Children’s Perceptions of Peace and Conceptions of War: A Cross Comparison of the Middle East and the United States

Dr. Chris Coughlin, CSU Chico
Dr. Gloydis Mayers, Zayed University
Dr. Jesse Dizard, CSU Chico
Dr. Judy Bordin, CSU Chico
Presented at the World Forum on Early Care and Education, Belfast, Northern Ireland
June 16-19, 2009
We feel strongly that given the state of the world and the potential for conflict that exists between the West and the Middle East, it is only through cultural exchange organized around empirical research into processes of human socialization that one can hope to dispel myths and create understanding and tolerance thereby forming the basis for international cooperation. Further, we are persuaded that contemporary problems are not merely modern versions of old enmities, they are qualitatively new and made more extreme due to modern technologies and the increased demand for limited natural resources. These new problems will not be solved by applying old ideas, but will require new thinking that will be the result of fresh insights arising from new ways of looking at the world. One way of achieving this will be through international exchange and cross-cultural comparisons of rigorously collected empirical data. Putting our convictions into practice, we designed this project to address our primary concerns that social science remains relevant to contemporary issues, and to offer undergraduates enhanced opportunities for practical research.

The purpose of this research project was for undergraduate students to investigate children’s perceptions about war and peace and to compare their findings, *inter alia*, across cultural contexts. The goal of this research was two-fold: 1) to learn more about how children perceive war and peace within the local and regional contexts of cultural and environmental influences, while taking into consideration gender and age; and 2) to create and maintain an opportunity for cultural and intellectual exchanges among university students through participation in an international research project. In addition to the main objectives this project also served as the basis for a Capstone Graduation
Research Project for 10 Zayed University Education students, and a Special Honors Project for 2 Chico State students majoring in Child Development. One comment from a Zayed University participant summarized this experience by stating:

Reflecting on our first major research project, we are amazed at how much planning and organization must go into conducting research in order for the results to be scientific and objective. We learned a lot as mentioned in our awareness of the possible limitations to our study. The fact that this is only a pilot study, gives the next group of researchers in the upcoming stage of this project the opportunity to learn from our mistakes. We have learned a lot and hope to be better researchers in the future.”

Such comments reinforce our position that undergraduate education requires hands on experience, not just reading about the sciences, but very much doing science.

Review of the Literature: Children’s Understanding of War and Peace

Curiously, what we know about children’s concepts of enemies, peace, and war comes from only a few studies. Our work attempts to both contribute to the existing body of knowledge on the subject of children’s conceptions and perceptions of peace and war, and to encourage others to engage in comparable investigations. In trying to describe previous work on the subject it is difficult to avoid conflating concepts such as ‘enemy’ or ‘enemies’ and ‘war’ or ‘conflict’. Clearly the terms and the concepts they purport to describe are co-determinant, one cannot exist without the other, each is constitutive of the other. Where distinctions are critical we are careful to point them out.

The classic research by Frenkel-Brunswick (1947) examined the presence of enemy images and prejudice among children studied just after the Second World War. She found that prejudiced children presented particular behavioral patterns that involved a glorification of the group to which they belonged coupled with unfriendliness toward
outsiders such as minorities or other countries. In short, ethnocentrism defines the boundaries of belonging.

Frenkel-Brunswik’s findings are supported by Hesse and Poklemba (1989, see Oppenheimer 2005), who studied enemy images among 4 to 6 year old children in Germany and the United States. Interestingly, they found that while 4 to 6 year olds have no unambiguous images of political enemies, they do show evidence of clearly understanding the concept of enemy/enemies. Further, the categories of enemy/enemies and friends appear to be permanent. According to Hesse and Poklemba, friends will never become enemies, and the latter are regarded as inherently evil and can never become a friend (p. 66).

Povrzanovic (1997), elaborated upon these findings to show that children who did not experience conflict directly did not apportion blame for causing war, rather they conceived of war as some kind of natural disaster or other passing phenomenon. For children with direct experience of war clear images of enemy/enemies were present.

Further research suggests that there are a variety of factors that influence the way children conceptualize peace and war (Hakvoort & Hagglund, 2001; Myers-Bowman, Walker, & Myers-Walls, 2005; Raviv, Oppenheimer, and Bar-Tal, 1999). Hakvoort (1996), in reviewing research from the 1960s to 1990s, posited that for children the concept of war is more easily understood than that of peace. However it remains unclear if and to what degree this varies by culture.

Additionally, research has also found sex and age-related factors are prominent domains influencing a child’s understanding of war and peace. Hagglund (1999) has concluded that younger children associate peace with friendships and war with violent
activities and war objects. For older children and adolescents concepts of peace are associated with much more complex and abstract schema such as “international cooperation, reconciliation, and equality” (Hagglund, 1999, p. 193). From a cognitive-developmental perspective, these findings would be expected as children move from the preoperational stage through the concrete stage, and finally into the formal operational stage of cognitive development as proposed by Piaget (1950). Prior to age six, as posited by Paramjit and Deborah (2003), children have a difficult time taking other’s perspectives into account. Another key feature with children of this age is an inability to understand death as permanent. This makes it difficult if not impossible for children still in the cognitive stage of preoperational thinking to understand the concept of war, killing, and the finality associated with death.

A child’s gender also appears to be an influential factor in understanding the concepts of peace and war. Studies have found that girls more frequently defined concepts of both war and peace in terms of relationships between human beings (e.g., peace is being friends, war is quarreling with friends), whereas boys tend to talk about peace as a result of war activities rather than negotiations (Hagglund, 1999; Hakvoort and Oppenheimer, 1998). Further, girls tend to personalize peace whereby they associate peace with their own social environment and relations, unlike boys who have been found to more frequently refer to peace as something distant (Hakvoort and Oppenheimer, 1993). These findings support the familiar and consistent sociocultural and sociomoral differences found among male and female children.

Ronen, Rahav and Rosenbaum (2003) assessed war’s impacts on second, sixth and tenth grade children. The study took place in Israel during the third week of the 1991
Gulf War. The results indicated that war had a negative effect on all children however, in terms of gender and age, they found war produced higher levels of anxiety and problem behaviors for girls and younger children.

According to Raviv, Oppenheimer and Bar-Tal (1999), factors within a child’s environment also contribute to his/her understanding of many social concepts, including peace and war. From a social learning theoretical perspective, this is certainly not a surprising finding given we know children learn vicariously through interaction and observation; children’s perceptions of war, peace and enemies are dependent on their direct or indirect experiences.

Spielmann (1986) reports that children not exposed to war conceive of peace as non-violence and tranquility, while children experiencing war more directly describe peace as freedom of movement. The research of Myers-Bowman, Walker and Myers-Walls (2005) investigating American and Yugoslavian children’s perceptions of war and peace supports the findings of Spielmann. Myers-Bowman, et. al. (2005) found both “overwhelming similarities” (p. 177) along with “striking differences” (p. 177) in comparing perceptions of war and peace between the two groups of children in part due to the proximity of their exposure. In describing peace, both groups of children referred to terms such as tranquil and quiet. In contrast when asked to describe war, children in the United States used general terms, whereas Yugoslavian children used personal pronouns and described war from their own personal experiences. A study by Covell, Rose-Krasnor, and Fletcher (1994), found that Canadian children associated peace with being nice and sharing. According to Hakvoort and Hagglund (2001), Dutch and Swedish children associated peace with friendship and social relationships, and that for
both Dutch and Swedish children it appears their perceptions of both peace and war are similar.

According to Costello and Phelps (1994), children's perceptions of war, their emotional responses, and their subsequent coping strategies all seem to rely on many interrelated variables such as age, sex, familial stability, and socializing agents including the media and peer groups (also see Oppenheimer, 2006). These researchers suggest that war-related effects may develop even though the conflict is taking place in a distant country.

However, unlike research investigating how sex and age influence a child’s understanding of enemies, peace and war, less is known in terms of cultural influences. Myers-Bowman, Walker, and Myers-Walls (2005), in their brief but thorough review of literature concerned with socio-cultural factors influencing children’s perceptions of war and peace, conclude “there is a relation between children’s socio-cultural environment and how they perceive war and peace but much remains unknown” (p.180).

**Purpose of the study**

As noted by de Souza, Sperb, McCarthy and Biaggio (2006), investigation of children’s understanding of war, peace and conflict has tended to be conducted primarily with Europeans, and has included children’s experiences in the context of experiencing ongoing violence, the aftermath of violence and the absence of violence. Very little research has been done comparing the perceptions of children’s understanding of war within the social and cultural context of the West and the Middle East. Thus the primary objective of our study was to gain a greater understanding of how children perceive war and peace within the local and regional contexts of Western and Middle Eastern cultures.
Methodology

This project began fall semester 2007 when students from Chico State University and students from Zayed University began a conversation based on common interests in gaining a better understanding of children’s perceptions on peace and war and also a mutual desire for cross cultural exchanges between the two campuses. Towards the accomplishment of the above objectives, students from Zayed University and Chico State University, participated in a video conference during November 2007. The activity was expected to provide students from both campuses the opportunity to participate in discussions about the project and establish the project’s timeline and research methodology. Specifically, during this video conference the following was addressed:

a. defined the sample for the study (target children age 5-10);
b. determine the number of children to interview;
c. discussion of the logistics and time line for conducting interviews;
d. discussion of interview questions to be asked based upon prior literature review conducted by the participating students (see Appendix A for the English version of the research questionnaire, and Appendix B for the Arabic);
e. determined data collection procedure and analyses; through the video conference as well as pre and post e-mails contacts and phone conversations, an interview protocol for study was agreed upon and developed.

Sample

The participants were 41 children, ages 5 to 10 years, from both the US and the UAE. There were a total of 16 children, 4 boys and 12 girls, from Chico, California who were recruited from an after school elementary school program in Chico, a small town of
about 105,000 people, located in Northern California. The children in this sample represented different ethnic groups.

The second group of participants were from the United Arab Emirates, a small country with a population of approximately 6 million people. The sample consisted of 31 UAE National children, 12 boys and 10 girls, and was drawn from family members of the participating students.

**Interview Protocol**

An interview protocol was developed collaboratively between Zayed University and Chico State University students through videoconferencing and e-mail exchanges. The developed protocol had 20 questions. These questions addressed children’s thinking on peace and war. The 21st item requested that children provide for the researcher a drawing of their concept on peace and war. The interview questions were first developed in English for the Chico State participants. Taking into consideration cultural differences, the English constructed questionnaire was then translated into an Arabic version for the children in the United Arab Emirates.

**Data Collection**

Data were collected through an interview process. Data collection by Chico State University researchers included the use of both video and audio tape recording of children’s responses. Taking into consideration culturally relevant issues, the children in the United Arab Emirates were only audio taped. Audio taped recordings for both groups were later transcribed.
Chico state students collected their data in an after school programs at an elementary school, while in the UAE, researchers visited children's houses to collect the data. In the homes researchers used a quiet place with no other family members present.

**Informed consent:** Prior to the interview process, researchers requested permission from parents for their children to participate in the study and for their children to be interviewed. At Chico State University, the study was approved through review by the Human Subjects review committee (see Appendix C for the Parental Letter of Consent, and Appendix D for the Arabic).

**Findings**

The following highlights the response by the children as related to war and peace. Specifically, what follows is the children’s responses to questions concerning: how they define and explain war/peace; if they believe war/fighting is necessary; if they think their county is at war; if they believe it is possible to stop wars and make peace; and lastly, if they believe that one day wars will stop.

**Question 1: What do you think when you hear the word peace?**

In reviewing the children’s responses, their comments, in relation to questions concerning “peace” included reference to country or countries (referencing a particular country or simply referring “countries being at peace”), people or groups, (“people not yelling at one another”, “friends”) environment (a “quite” place), cooperation, emotions (“happy”, people feeling “happy”), religion, symbols (the peace sign), opposite of war/fighting, or they stated the “did not know” or gave an answered that indicated their confusion with the question.
As Table 1 indicates, the majority of US children responded to this question in reference to emotions (25%). The UAE children’s responses were not clearly understood and indicated difficulty in terms of the coding, with the majority of responses, 56%, coded “confused”.

Table 1
Response to question: “What do you think when you hear the word peace?”

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Referencing Country/Countries</th>
<th>US</th>
<th>UAE</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Referencing People/Group</td>
<td>6%</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Referencing Environment</td>
<td>6%</td>
<td>4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Referencing Cooperation</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Referencing Emotions</td>
<td>25%</td>
<td>4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Referencing Religion</td>
<td>6%</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Referencing Symbols</td>
<td>12%</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Opposite of War/Fighting</td>
<td>12%</td>
<td>12%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Don’t Know</td>
<td>12%</td>
<td>16%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Confused</td>
<td>18%</td>
<td>56%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Question 2: One of your classmates asks, “Can you explain the word peace to me?”**

**What would you tell him or her?**

In response to this question, 37% of US children made reference to environment. Responses included: “I would tell her it is like being quite…”, “I would say, like, it’s quiet and you get to like alone time and stuff.”, “I would tell her that peace is something where people are calm.” For UAE children the majority of children responded that peace was the opposite of war.
Table 2
Response to question: “One of your classmates asks, Can you explain the word peace to me?” What would you tell him or her?”

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>US</th>
<th>UAE</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Referencing country/countries</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Referencing people/group</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Referencing environment</td>
<td>37%</td>
<td>6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Referencing cooperation</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Referencing emotions</td>
<td>12%</td>
<td>16%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Referencing religion</td>
<td>6%</td>
<td>16%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Referencing symbols</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Opposite of war/fighting</td>
<td>18%</td>
<td>43%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Don’t know</td>
<td>18%</td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Confused</td>
<td>6%</td>
<td>3%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In terms of gender and age, we found older children in the UAE responded with words that seem to relate to religion, for example, peace was given in the context of “Peace be upon you” which is reflective of Islam. In the US one child referred to peace as “US Hippie”. Themes in younger children’s responses from both cultures referred to peace as calmness and quiet time while older children referred to friendship in more abstract terms such as non-violence, safety.

Questions 3: A classmate asks, “Can you explain the word war to me?” What would you tell him/her?

As indicated in Table 3, in response to questions concerning “war” children referenced people/groups fighting; a country or countries fighting; provided a description of weapons, blood, destruction, fighting, and/or enemies; emotions, symbol (“war of the worlds”); specified only the word “fight/fighting”; specified only the word “enemy”;
battle/conflict; environment; referenced war as the opposite of peace; responded they “did not know”; responded in such a way as to indicate confusion with the questions.

For US children, the majority of responses referenced people fighting (25%) and country/countries at war and fighting (25%). The UAE children were much more likely to reference weapons, blood, destruction, fighting and/or enemies and be much more graphic and detailed in their responses. Examples included, “People are fighting, dying and some are sad because of the dead people.”; “When people are fighting, killing and hating each other, and when there are orphaned children.”; “Kill, steal the money and destroy the houses.”; “War means they fight with each other using the sword.”

In terms of age and gender, in response to this question concerning war, older children, in both the US and UAE, were more descriptive in their responses than younger children. There were no apparent gender differences found in terms of responses for children in the US or the UAE.

Table 3
Response to Question: A classmate asks, ‘Can you explain the word war to me?’ What would you tell him/her?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Referencing item</th>
<th>US</th>
<th>UAE</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Referencing people/groups</td>
<td>25%</td>
<td>13%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Referencing country/countries</td>
<td>25%</td>
<td>13%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Referencing weapons, blood, destruction, fighting, and/or enemy</td>
<td>12%</td>
<td>33%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Referencing emotion (bad, hateful)</td>
<td>6%</td>
<td>3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Referencing symbol</td>
<td>6%</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reference word “fight” only</td>
<td>12%</td>
<td>20%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reference “enemy”</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reference battle/conflict</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reference environment</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Opposite peace</td>
<td>6%</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Don’t know</td>
<td>6%</td>
<td>3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Confused</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Question 4: Can you name other words that people sometimes use that mean the same thing as war?

In response to this question, the majority of UAE children simply referenced the word “fight/fighting”. For children in the US, their responses indicated confusion, whereby the majority, 56%, stated “I don’t know.”

Table 4
Question: Can you name other words that people sometimes use that mean the same thing as war?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Referencing people/groups</th>
<th>US</th>
<th>UAE</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Referencing country/countries</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Referencing weapons, blood, destruction, fighting, and/or enemy</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>25%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Referencing emotion (bad, hateful)</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Referencing symbol</td>
<td>12%</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reference word “fight” only</td>
<td>19%</td>
<td>38%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reference word “enemy” only</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reference battle/conflict</td>
<td>6%</td>
<td>3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reference environment</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Opposite peace</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Don’t know</td>
<td>56%</td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Confused</td>
<td>6%</td>
<td>6%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Question 5: Is fighting and wars necessary?

As is indicated in Table 5, in response to the question, “Are fighting and wars necessary?” 56% present of the children in the US, responded that wars are necessary. In contrast, 70% of children in the UAE responded, “no, wars are not necessary”.

Table 5
Response to question: “Are fighting and wars necessary?”

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>US</th>
<th>UAE</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>56%</td>
<td>22%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>25%</td>
<td>70%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Confused or don’t know</td>
<td>18%</td>
<td>06%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Question 6: Is your country at war?

As indicated in Table 6, 78% of the children in the UAE responded that their country was at peace. The remaining 22% responded they did not know or were confused by the question. In the US, the majority of children, 73%, responded that they did not know and seemed confused stating their country was both at peace and at war. The UAE children mentioned knowing that their country was not at war because of cooperation with other countries (the UAE “not fighting with other countries”) and “because the people live in quiet and comfortable.”

Table 6
Response to question, “Is your country at peace or war?”

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>US</th>
<th>UAE</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Peace</td>
<td>26%</td>
<td>78%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>War</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Confused or don’t know</td>
<td>73%</td>
<td>22%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
**Question 7: Do you think that it is possible to stop wars?**

Most of the UAE children (approximately 80%) of the 6 to 10 year olds responded “Yes”. Children of both sexes and all ages gave similar responses. There were a few students who were unsure responding, “I do not know”. Children from the US sample were somewhat evenly divided, across age and both sexes, between those expressing the view that it is possible to stop war and those that were unsure. Responses included:

“Yes, I think it is possible to stop wars, not in the middle of the world but it could be possible”.
“You could if you tried really hard. Well like you could try to get like all the land separate, so like no one could actually reach each other”.
“Maybe or maybe not. Kind of. I think that’s a tricky question. Probably talk to the other countries and try to work it out.”

**Question 8: How could you make peace?**

Children’s responses in the UAE and US were somewhat similar. In both countries, children’s associated “making peace” with caring for “each other,” resolving conflicts and viewing their government as having influence in stopping wars. Examples of responses included:

“Give people money to help them.”
“Ask the leaders of countries to stop wars and make peace.”
“By spreading love.”
“Like saying you’re sorry or resolving it or just owning up to your responsibilities.”
“Well, by everybody getting along and friendship.”
“Bring everybody together and make them friends.”

The responses were similar for both sexes and ages.
Discussion

As has been found in other studies (see Myers-Bowman, et. al., 2005) in response to questions concerning peace, children in the US responded by referring to peace in terms of quiet and tranquil environments. UAE children, however, were more likely to contrast peace to war, describing peace as the opposite of war.

This study is also supportive of other studies that found comparable age differences in terms of children’s understanding of both peace and war. Specifically older children in comparison to younger children demonstrated a much more complex understanding of both peace and war. Unlike previous studies however, our data suggests that gender differences were negligible.

The most striking differences found between children in the US and children in the UAE concerned their beliefs about the necessity of war/fighting and their understanding of whether or not their country is at peace or at war. The majority of children in the US sample, 56% stated that they believe war/fighting is necessary. In contrast, only 22% of children in the UAE sample stated that they believe war/fighting is necessary. More research is needed to understand the American children’s acceptance of war/fighting as necessary. We suspect that a careful examination of the psychosocial environment of the children in the American sample will reveal a broad cultural preference for regarding conflict as a source of amusement (eg., the ‘fun’ and ‘happy’ violence of film and video games) and the means for assessing quality (eg., may the best person win).

When asked if their country was at war or peace, 78% of children in the UAE responded that their country was at peace. For children in the US, the majority, 73%
responded that they did not know if their country was at war or peace. This is an intriguing difference and more research is required to explain why, after seven years at war, essentially the entire lifespan of the younger respondents, so many children from the US sample did not know if their country is at war or peace. An explanation for US children’s response to this question might stem from the fact that children in the US hear “the US is at war” (at war with Iraq, Afghanistan) but they don’t see “war” and they aren’t exposed to the violence, hence it is confusing; they hear their country is at war, but given it is not something tangible, they simply don’t understand what war in that context means, and hence when responding to this question gave conflicting comments as an indication of their confusion. One can speculate further that perhaps American attitudes toward childhood as a time of innocence restricts discussion of and/or access to information about the Global War on Terror such that younger children are simply not exposed to the information is such a way as to make the concept of war and it’s implications understandable.

**Limitations and future work**

A major limitation of the study concerns sampling procedures. Interviews in the UAE were conducted in the children’s homes, and occasionally family members were present. This may have influenced children’s replies. US sample data were collected from children who were attending an after-school program. Nearly all of the children in the UAE sample were related to the students conducting the interviews. In contrast, the students conducting the interviews knew none of the children in the US sample population.
Further, both samples were small, particularly the US, making comparisons and conclusions problematic. There are additional contrasts between the two samples. In some instances, as in the UAE sample, more than one child from the same home was interviewed, and students conducting the interviews occasionally found that some children were giving the same answers as their relative. We do not know if the presence of siblings influenced children’s responses. There also seem to be cultural factors influencing some children’s responses; many of the UAE children misunderstood the word peace, since in Arabic the word “peace” has two different meanings, “peace” & “greeting”. Therefore, the responses to the question directly addressing these concepts may not accurately reflect the meaning intended by the children.

Given the stated limitations, generalizing the results of the study is not possible at this time. To gain a greater understanding of how cultural influences shape children’s concepts as well as to provide further opportunities for cross-cultural undergraduate research opportunities, this collaborative study between California State University, Chico and Zayed University will continue beginning fall 2009. It is our hope to expand the study so that samples in both the US and UAE are more representative thus allowing for a more definitive understanding of cultural influences on children’s perceptions of peace, conflict and war.
References


Medical Science Journal, 6 (4) 275-292.


Appendix A
Interview Questions (English Version)

1. I would like to know what you think of when you hear the following words:
   a. Food:
   b. Peace:

2. (a) One of your classmates asks, “Can you explain the word peace to me?” What would you tell him/her?
   (b) Also a classmate asks “Can you explain the word war to me?” What would you tell him/her?

3. Can you name other words that people sometimes use that mean the same thing as war?

4. Can you name other words that people sometimes use that mean the same thing as peace?

5. Do you think children live in countries where there are wars?

6. Do you think people have to fight sometimes? Do you think war is sometimes necessary?

7. A boy/girl in your class snatched your favorite play toy. He/she does not want to give it back.
   a. What are going to do?
   b. If you had a teacher who did not like students telling on one another, what would you do?

8. If your friend took your toy, could you ever be friends again? Why or why not?

9. Your best friend is having a fight with some other boy/girl in your class. What would you do? How do you feel when you and your friends get into a fight with each other?

10. What do you think causes wars in the world?

11. What do you think causes peace in the world?

12. Do you live in a country that is at war? At peace? How do you know?

13. If you were a rich person/boss, do you think you could stop wars from happening? How?

14. Do you think that there will be a day when all the wars will stop? If yes, why and when? If no, why?

15. Do you think there will be wars when you grow up?

16. From where do you hear about wars?
17. Do you see pictures of war on TV? In newspapers? In magazines?
   a. If yes, how do you feel when see pictures of war?
   b. If yes, do you talk to anyone about what you hear or see on ___ ? Who do you talk to?

18. Do you play video games? If yes, do you play games where people are fighting? Like shooting each other or hurting each other?

19. Do you think that it is possible to stop wars? If yes, tell me what you can do?

20. How do you think you can make peace?

21. Draw pictures:
   Draw a picture of peace:
   Draw a picture of war:
   What is the different between the two pictures?
   picture of peace:
   picture of war:
Appendix B
Interview Questions (Arabic Version)

1. :
   a.
   b.

2. (( : ) ( ) )

3.

4.

5.

6.

7. .
   a.
   b.

8.
Appendix B - Continue

17.

a.

b.

......
19.

20.

21. :
   a.
   b.
   c.
Appendix C
Parent Consent Letter (English Version)

Informed Consent

Research Project

“Children’s Perception of Peace & War”

January 2008
Dear Parent or Guardian:

Thank you for indicating an interest in our research study. I am a Zayed University student in the College of Education. My class is studying children’s opinions about war and peace for a project entitled “Children’s Perception of Peace & War”. We would like to invite your child to be a part of this research.

This study is a collaborative effort with students and faculty from Chico State University in the United States. The two teams will compare and contrast their individual findings and present these at the Women’s Global Leadership Conference in Dubai during March, 2008.

If you allow your child to participate, he/she will be asked to answer some open ended questions about war and peace issues (conflict and friendships) in their school, neighborhood, and world. There are no right or wrong answers to the questions. This interview will be audio taped.

There are no known specific risks or benefits to your child to participating in this study. Although not expected, talking about war might be upsetting to your child. If you have questions or concerns, we will be glad to answer some of them and refer you to resources on this subject. If you decide not to participate, you are free to withdraw this consent at any time. If your child is not willing to participate, he/she may stop answering questions at any time.

Each child will be identified by a code number to protect anonymity. The video tape will be transcribed by me. No names will be used during transcription, if a name is spoken only a first initial will be transcribed.

No information from the study will be available to program personnel, including whether your child participated in the study. The results will not be reported for individual children or families.

If you agree to have your child participate in this study, sign the attached form and indicate if you would like to receive a summary of the study results.

The attached form also asks for some information about your family. We would like you to provide information about your child’s birth date, gender, number of siblings with age and gender, ethnicity, travel experience, and parental employment status. This form is attached and should be completed and returned with this signed form.

Dr. Gloysis Mayers
College of Education
Zayed University, Dubai Campus
Gloysis.mayers@zu.ae
Office: 04-4021-243
Mobile: 050-295-3026

I give permission to have my child participate in the study.

___________________________
Name                          Date
Appendix C - Continue

I am interested in receiving a summary of the results of the study (circle one)  yes  no

If yes, please include your address or email address below:

Family Information (please complete)
Your Name:

Your Child’s Name:

Your Child’s Birthdate:

Child’s Gender (circle):  Female  Male

# Of Male Siblings  _______  Age(s):

# Of Female Siblings  _______  Age(s):

Parent’s Employment:

Has the child who is participating in this study traveled to another country? If so, which ones? At what age?

Please put this completed sheet in the attached envelope and return to the after school program. Thank you very much!
Appendix D
Parent Consent Letter (Arabic Version)

مشروع بحثي

)).substrات للأطفال لعفويّة الحرب والسلام(()

2008

أن أ طالبة من نادي الشباب التربوي بجامعة زيّد، أقوم حالياً مع أستاذتي في تطوير
بإجراء أراء الأطفال عن عفويّة الحرب والسلام، وردو أن يشاركنا طفلك في هذا البحث.
ذا البحث طالبات من جامعات وحلجية جيّدة في الدراسات المتقدمة يشتركون معنا في العمل على ه
مع أستاذتي.

خلال البحث سنقوم بطرح بعض الأسئلة على طفلك عفويّة الحرب والسلام، لا توجد
إجابة صحيحة أو خاطئة على جميع الأسئلة، فسأجعّل معطى كاملاً وصريحاً رأي الطفّ.
سنقوم ببذكير الأسماء، وسنقوم بإعطاء لكل طفل روم لتمييز مشغّل البعض الأخرى صريحًا. لن نقوم
بطلب طفل عن الأخ.

إذا لم تكن لديكم أي مانع من المشاركة طفلك في البحث، الرجاء الضغط على أسفل
في ورقة البحث الرجاء الاستماع إلى الصوت، و
الرجاء لذلك شوقي الرسالة التي تحتوي على الشرجة الأولجليزي، وإذا لزم الأمر، تزداد أن
الرجاء الإشارة بذلك في الرسالة الأولجليزية بسببك على نسخة من نسائج البحث،
في ورقة البحث الرجاء ضغط لذلك ببعض الأسئلة الجامعات على صرختكم، رد أن نعرف تاريّخ
ميلاد طفلك، الجنس، عدد البّاقر، والآخرين، إذا كان المرشح منسق وسنأتي إلى بيان أخرى و عمل
الورقة بالبحث. الآمWordPress.com للاستماع، الرجاء إشمال هذه الأسئلة وأرسالة معا

لا مانع لدي من المشاركة طفلك في البحث

الاسم

التوقيع