but I don't know if they are rich or poor. I am happy – but are they rich? (girl, 11, Exeter).

Accepting half

As with the offers, the rationale for accepting half was almost always explained as being 'fair' or 'equal'.

Playing pupils in different countries

The final round of the game was played in the same manner as the London-Exeter iteration, but this time pupils played against similar age pupils in Turkish schools. The Exeter pupils (14 and 17 year olds) made offers to pupils in Eskisehir, a small provincial town in the north west of the country, and the Eskisehir 11 year olds made offers to pupils in an Exeter primary school. London 11 year olds made offers to similar aged children in Istanbul (the largest city in Turkey), while 14 and 17 year old Istanbul pupils made offers to London pupils of the same age. In all, 167 English pupils were involved in playing this number of games against Turkish pupils. This section analyses in particular the English pupils' behaviour.

Offers

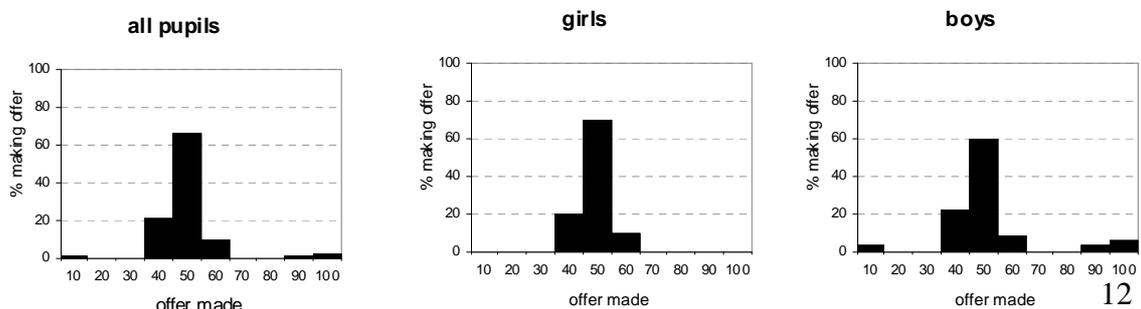
In all of the 167 games, 87 involved the English pupils making an offer to their Turkish counterparts. It is particularly striking that the behaviour exhibited in the offers was in some respects mid-way between the pattern shown in the face to face games and that of the inter-city games. The norm was still an offer of 50, but there were fewer non-equal offers than in the London-Exeter games. Table 2 shows this in a summary form:

Table 2: Comparison of levels of offers made by English pupils facing different partners

	partners in the same class (face to face)	partners in a different English city	partners in a different country (Turkey)
offers of less than half	13	36	21
offers of half	83	55	66
offers of more than half	4	9	13
%	100	100	100

There appear to be some complex effects at play here. We first present the behaviour more detail. The overall effect is that more pupils are behaving in a 'generous' mode than in other iterations of the game, and that boys and girls are both making offers of over 50 (with a few very generous offers by boys) (Figure 8).

Figure 8: England playing Turkey: all pupils, and by gender



n=87

n=50

n=37

This pattern makes the mean offer higher than in any other iteration. It is some of the older pupils who are behaving in this more generous manner (Table 3).

Table 3: Mean offers by group

Context	Group	Mean offer	N
Playing against Turkish pupils			
	All	50.0	87
	all boys	51.4	37
	all girls	49.0	50
Exeter	boys	53.9	23
	girls	49.1	33
London	boys	49.1	11
	girls	48.8	17
	11 year olds	48.9	28
	14 year olds	50.0	29
	17 year olds	51.0	30

Our analysis is again constrained by the fact that we did not play all ages between all cities. In terms of the offers, 56 were made by Exeter pupils of 14 and 17 years of age, and 28 by London pupils who were 11 years old. But, unlike the previous iterations, there is a more consistent distribution pattern of offers across both age and gender (Figure 9).

Figure 9: England playing Turkey: by city and by gender

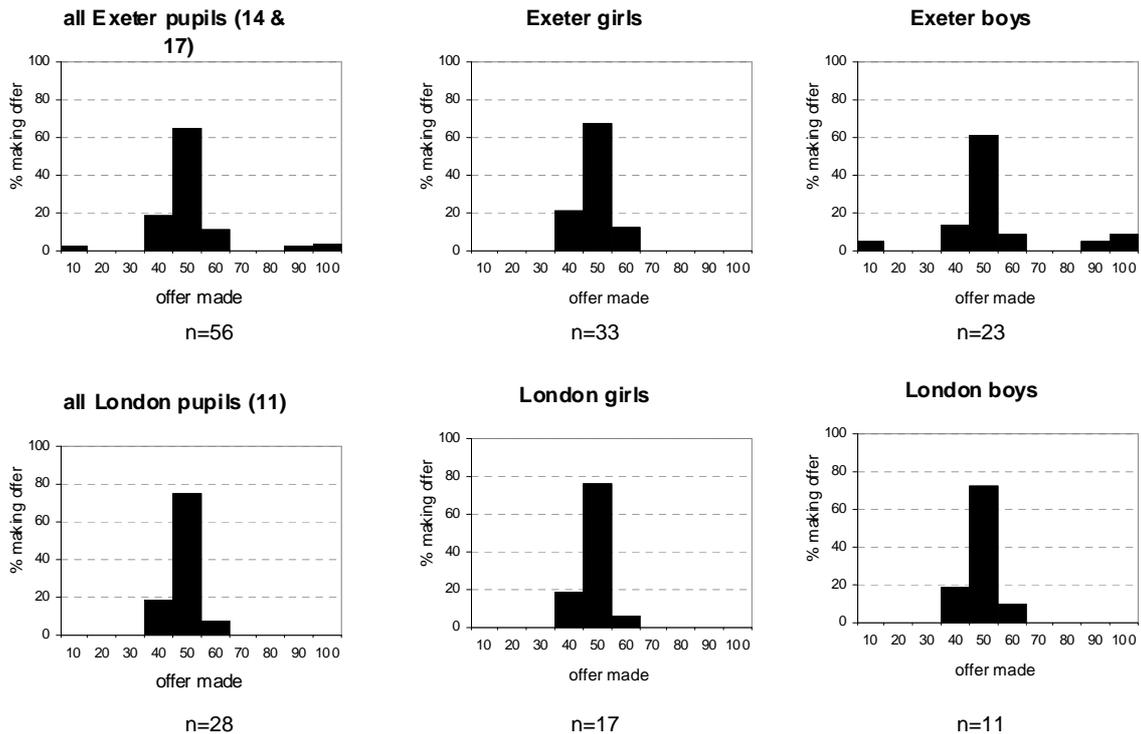
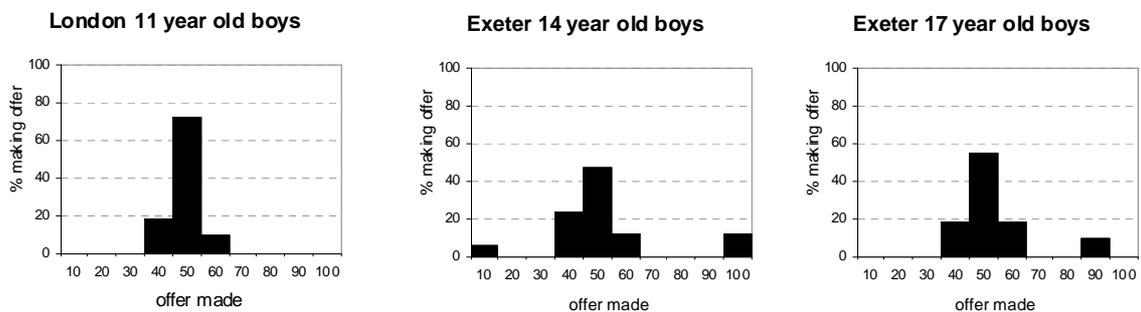


Figure 10: England playing Turkey: by age group and gender





However, analysis by city, age and gender – with small numbers in each group – does show some possible variant behaviour: the Exeter 14 year old boys appear to be particularly diverse in their range of offers, for example (Figure 10).

In the face-to-face games, the pupils, though not necessarily close friends, all knew each other, and a set of reciprocal relationships would have existed prior to the game, and the players would have known that they would continue after the game. Behaviour was very ‘fair’ and ‘equal’, perhaps as part of this reciprocity. These social constraints were not present in the second and third rounds, where the players making offers only knew the age and location of the person they were playing (they were subsequently told the forename and gender). Yet most children, of all ages, continued to play in the same altruistic way. When playing with other English children, however, some of them were less generous, and they showed more calculation in their rationales. This rationale extended, in some instances, to making a larger than 50% offer, in order to ensure gaining an acceptance. Why, when playing children from Turkey, should the pattern of behaviour be different? The rationales for making their decisions may offer some insight.

The offers

Offers of half the amount

As in the previous phases, most offers were of exactly half the sum (66%). The reasons given were also dominated by the use of the word ‘fair’, or sometimes ‘equal’. Again as in the earlier rounds, these were sometimes combined with instances of calculation, and, as in the England inter-city games, with concerns about what the other person might think of them if they were not ‘fair’.

I thought it would be fair for the Turkish person and fair for me. I thought if I offered less, it’s kind of – they might not accept it. Because I wanted some money, and I thought they might want some. (girl, London, 11)

They might want the same as me – otherwise it would be unfair for them. I want to get the money, and about what they think of me (boy, 11, London)

They will be more likely to accept and then I’ll be happy and grateful (girl, 14, Exeter)

Because I’m unaware of their circumstances, so I thought I’d play if safe and fair (girl, 14, Exeter)

It’s fair, and neither will be offended. It’s what I would accept (girl, 17, Exeter)

We both get half and it’s likely to be accepted (boy, 17, Exeter)

One boy began making an offer of 40, but talked through his decision as he toyed with the coins:

You can’t really make it the same – I don’t have much money at home. I want to have a bit over. No, can I make it the same? I’ll change it to 50:50, because then we’ll both have the same (boy, 11, London)

Offers of less than half

21% of the English offers were for less than half of the sum. All these offers were for 40 except for a single offer of 10, where the reasoning was

I flipped a coin (boy, 14, Exeter).

The other offers were all accompanied by explanations that qualified their acceptance of the principle of fairness with phrases such as ‘nearly fair’, or ‘just under half’, or by evidence of a calculation that an offer of 40 was the smallest sum that was likely to be accepted.

It’s like a bit fair – I can’t explain – it would be selfish to keep 90 (boy, 11, London)

It wouldn’t be fair if I gave 10 and kept the rest – if I have 10 more, at least they’re getting some money. I thought about [offering] the same, but it’s just 10 more, I’m sure they wouldn’t mind it. They should be pleased they’re getting money – because I would accept 40 (girl, 11, London)

It’s just under half the total amount (girl, 14, Exeter)

I’m the one offering, so I’m willing to give two-fifth of my money (boy, 14, Exeter)

They will accept this as it’s a reasonable offer out of 100 (boy, 17, Exeter)

It’s quite fair (girl, 17, Exeter)

There was less manifest evidence of greed than in the games between London and Exeter:

Because I want to get 60 (boy, 17, Exeter).

Offers of more than half

It was striking that in the offers made to pupils in a different country, some 13% were for more than half of the sum. The explanations offered for similar behaviour in the games within England included a number where there was evident calculation that the decision was to minimise the risk of rejection, and assure that they received something. Only one of the offers to the Turkish pupils was accompanied by such a rationale: all the other offers of over 50 were justified either on grounds of the desirability of being generous, or on concerns that the Turkish pupils might not be as financially as well off as they were.

Examples of explicit generosity were:

I don’t know – I’d do that to my friends (boy, 11, London, offering 60)

Because I think we should get roughly the same amount and it would be nice (girl, 14, Exeter, offering 60)

It’s customary to give more to others than you keep for yourself (girl, 17, Exeter, offering 60)

Examples of a ‘Turkey factor’ included:

People in Turkey may not be able to get as many things as we can in England – I wanted to offer them more (girl, 11, London, offering 60)

Because I think they are poorer (girl, 14, Exeter, offering 60)

Three 14 year old boys in Exeter all offered the complete sum (100) to the Turkish player.

I don’t need the money, and they don’t have as much as me (boy, 14, Exeter, offering 100)

I don’t need the money, and they’re probably better off (boy, 14, Exeter, offering 100)

The sole example of a ‘calculation’ in making an offer of over 50 was:

It’s worth it so I get 40, rather than offering a minority share which might get declined (boy, 17, Exeter)

The ‘Turkish effect’ in offers and acceptances

The realisation by some pupils that they were interacting with potentially less well-off partners in Turkey was not confined to those who made the larger offers. One offer of 50 was justified as:

I think it's fair, and I like Turkey. They are also likely to be poorer (boy, 17, Exeter)

Similar reasoning was seen in some of the decisions to accept offers from Turkish pupils.

I accepted because now some people will be rich in Turkey (boy, 11, Exeter, accepting an offer of 30)

I accepted because maybe my person was poor, and needed the money (girl, 11, Exeter, accepting an offer of 30)

I accepted, because it might be a poor school (boy, 11, Exeter, accepting an offer of 50)

I'd rather walk away with something. I don't mind he offered me less. I don't know what his life's like – he may need the money (boy, 14, London, accepting an offer of 30)

Because – she probably lives – probably doesn't have much money. I'm OK that it's not split [even] (girl, 14, London, accepting an offer of 40)

If I get this, she'll get that. I feel like – it's just 20 difference. Is she poor? Because it's Turkey – I'll let her. That [40] will do for the needs I've got. (girl, 14, London, accepting an offer of 40)

I've been to Turkey, and seen the lower class areas and poverty, so I'm happy for them to have more. She wouldn't do it out of greed, I hope. She needs the money (girl, 17, London, accepting an offer of 40)

He might be less fortunate than me (boy, 17, London, accepting an offer of 30)

It would have been selfish of me to reject it – he probably needs it more than I do (girl, 17, London, accepting an offer of 40)

It's a poor country. He might need the money more than I do (girl, 17, London, accepting an offer of 40)

Alternatively, there was some speculation about the economic circumstances of the Turkish person they were playing with:

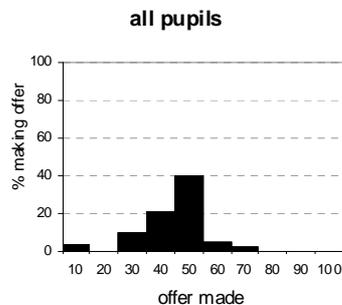
I accepted, but I don't know if it's going to skint [poor] people or rich people (male, 11, Exeter, accepting an offer of 50)

I accepted because here we have a credit crunch and need money and you do not have a credit crunch (boy, 11, Exeter)

Acceptances and rejections

The Turkish offers were quite widely distributed, although (as with all other cases) the modal offer was 50. The mean offer was 44.3.

Figure 11: Turkish offers to England



Rejections

There were just three rejections of rejections of the Turkish offers, two apparently based on a mistrust of the nature of the game.

I don't know what might happen, so I won't risk it. I don't take risks. I might have accepted less (girl, 17, London, rejecting an offer of 50)

I don't feel it's appropriate to take money. I don't need it (girl, 17, London, rejecting an offer of 40)

In the third case, an offer of 10 was rejected:

I would have wanted more – Revenge! (boy, 14, London)

Acceptances

Accepting less than half

As was noted above, the possibility of the Turkish player being poorer, or more in need of the money, was cited by a significant number of English pupils in their rationale for accepting offers of less than 50. Other explanations broadly correspond to the reasoning behind accepting intra-England offers of under 50. Something was better than nothing.

I accepted because I would like some money, and I don't have any (girl, 11, Exeter, accepting an offer of 40)

I accepted because you only play once, so you won't get another chance (girl, 11, Exeter)

The offer was sometimes seen as mean, but not refused:

I feel good because both people get something, although she was a bit greedy (girl, 11, Exeter, accepting an offer of 30)

It's unfair, but money is money ((boy, 17, London, accepting an offer of 30)

Sometimes it was not seen as mean

I accepted because I'm not greedy. I like your offer, because you get more (boy, 11, Exeter)

There were also some attempts to explain the lower offer in terms of qualified fairness, in the same way that some offers of less than 50 had been justified in earlier iterations:

It's kind of fair, because he gave -- he kept 20 extra. I'd have offered 50 (boy, 14, London, accepting an offer of 40)

It's fairly equal. He only kept a bit more than me ... (boy, 14, London, accepting an offer of 40)

It's not exactly fair, but it's near enough (girl, 17, London, accepting an offer of 40)

There was also sometimes an acknowledgment of the superior power of the person making the offer:

He was making the offer, and I'll accept a smaller offer ... because whoever's making the offer, he'd wasn't to make money (boy, 15, London, accepting an offer of 40)

Accepting half

The predominant comment made on accepting half was an acknowledgement that this was a 'fair' or 'equal' offer.

I feel happy and excited because it's fair (girl, 11, London)

It's the same amount, and she's made it fair – it's not being mean and greedy about the amount. We're even, one doesn't miss out. I would have done the same - I'm not selfish, and I respect other people. I like to be fair – it's grown up (girl, 14, London)

I feel happy because it isn't a greedy amount (girl, 11, London)

Accepting more than half

When accepting a larger amount, the offer was often acknowledged as generous:

... this person seemed really kind and generous (girl, 11, London, accepting an offer of 60)

I accepted because not only is it nice of you to offer this amount, but I would like you to have something too. I felt it was a little unfair to Y***, but a nice amount to have (boy, 11, London)

She's given me more money – it's generous! If it was me offering, I'd have offered less (boy, 14, London)

Conclusions

These results show a complexity of decision making among these young people in England. The predominant sense seems to be one of a wish to be fair, to be equal. Offers of 50 were frequently justified on this basis, as were the rationales given for accepting such offers. Yet there were also examples of calculation and justification taking place alongside this – an understanding of how the other person might react to offers that were less than half, for example. These were often used when justifying offers just below 50: an offer of 40, or even 30, was seen as probably enough to gain acceptance. But these were also sometimes rationalised as being 'nearly fair', or 'about equal'. In all situations, and with all age groups, genders and locations in England the medial, most common offer was of 50.

But not all of these young people offered 50. A minority offered less than this, and a smaller minority offered more. Some offers of less, and some of those of an even split (and a few of more) were based on an explicit calculus of how the person being played against might react: could they 'get away' with a 'mean' offer of 40; would an offer of 60 guarantee a pay-off; would 'being fair' ensure that this was recognised and accepted by the other person? Several rationales revealed an anxiety about how the person making the offer might be perceived by the other person – would they appear to be mean, or to be greedy?

In a sense, these considerations appear to have been over-ridden when the players met face-to-face, necessarily playing with a person they knew, and with whom social relations would continue after the game. Here there was an overriding desire to behave in a way that was seen as 'fair' and 'equal'. This was sometimes coupled with a very accurate knowledge of the other person's economic circumstance – as in the situation where a debt between the two was paid off in the offer and acceptance.

This constraint disappeared for some players when they were playing a person in another English city. Some were willing to take greater risks, and to display more 'greedy' behaviour; others saw the role of making the offer giving some additional power in the game, that would justify a slightly higher pay-off.

When playing against the Turkish young people, however, another set of considerations came into play for some of the English players. They were aware of, or assumed, that they were playing people who might well be less materially well-off, and adjusted their play to be recognise this, and to make some more altruistic (and others, to make less selfish) offers.

ⁱ English girl, 14 years old, London, explaining her offer of 50%