ISSUE NO.4 Children, Media and Conflict: the experience of divided communities – Ireland, Israel, Palestine.

UNIVERSITY of ULSTER

Proceedings of an interdisciplinary colloquium held at the University of Ulster on April 25th, 2005, supported by Cultural Development, The Centre for Media Research and the Department of Psychology, UU.

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MEDIA POLICY BRIEFING PAPERS

MEDIA, CHILDREN AND THE EXPERIENCE OF DIVIDED COMMUNITIES: IRELAND, ISRAEL and PALESTINE

AN INTERDISCIPLINARY COLLOQUIUM
11 – 4 pm
April 25 2005
at
The Link Lounge, Coleraine Campus, University of Ulster

This colloquium, jointly organised by the Centre for Media Research, School of Media and Performing Arts, and the Department of Psychology in the University of Ulster, and supported by Cultural Development in the Faculty of Arts, asks:

What can psychologists and media scholars learn from each other, and what can society learn from them, about the experience and reporting of conflict and its impact on the young?

A great deal of research has been carried out by psychologists on the impact of conflict and division on children and young people, but few of these studies have taken account of possible media influences in shaping children's attitudes and behaviour. There has also been a great deal of research among Media Studies scholars on the impact of the media on young minds, particularly the effects of fictional violence. Little of this has addressed what children learn about the real violence and conflict in the world they live in from sources such as news and factual material. How does media coverage of conflict affect children directly involved in conflict situations, and is this different from the impact on children not directly involved?

These are some of the questions to be addressed by an invited group of psychologists and media scholars, including:

Professor Sami Adwan, Faculty of Education at the University of Bethlehem, Palestine
Dr. Cynthia Carter, Cardiff School of Journalism, Media and Cultural Studies, UK
Professor Stuart Allan, School of Cultural Studies, University of the West of England
Professor Dafna Lemish, Chair, Department of Communication, Tel Aviv University, Israel
Dr. Peter Lemish, researcher in peace studies, Tel Aviv, Israel
Dr. Karen Trew, Lecturer in Psychology, Queen's University Belfast
Plus from UU:
Professor Ed Cairns, Psychology Department, University of Ulster
Professor Máire Messenger Davies, Director, Centre for Media Research, University of Ulster.

SCHEDULE OF SEMINAR

10.30 Coffee

10.45: Introduction and welcome: Máire Messenger Davies and Ed Cairns

11.00: Research from Israel on children, conflict and media: Peter Lemish and Dafna Lemish

11.40: Research from Palestine on children, conflict and media: Sami Adwan.

Discussion

1.20: Lunch

2.30: Research on Children and News: Cynthia Carter, Stuart Allan and Máire M. Davies

3.00: Research from Northern Ireland on children, conflict and media: Ed Cairns

3.30: Research from the Republic of Ireland and Northern Ireland on children, conflict and media: Jean Whyte and Karen Trew, presented by Karen Trew.

4.20: Plenary feedback session

5.00: end.

EDITORS' NOTE

'They are scared of the other side because of what they see on TV'

The quote above – from a researcher at UU Jordanstown doing research with young people - is actually the last contribution made to the discussion on this topic which took place at our Colloquium. It sums up why we think this Colloquium has been necessary, and why we hope further research will arise out of it.

The notice and programme on the previous pages give the description, rationale and format of the seminar on Children, Media and Conflict which was held at the University of Ulster in April 2005. A list of attendees appears at the end of this booklet. We at UU are grateful to all who attended and who contributed to the event and to the discussions. These were tape-recorded and are transcribed in the following pages. The speeches and discussions have had to be edited, as in their complete form they ran to the length of a small book! The fullness of these discussions, which contributed greatly to the usefulness of the event, is the main reason why it has taken some time for these proceedings to appear.

Tape-recorded speeches and conversations are difficult to capture accurately, particularly spontaneous comments and this, too, added to the length of time of transcription. It was also important to give our speakers the opportunity to check the transcriptions. Apologies to our contributors for the cuts we have made; we have preserved the full transcripts on file, but in published form some editing was necessary. Some of the speakers used visual aids and where they have given clear descriptions of these, these descriptions are included. Where it is not possible to understand the point being made without a visual aid, these passages have been deleted. However, we hope that participants will agree that all key points have been included and that the general flavour of the discussions remains.

Máire Messenger Davies, April 2006

PROCEEDINGS OF CHILDREN, MEDIA & CONFLICT SEMINAR:

MÁIRE MESSENGER DAVIES: Welcome and thank you very much for coming. I would just like to make a couple of points about the programme before we start. It's a very full day, but we do want everyone who has come today to be able to share their experiences. The people we have invited are people Ed Cairns and I knew of who are doing this kind of research with children, people who are interested in the topic of children, media and conflict, from different perspectives within media studies and psychology. So the purpose of this colloquium is an interdisciplinary convergence, a bringing together of people who have common research and educational interests but who don't often come together in the same forum. For the first session I'm going to hand over to Peter Lemish. He's going to put the day in context here by talking about his own work.

PETER LEMISH: First I want to thank Máire and Ed for inviting us. We're pleased to be here. This is actually a bit of a return for me. I was here in 1990 and then have been coming back every couple of years. So I'm very happy to be back here and to share a few ideas with you.

I actually come from the area of work that is directly connected with today's session - from conflict and resolution studies. A lot of my own work is in education in Israel, with Israelis and Palestinians in trying to develop alternative approaches, some of which I'm going to share with you. I'm going to be speaking about some work that's in progress and sharing some of the foundations of that work, and trying to talk about the common ground that we share coming from a psychological perspective or from a media studies perspective in today's context.

What we are concerned about is what happens in societies that are in conflict, in our cases we're talking about deeply conflicted societies, with intractable conflicts that have gone on for decades. In doing so, I want to talk about some fundamental principles from a conflict and resolution studies approach. I also want to share some questions with you that I think are appropriate to the discussion and give them some grounding; and then go on to one case study that has to do with how children and adults and

media researchers and psychologists actually may understand conflicts. And I hope I will have a few minutes to say a few words about reconciliation, which is another very important emerging issue both here and in lots of other societies today.

I'd like to begin with just a few comments about the historical and political context of *our* conflict, i.e. Israel–Palestine. A key term that I want to talk about today is conflict resolution cycles. To recall for you just a couple of key markers, in 1967 a war was initiated by neighbouring states – Egypt, Jordan and Syria – to eradicate Israel, to which Israel reacted with a very strong response that led to the occupation of large parts of those states' territories. This was followed by a very extensive effort to occupy the territories gained, settlement activity led by the current Prime Minister, Sharon. The most recent conflict cycles began with the first Intifada in 1987, a civil uprising by the Palestinians, which was met with very strong force by the Israelis. This was followed by the Oslo Agreement in 1993; an agreement that led to the declaration of a ceasefire and a peace process that was supposed to be implemented extensively.

The immediate event that followed was the assassination of Prime Minister Rabin. This led to a breakdown of the Oslo process and the beginning of another cycle which started in 1997/98 with another Intifada, a second civil revolt by the Palestinians. Throughout this period we've had continuous settlement activity. Now [April 2005] just a few months ago we've had a declaration of another ceasefire and the beginning of a process that may or may not lead to conflict resolution.

So we've had conflict leading to some resolution attempts, a breakdown in that process, and another wave of conflict leading to more and more attempts at a conflict resolution. Without getting into the details of these cycles, I want to make two main points: it was made very clear, and was accepted by a large majority of Jewish Israelis, that Oslo would lead to the establishment of a Palestinian state. There was also large-scale agreement that there would be return of all or nearly all of the territories, and there would be talks about issues of the refugees and Jerusalem. These agreements were accepted in general terms by most Palestinians and Israelis, except for a small core who in the Israeli case were led by the

present Prime Minister, Sharon, who opposed the Oslo process and did everything possible to cease the whole resolution process; and for all intents and purposes succeeded.

The second point is that with the start of the Oslo process, the left felt that it had done its job in Oslo and has ceased to function as an advocate for a peace process. For example, in 1994, about six months after Oslo, an organisation of Jewish and Palestinian Israelis who shared an interest in advancing the contribution of mental health workers to peace decided to disband its work. Proponents argued that since the Oslo process was proceeding there was no longer need for the work of this organisation. I was the only member of the board who said "Well, agreements are just a formal statement of intents and purposes. Let's see how things move forward with implementation. Let's become involved in implementation of Oslo." That sole voice enabled us to delay the vote for a meeting, and then two months later we disbanded an organisation of over 300 psychologists, psychiatrists and social psychologists – those of you who have studied the psychological work that has been done with children in Israel will know the names of many researchers who were colleagues in this organisation. One of the questions that I have is: What is their concept of conflict? What are they thinking when they think that if we reach a formal agreement then that is basically the end of our activity?

The second example that I want to share with you is a newspaper article that was written just a little while ago by Yair Lapid, a Jewish Israeli newspaper columnist and television talk-show host. This appeared a few days after the recent meeting at Sharm el-Sheikh. In the caption beneath the picture of Abu Mazen and Sharon shaking hands Lapid writes: "On Tuesday I told Yoavi that he doesn't have to go to school. No school will teach you to make peace, son, like the photos you will see this morning on television. It was raining outside and we snuggled together like only a father and son can as we watched the events" Yoavi by the way is 17 years old and about to go into the army. I'm not sure he was snuggling up with his father but that's not the point. The point I want to talk about is really this one sentence here – "No school will teach you to make peace, son, like the photos you will see this morning on television."

Here, I just want to make a couple of comments. First, he is absolutely right that no school will teach you to make peace in Israel. I don't want to talk about anywhere else, but I can say that in regard to Israel *we* don't teach peace. Not only do we not teach peace, we do not teach current events. There is no time in the curriculum, from primary school through to universities, when our students have the opportunity to study and to talk about what is going on in contemporary society. Furthermore, there is no curriculum, formal or informal, that teaches students/pupils about events in our area of the world since the establishment of the state in 1948. There are lots of references in some of the textbooks, particularly the history of two of the wars – which is how history is divided up in Israel, by different wars – but even that is not done very systematically. So in terms of the issues that we're talking about today –socialisation patterns from the family, media, education – Israel formally has no work in this area. Informally, however, and in curricula that are not directly related to the conflict but are fundamental for fostering the conflict, an enormous amount of work goes on in teaching history, literature, the Bible. All of which is oriented towards the dominant, nationalist narrative: its message is the justification for why there is a Jewish state.

The importance of photos

The second thing is that Lapid is absolutely right about the importance of photos. Now, Israelis are absolutely obsessed by the news, in particular by television news. There is a very high rating for news broadcasts at eight or nine o'clock at night. There is a children's news broadcast at 5.30 in the afternoon; I don't know what its ratings are in terms of children. It's only about 20 minutes, but it's actually quite good. Children at a very young age grow up with television news in Israel.

So what happened at Sharm el Sheikh? What did the boy and his father see on television that day in February? This was a meeting hosted by President Mubarak and King Abdullah of Jordan; the two other main participants were Sharon and Abu Mazen, the president of Palestine. The primary learning that the boy was to have that day from television, that his father wanted him to see, was a declaration of ceasefire. Yet, the terms of the agreement were vaguely referred to by Sharon and by Abu Mazen. We

didn't have the written agreement, we saw some signing of a document, but basically it was another ceasefire – we've had a number of them.

What were the secondary learnings? Well, what is important is the role of leadership – many people think that this wouldn't have happened without the death of Arafat and the election of Abu Mazen. Also, we see the leadership of Sharon who declared that Israel will disengage from the Gaza Strip – even if the other side does not agree. The role of media was very important here, with President Mubarak and King Abdullah and the Americans behind the scenes, and above all the importance of ceremony, honour, respect – things that took place in a very important way.

What was also very interesting was that in terms of the media - this was a non-event. The meeting was totally oriented towards following what was going to happen, but the media were totally isolated from what went on. There was a huge physical distance between where the meetings of the leaders took place and where all the press were assembled. There was a sole feed provided by Egyptian television to the room where all the journalists were gathered, and it was the exact same feed that CNN, Sky, BBC, AlJazeera and Israeli television were receiving. In other words, there was absolutely no need for the journalists to be there, because there wouldn't be any contact between them and the people involved in the cease-fire meeting. They could have well just have been in the studio.

But what happened in the studio was even more interesting in terms of the point that I want to make. By way of background, there was a very precise schedule: at 11 o'clock Sharon was to arrive and to meet Mubarak, then Abdullah and finally Abu Mazen. This was to be followed by the signing ceremony. We had half an hour's broadcast before it started. I thought I would spend an hour watching this event – but it went on for four hours. Basically the journalists had an enormous amount of time to fill because nothing went according to the schedule. During this time the journalists talked with one another. It was really interesting. We met a person from AlJazeera, which we never get a chance to hear, and someone from Syria and Egypt. Lots of interviews were taking place by Israelis with people they had never met before. What were they talking about? Well basically nothing, because nothing had taken place. Nobody had any information and it was all very fascinating but there was nothing really going on.

So there was a lot of speculation in the studio. We had the normal kind of arrangement: you have people there to present the news, but there is nothing to present, so they are pretty quiet and introduce the commentators – who are other journalist experts, academics or politicians. It's in the analysis of what the commentators that is the point I want to make.

Ninety per cent of the commentators spoke exclusively about this event that was about to take place, yet they had very little information about it. So there was speculation about what could have been going on. Maybe the negotiations have stalled and there are last-minute negotiations (which has happened many times)? Maybe it has blown up? Maybe there were other things that were going on; maybe they were just taking a longer time to talk to one another? Nobody really knew and they were speculating about it. A very small percentage of people, primarily from three groups – representatives from the Palestinian Authority and from the two main opposition groups within Jewish society, the far left and the far right – were the only ones who put this event into context. Their basic message was the following:

This is a ceasefire agreement that includes a statement of principles. What is key is that we will have to see how it is implemented, since we have a history of problems with implementation of agreements. Let us take into account what has led up to this and let's talk about the disengagement process of leaving Gaza – which is just the first disengagement. According to this process, there are going to be more disengagements and more problems. In fact, if you think we've got problems now, wait till we have to meet the real big problems of removing settlements down the road.

Now, the only people who are really talking about this process are the opponents of the present peace process. Their claim is that it is a very superficial peace process. From these three examples I think we can generate some questions now. What ontological, epistemological, moral, social and psychological dimensions of conflict are involved in research about children in the media? What understandings of conflict do children learn through the media? And a more complicated one; are differential

approaches required for the study of children, media and conflict according to their direct or indirect experience of conflict, their status in conflict and power relations as well as age and gender?

I'm going to talk about an approach to the media which I think captures two options. Galtung, a very well known peace studies researcher from Norway, has written the following about an approach called Peace Journalism:

> *Peace Journalism describes a form of reporting that focuses on the causes of conflict, possible solutions and preventive steps rather than portraying conflict as two parties contesting one goal. The goal of peace journalism is to enhance prospects for peace.*

I can tell you that from observing Israeli journalism, that there are very few examples of anyone who is engaged in peace journalism in Israel. Outside of Israel an interesting example is Amy Goodman of *Democracy Now*, a radio programme in the United States syndicated on the web. *Newsround* [CBBC] may well do so, as well, but I'm not sure. What I want to end with is three different models that related to Galtung's discussion of Peace Journalism. Maybe you can place your own research in relationship to these three models that I am going to show you.

The first is the "absolute power model" which is basically what we see in situations where there is a conflict between X and Y. The resolution approach is the use of force – X and Y go to war. The outcome is that X in this case overcomes Y. This is a much more subtle process if we talk about male hegemony, because the whole process of conflict and absolute power is internalised. So you don't really have to use physical force; males and females learn this approach, function accordingly and their expectations are that the world will function in a similar manner.

The second model is the "rational resolution process": a conflict takes place at stages 1 and 2 between X and Y. There is a ceasefire and negotiations take place between X and Y through a mediator M. There is an agreement that's reached. Implementation is not addressed, so, well, we'll have to see. One of the arguments that I use in talking about Oslo is that nobody agree to divorce based on what Oslo declared. It's not a good

contract in terms of what implementation means, in terms of dividing up the time with the children and how this is going to be implemented. Without getting into the politics of it, it's a bad contract.

Now the third model - the model that I'm trying to work on and develop- portrays the full conflict resolution process in terms of conflict cycles. Points 1 and 2 are the same: conflict is generated and develops. While military force can be used, alternative non-violent approaches might be used such as words, embargoes, avoidance, silence - techniques used in lots of societies. Through these various mechanisms, the sides decide at point 3 to seek mediation that may well lead to compromise and an agreement. What this model emphasises is that what the media needs to be talking about is what happens with the compromise agreement and implementation: there is the possibility of no resolution; then we return back to the conflict; there could be a superficial resolution, in which case we again return to the conflict; again the idea of a conflict cycle. And in the background of this model we see the spirals of the cycle going on endlessly . . .

The Good Friday Agreement

So if we had research that said, after the Good Friday Agreement [in Northern Ireland], let's see how this peace is going forward and how children think about it? What we're learning now is that these processes take on many different forms with many complicating variables and the key is this implementation process. So what could students learn? What from these different models could we say are the implications for what children might learn and what media people and researchers and journalists learn from these different processes? Or could they learn from more serious thinking about conflicts. One of the places where we could examine it is in children's news and the websites that accompany *Newsround* and other programmes, films and books. We could check and see what concept of conflict the journalists and producers are applying? What are children learning about resolution processes by the way in which conflicts are presented? What understanding do they have of the dynamics of the process? It's only the third model that talks about the dynamics of these processes. Model number 3, I submit, is I think really critical for conducting such research. Further, we can ask, what is it that children

learn from these studies that they can transfer to many other kinds of conflicts in their lives; in their interpersonal relationships, in their family relationships? Can they take something from what's happening here in the Troubles and apply it to their lives, in other aspects of their lives? Are they learning something or are they applying their learning to think about different resolution approaches? If they learn these different resolution approaches, then they ought to have the capability to watch the events at Sharm el-Sheikh and judge whether this is a peace initiative that has a chance of success

Finally just to end with a few sentences about reconciliation. This is 'Northern Ireland Month' in Israel. The British Council is bringing lots of people from Northern Ireland to Israel and Palestine over the next month films are going to be shown; there is a large art exhibit of Belfast painters. Also, two professors from Queens University, Adrian Guelke and Claire Mitchell, are coming to talk about reconciliation in an event sponsored by the Van Leer Institute research centre in Jerusalem. I'm not sure how much reconciliation has really been implemented here but do know that it has been developed very strongly in South Africa. Yet, in Israel, according to my model we are a long way from reconciliation, but if you think according to the first two models, then it seems like reconciliation is just around the corner.

The amazing thing I find about this is that we have people coming from abroad talking about reconciliation. Yet, one of the most advanced forms of reconciliation actually takes place frequently within Israel and within the Middle East, in a practice called "sulha" in Arab cultures. Very limited research has actually been directed about how the Arab communities use "sulha" to reconcile differences and conflicts. Further there is no one on the Van Leer programme talking about reconciliation from this perspective. This is very characteristic of what happens in Israeli academia and I think in a lot of places in the world. All too often we do not recognise the major contributions that can be made by groups within our society – in this case in the Arab communities or by NGOs working for peace. All too readily we turn to people from outside to help us mediate these conflicts. However, if we took a different view of things and opened our eyes to our rich cultural backgrounds and activities taking

place in civil society, I think we would have much greater strength and openness and possibilities coming forward.

Thank you.

DAFNA LEMISH: Good morning. I would like to join Peter in thanking Máire and Ed for organising this event and for having us here.

I would love to follow up some of the things that Peter said because they kind of open the door to what I would like to say. I'm coming from a media studies prospective. I have been studying children and television for many years. When I think of the three words children, media and conflict, I can think of at least five ways that they interact or intersect, and I would like to share with you two small case studies on projects that I have done that relate to two of those five. Let me just mention the five so that we have a general layout of the possible perspectives.

One of course is to think of children as an audience, children receiving information through the media about the conflict. What are they learning? What do they understand? How do they react in terms of fear, anxiety and other feelings towards the coverage of the news? If I tie it to what Peter was saying before, if the school system is not working and not dealing with conflict and if the families are not dealing with conflict, then the media become the major socialisers, the major way for children to find out about the conflict and learn about it and react to it etc. So one perspective would be children as an audience to news coverage of conflict, learning and understanding emotions.

A second intersection of those three areas is when children themselves become active producers of media in relation to the conflict. For example, if they are involved in projects that have to do with either building Internet sites or producing video bits or whatever, if they are expressing their understandings and their feelings towards the conflict and their suggestions for resolution or whatever through producing media that would be another area.

A third area again, which I'm not going to talk about, is children's images in the media in relation to the conflict. We know from news all over the

world that children are often being exploited in many ways by the media for news coverage – because of course showing children in misery situations is a very emotional and engaging kind of portrait of the conflict and is used by both sides to present children as victims of conflict. So this another really interesting area of how children are being manipulated through the media, by the media, for the purposes of whatever cause or each side has for the media.

So those are three intersections that have to do with the child's perspective. There are two others from the media perspective. That is, how do they use the power they have in terms of helping children cope with the conflict? That would be a fourth perspective. The fifth would be: how do the media sometimes take upon themselves the goal of making a difference? Let's say by breaking up stereotypes; helping mutual understanding of both sides; when the media themselves are recruited to take the chance to make a social change in relation to the conflict.

Let me just say regarding this last point – I'm not going to talk about it, but in Israel there has been quite interesting research related to *Sesame Street* – a co-production version of *Sesame Street* in Israel that had to do with the conflict in two cycles, related to the Oslo Accord in the early 1990s. A joint effort with Palestine television and Israeli television to produce a *Sesame Street* that catered for both Jewish and Palestinian children has failed – I mean the project did not fail; it was just that broadcasting it has failed due to the break-up of the peace process. There is a new effort now to produce a co-ordinated *Sesame Street* for Israeli children, Palestine children and Jordanian children.

Children as an audience for news about conflict

I would like to map for you the five areas that I can see where children, conflict and the media intersect; areas that have great potential for study and for elaboration.

I would like to present just two small case types. The first has to do with children as an audience – children as receiving and understanding conflict news. The particular conflict I want to talk about is not the Israeli–Palestine conflict per se (although you will see that we will get to

it) but the Iraq War. The background for this little study is the spring of 2003. Israel, together with the entire world, is building up towards the war. Before the war broke out, in Israel the situation was very tense because of the experience of the Gulf War in the 1990s, when Israel was attacked by Scud missiles by the Iraqis. The discourse in the media was that we were preparing for the unknown. We had no idea of what might happen; whether Saddam Hussein had atomic bombs, weapons of mass destruction, biochemical warheads, water poisoning. There were all kinds of speculation about what might happen, including speculation that if we were bombed by Scuds from Saddam Hussein, this would be a great opportunity for our country to make a new war against the Palestine terrorist uprising. There was a kind of preparing for total chaos – anything from nothing happening to complete chaos, an atomic bomb and the complete destruction of the country by the neighbouring Arab countries.

So this is the atmosphere children are living in the days before March 2003. In their homes the whole Israeli population received personal protection kits that included personal gas masks and atropine shots that you are supposed to inject yourself with in case you are exposed to biochemical weapons. Kids from two or three years old would go to their little pre-schools with their personal gas masks. So there is no way to protect children from knowing that this is going to happen: they are going with their parents to stores to buy sealed water, they are sealing rooms at home, they are preparing shelters, they are preparing for an atomic war at the worst. This is the situation; so what we wanted to ask is: what are children understanding from this news coverage, what are they learning? As Peter said, Israel is a very compulsive news culture. We consume a lot of news from television and newspapers and the radio and it is good parenting practice to encourage your children to watch the news. It's a civic duty in a way to be involved, to know what's happening. So, as I said, children know what's going on and they are informed.

The study in spring 2003 was mainly about the role of television in children's understanding of the conflict, because we are talking about the age where the most important medium is television. We had intensive interviews with 39 children, ages 7 to 11 – 19 boys, and 20 girls from a diverse social and economical background.

So the first question: what do children know about the war? We were amazed to find out that they know a lot. The children we studied had a very accurate understanding for their age level of what was happening. Here is just one example: a boy aged 11 on why the war is happening or is going to happen – "it's because Iraq has an undemocratic regime. Part of the population is against it but they can't express themselves because they are afraid of the ruler. It's also because Bush thinks Saddam has mass destruction weapons." Pretty good coverage, this is a pretty good reflection of the coverage of the news that they have seen in Israel. They knew a lot about the demonstrations in Europe against the war. They knew a lot about the kind of discussions that were going on in the USA, of the 'Bush against Saddam' personal kind of conflict – quite a lot of information and quite accurate.

Interestingly, though, they did what we call 'new studies', domesticated the war – the current Iraq–United States conflict – into *our war*. And they did it in many ways, many of them confusing facts and fiction. Here is an example: a girl, Vito, says "there is a person who is against us" – Israel of course – "namely Saddam Hussein, and the Americans want to protect us, so they want to do something to him." Another 8-year-old says "The Iraqis and the Arabs are together in their military forces and they claim that Jerusalem belongs to the Arabs and that's why the war started." So you can see there is a complete confusion of the war between United States and Iraq, the invasion of Iraq by the United States for whatever reason, with the Israeli–Arab conflict. The Iraqis are seen as being part of the Arabs and Palestinians are also part of the Arabs; Israeli Palestinians who are citizens of the country are also part of the Arabs. There is this general term, *the Arabs*, who are the enemy, and Iraq is a part of it. And the United States is of course the good guy who is there to save us. So Bush is assigned benevolent reasons for his behaviour, I mean he is going to attack Iraq to save us, Israel, which is a very interesting perspective. So the war is our war.

They also internalise this axis of evil. Here is an 8-year-old boy who says "it's because of the collapse of the twins, it's like the First World War" – remember, it's an 8-year-old boy talking about how he understands this war. "It's like the First World War between America and their enemies. In this case they killed many in the twin buildings but the Americans gave

them back. Not with the use of terror but in a fair war, missile against missile." The whole idea of a fair war – the Americans' missile against missile – it's not just the terror of the twin towers but he really internalises this whole discourse, that the war against Iraq is something to do with the twin towers and bin Laden. He mixes this whole thing up, and all this has to do of course with the Arabs wanting to get Jerusalem and the Palestinian conflict.

They were very pessimistic in general. This is one quote that I particularly like. (The war had already begun by the time we did the interviews, I should have mentioned: all these interviews took place in the first week of the war.) This 11-year-old girl says: "In the end nobody will win and nobody will lose and in the end this terror would have been in vain." This is what she is saying after a few days of the war. It was generally the kind of understanding that many of the children had. The war took place at a time where the general feeling in Israel was a kind of despair – "here is the war again". Think of the cycle Peter showed us – it was "Here we go again. We were all hoping for peace, there was optimism, but it broke down because there was nobody to talk to on the Palestinian side. They really do not want peace. There is no way to get peace. We're only going to get this terrorism again and again and there is nothing to hope for." A real sense of despair was very typical to Israeli society for the last few years. I think maybe now we are getting out of it, and that also relates to a comment Peter was making before about the Left parties in Israel, the Left activist groups disappearing. There was just a general sense of "OK, we tried it all. Nothing worked. OK, just forget it. Whatever happens happens." A sense of pessimism. Children are getting that from the news and expressing that kind of opinion.

The second theme that was very dominant for children was how dependent they were on the media in general, television in particular. Out of the 39 children, 37 agreed that television is their most important source of information and interpretation about the war with Iraq; when asked what their sources were, 37 said that school was not the first source, family was. The media, particularly television, were the first source and from television it was mainly adult television – not special programmes for children, just the general news. Here are some quotes that tell us not only how much information that we are getting from television, but the

kind of belief children had in television coverage, as if "if it's on television it's true". A 10-year-old says: "I'm not afraid any more because I know that Saddam Hussein will not send missiles because they already took over Baghdad and we don't see him on television any more." So if he is not on television any more there is no danger any more. That's the whole notion that "if it's not on television then it doesn't exist". So if he is not on television because [the US] took over Baghdad, that means that there's no danger anymore. It's not only a dependence on the media for information but a belief that the media is a window to reality. This is reality; if it's not there it's not a threat anymore.

One of the children's complaints was that [though] they were dependent on the news for adults, they did not like the news in many ways. A 10-year-old says "I'm bored of watching what they are saying and all but I like to watch the real war closely, like the shootings and all." There are all these interpreters and hours and hours of what we call in Israel *disaster marathons* (this term was coined by a researcher in Israel), those marathons that television goes in for after each terrorist event or each bombing. Hours and hours and hours of airing old generals – it's mainly men who sit in the studio and give their interpretation. There is nothing but talk; there is no news, no information, there was a bomb and people died, which is horrific and terrible, but there is nothing more to say about it. And the children are bored by all this talk, like most of us are, but we are compelled to watch it for some reason.

'Shooting is not a computer game'

What they like obviously is to see the real war, shooting and action – which is also in many ways sad because there is little evidence that they realise this shooting is not a computer game, it's real shooting, real people, real war and there is little compassion over that. An 11-year-old girl said: "Only the pictures were interesting. The reports just blah blah blah and didn't say anything new. The same thing all the time." And she is right, of course; this is the kind of reporting that adults get on television. Interestingly about the dependency on television, we had some clear evidence they were reciting very specific elements from news coverage which there's no way they could have known if they hadn't seen the news. For example, there was an item on the news about dolphins being trained

to detect underwater bombs. This is very anecdotal, but trained dolphins are an item children are very attracted to of course. There are all kinds of little details; they are very obsessed about the question of how many look-alikes Saddam Hussein has - that was a major theme. Why were they so obsessed with it? It's interesting, it's a fantasy world, these look-alikes, but also it's because the media in Israel for many days were obsessed with the look-alikes because it wasn't clear that the videotapes we had of Saddam Hussein were really of him or not. And if it was not him that would have meant that maybe he was captured or dead or whatever, which would have meant that the danger of missiles on Israel had been reduced significantly. So there was a great obsession with the look-alikes and children were fascinated with Saddam's look-alikes. They had many unanswered questions. They didn't understand how many look-alikes Saddam had. We asked them "What else do you want to know?" "I don't understand that when a house was bombed whether it was an important house, a residential house or a store" – and here's the real question: "Why aren't they stopping the war for one minute, trying to talk and reach an agreement?" They were asking questions that ranged from just the tiny thing – "explain to me what happened to this particular house that we saw bombed" – to the really big questions that we all want to know: "Why don't we stop the war and start talking?"

They dislike the coverage: "I didn't like it because they show people suffering, it's not fun to watch" – that was from another girl. This was very typical of girls showing compassion; we didn't have much of that from the boys – "It's not like they are showing a birthday party, it's a bad thing and they show killings and I don't like to watch it." So the girls were talking about not liking to watch the news because they didn't like to see suffering and war and so on.

We asked them what would you have done if you could have made news for children, what would you have liked to have seen if it was up to you? You're the producer and you can build up whatever news programme you want. Shirley aged 9 says: "I would have made a special programme for children because adults know what war is and children don't. I would have explained what war is, how they build missiles and what will happen to us. I would also have made fun of them and imitate George Bush or Saddam so the children would calm down." The beautiful thing about this

quote if you look at it is that it has all three elements that our research suggests about the role of the media at times of tension. First, give information – "because adults know what war is, children don't". Second, give interpretation – "I would have explained what war is … what will happen to us". Third, give some kind of emotional release – make fun and show lots of comedies. Information, interpretation and emotional release are the three major functions that the media serve at times of crisis. We have lots of research on different wars where this has been found to be the case. This 9-year-old girl already knows that and says it very clearly, which I thought was amazing.

They talked about their feelings. In one drawing there is a girl sitting and listening to the radio. She hears an alarm in the radio – you can see the alarm going off – and then she says "Oh no, an alarm". The three missiles are a chemical missile, a dangerous missile and a regular missile; three missiles potentially hitting her home. This other one says: "My first day at war. This was the first day of war. I felt I'm going to die. I trembled. Suddenly there was an alarm. I trembled. I was afraid, I put my gas mask on my face and we ran to the shelters and finally the war was over." She drew her gas mask here. But the thing was that none of this happened. There were no Scud missiles, all this was imaginary; she was imagining what would happen if this happened to her. It was all in her imagination because none of this happened. However this actually did happen in the Gulf War 13 years ago, when she wasn't alive. So this was her expressing her feelings of fear.

We asked: "What would you like to see on television?" and the children gave us all kinds of explanations about the end of the war, which took two shapes. One is victory, and it's interesting that the scenes of victory are very much like scenes you see on the news, they duplicate news scenes. This [picture] says on top "The News Studio" and you see the news broadcaster saying "The United States has won", so this is like a news item. This is also a typical news item; you see the American aeroplane landing. We have seen lots of those with American aeroplanes going up and down; what happens between them taking off and landing we don't see. It says an American air fighter lands back in the United States, is back from the war and the man is singing a song of victory. At the bottom it says there are many Iraqis who say "Yeah Bush! We finally have a

democratic state!" The Iraqi people are cheering Bush for giving them a democratic state.

The next theme was the theme of peace. Interestingly you can see a kind of intertextuality to other news items. There is one I particularly love. In Hebrew it says "Shalom, Peace" – you see the rainbows, hearts and all kinds of scenes of peace. It's inside a television screen. The scene here is of three people shaking hands, Saddam Hussein, Ariel Sharon and George W. Bush. This scene is a typical scene that Israeli children have seen many times over: the signing of the Oslo Accord on the White House Lawn between Arafat, Clinton and Rabin. It's interesting that in this peace treaty Sharon is in the middle between Saddam Hussein [and Bush]; he is the mediator. Again, just to remind you, he had nothing to do with this war, but still for our children this is the signing of the peace, and here there are people demonstrating with signs saying "We want peace" and Bush and Saddam Hussein are shaking hands. So these are peace scenes.

A latter-day Esther

One creative solution I'd really love to show you is very gendered but interesting; one of the girls says here how she would have solved the war. The Hebrew text is like a comic strip. Saddam is saying that this is so much fun because he's going to bomb Israel. "I pretend," the girl says. "Saddam you're so beautiful and cute, do you want to marry me?" Saddam says she's so cute, he will agree, but without kisses. (I think the girl was 8 or 9.) And the girl says "Saddam *elai*" – it's a loving sort of name – "come let's not make war. We need to talk about the wedding and to spend time together." Saddam says "You're right sweetie. Can you bring me a glass of wine?" Then the text says "Yeane" – that's her name – "filled the glass with wine and put poison in it so that Saddam will die. Yeane killed Saddam and made peace with the Iraqis." She continues to tell the interviewer: "Afterwards I make peace with the Iraqis and everybody loves me. I don't want anyone to cheer for me because it's all thanks to God." And she ends by saying: "I hope you don't take this seriously because I hate Saddam Hussein!" She was afraid the interviewer would feel that she really wanted to marry Saddam Hussein. There's a lot to say about this example – the kind of perspective a girl at the age of 8 or 9 thinks of herself, how she can manipulate the man into poisoning him by

marrying him and offering him no kisses. It also follows the well-known biblical story of Queen Esther, who married the King of Persia. The thread is there: she didn't invent it but she adapted it to her needs.

In summary what I want to say is that we saw a very high media dependency by the children. They were adapting the hegemonic framing they were getting from Israeli news coverage and accepting the hegemonic view that the war with Iraq had to do with the Israeli-Arab conflict. They were accepting all those terms. Just to give you a hint, this study was part of a comparison with two other countries, Germany and the USA. We did something very similar and we found the same thing in the three countries. Israelis were very much for the war: Israeli children believe the war is going to protect them; it's for their good, for resolving the Palestinian–Israeli conflict. The German children were very much against the war. They saw Bush as mean and the war was not justified. They were much against the war, which was the typical discourse of the German media. American children were very much for the war: they saw the war as a clearly personal fight between Bush and Saddam Hussein; they accepted the hegemonic discourse of the American media. So you could see the same theme: children adopt the main discourses that the media are offering them.

... Now what do children need? What do the producers of television think that children need in a time of war and conflict? Firstly, to be safe and busy at home. In many ways they saw themselves as babysitters. They wanted children to be at home, to be occupied at home, to be close to adults, to be close to shelters, to be close to television – which can tell them there is an alarm, go to the shelter or open your gas mask or whatever, or drink water. We found that we were serving as a babysitter, an emergency medium for transmitting information in case of emergency for children at home. We prepared different scripts of what could happen. Sitting in a sealed room for hours, one needs to prepare things that can be done there; otherwise children will be pestering their parents all day long and driving them mad. You are sitting there in the room with your emergency water and batteries and bucket to pee in if you need to. You are locked in the room: during the Gulf War we had done that many times throughout the months. Every time there was alarm we would seal ourselves in the room.

What do you do when you have young kids and you are stuck in the room for five hours? You have to keep them occupied. So many of the programmes were just concerned with activities, art and craft, how to decorate your gas mask box or decorate your sealed windows – something to keep the kids occupied. The second thing was relaxation and information: many of the programmes, depending on the age group, worked around providing children with information – things that children were concerned about. For instance with the very young age group, the pre-schoolers, they weren't exactly concerned about what to do if there is an atomic bomb because they don't have a concept of an atomic bomb and that was not scary. But it was very scary for them to think "I am in the sealed room and I need to go to the bathroom and I don't know what I will do." Those were the kinds of things they were concerned about. So that kind of information was in the special bits that they produced, geared towards the audience and their needs, concerns and fears. Also the sense of helplessness – for example, television for the young audience produced 16 special segments in preparation for the war. One of them dealt with the child who feels guilty that the war broke out because of him, because he took a green colour from his friend without his permission and broke it. He was driven with a guilt feeling that the war was happening because he was a bad boy. So the whole segment was about how the war is not our fault, not your fault, it's something somewhere else – all kinds of emotional issues that of course we as adults would not be concerned about. But they were geared for children.

How much is too much?

The second dilemma, and I will finish off with this, is how much is too much? How much would you deal with the conflict to a point where overdoing it is problematic? They interviewed the children, and the children themselves said in an unequivocal way: "We want to know, and after you tell us briefly what's happening, then you go back and broadcast the regular programmes we like, and in the scheduled way you used to." They wanted to know, but they wanted life to have as much routine as we are used to. One producer said "Explaining is like a hot potato. You are afraid you will cause more damage. There is a problem with over-explaining to children. You want to explain, but how much detail do you

want to go into about the danger of biochemical weapons? What will happen if you are hit? Over-explaining is problematic, so where is the line? You don't want to cross it."

Here is a quote that is very important. "We always have this feeling that the more we give the children the feeling that in order to be on television, so that your voice will be heard, [you must] come and talk about your fears. Maybe we are contributing to escalating things that didn't necessarily happen with that much intensity to the children. On the one hand, there was a need to help legitimise children's fears and anxiety. It's OK to be anxious, we are all anxious, it's normal, it's fun, so come and tell us in the studio how you are handling your anxiety. We had lots of children interviewed saying 'Yes, I am afraid', and the psychologists in the studio would say 'It's good to be afraid, it's healthy, it's normal, you know, to express your feelings' – all this wonderful talk about expressing your feelings. But then there was a boomerang effect. The children learned that if you want to be on television, if you want your call to be heard, you'd better be *very* anxious. So they were building up their own anxiety, or just pretending. Then what you got on the news for children was lots of children building up this tremendous amount of anxiety that was completely out of proportion and unnecessary. It had a boomerang effect because then if I am a five-year-old or ten-year-old child at home *not* feeling this anxiety, and everybody on television is anxious and crying and fearful, then maybe something is wrong with me. So there's a whole concern with that.

So, to sum up, those are just two examples of the kind of issues that can be raised about media, children and conflict when we meet together. A lot more work needs to be done, of course, and this is just a taste. Thank you very much for your attention.

Máire M. Davies: We are very pleased to welcome Professor Sami Adwan from the University of Bethlehem. He is going to talk about the Palestinian experience in terms of our topic today. After Sami is finished we will have an open discussion.

Sami Adwan: Good morning. I would like also to thank Máire for inviting us to be with you. This is my second time in your country: I learnt a lot from the first visit and it's really an experience for me. I would also like to tell you I'm not a psychologist or media expert and it puts me in a more or less difficult situation here; I am really a teacher trainer. We train teachers to deal with the children who are affected directly and indirectly by the conflict and by the consequences of conflict.

I would like to put my speech into three segments. One segment will try to show the daily life that children are living through which is affected by the conflict – not through the media, just directly affected. The second thing which I thought to add to my presentation is how children see the conflict through drawings, as Dafna mentioned, presenting some personal views of children inside the conflict. The third thing I would like to present is research from a quantifiable perspective, how from the perspective of parents the media affect children in six different aspects: psychological, emotional, social, educational, intellectual language and psychic health.

Before that, I would like to explain more about these assumptions I started with as a pedagogue. I think reality always has much more effect than media. Because children are directly exposed to conflicts, they are really harmed by the conflict itself. Another assumption is that media effects are less; they don't have that much affect on children who are caught in conflict, not more than children who are not caught in conflict. It's like Dafna saying that people are trying to see conflict while they are not caught up in it, when she refers to the issue of the war in Iraq. The third thing to be careful of when thinking about media and conflict is that children are more attuned to media in conflict than at other times. In conflict they are so much tuned into following the news, either by their own or their parents' choice or by having nothing to do except staying at home and watching television.

The other thing is to talk about the differences between children's situations. Of course children's experiences can be the same, but we found that children who have more opportunities to be protected and be secure are in a different situation from children who feel vulnerable and fragile and have no way of being protected from conflict. And here maybe is just

an example: as Dafna was saying, Israeli children have an educational programme that tries to build a situation where children at least feel safe, while in the Palestinian conflict we don't have such capacity to develop an infrastructure to insulate our children from real exposure to the conflict.

So I would like to start first with daily life, then go on to the children's personification through their drawings, then the results of this research. Before we go into research, I should say it's a quantifiable result. I wish I had time to do qualitative research too. But because I'm not an expert in that, I would prefer to stick to the quantitative research. It's also from the parents' perspective. I asked the parent what kind of affect they thought the media had on their children. That's maybe the weakness of research or one aspect of it. The other aspect is asking the children what they feel. The sample was about 400 parents from Bethlehem district, where I asked them to respond to these questions.

Images of threat: Palestine

But first I would like to go through the real-life issue that has put us in such conflict. I would like to do it with a slide show.

This is a family crossing in front of a checkpoint where the children are directly exposed to the reality of life.

This is also a child here in a crowd, who is forbidden from crossing a checkpoint by Israeli soldiers; and here is the small child who is just watching the whole scene. The feeling of the children is that the adults are becoming impotent to protect their own children; they feel also that the adults are subjected to the same practices.

These two are just waiting for the gates to be opened to let them go to their farms.

This is children going to their schools, crossing; there is a dirt road at the bottom and this man is trying to plead with the soldiers to let them go to their school. You can see their faces are clearly disappointed about not going to school. This little one was almost devastated.

This is another picture showing how the soldiers are so big and the children are so young; it gives you the impression of what these children had to grow up with.

This is when the tanks invaded Bethlehem. The children are in the streets coming from their schools and they have become frightened and are chased out to their homes, trying to seek refuge.

This is another picture where I say children are exposed to the conflict directly, which is much more than for children who just see the media or watching the reproduction of the media in relation to conflict.

This is another picture of young people blindfolded and taken into these barriers into a place of detention.

This is children trying to rescue whatever is left from their house, a shanty house in Gaza. They are trying to rescue their books and school bags from under the debris.

A woman watching a bulldozer destroying a neighbour's house. Children are also exposed to this life where tanks protect the bulldozers that are trying to destroy the house.

Women watching the debris after the tank or bulldozer was there.

This is a small child just sitting on the debris of what used to be their home. A woman is trying to rescue whatever was left from her house.

This is also them trying to protect the land from confiscation.

This is an ambulance in the streets. You can say "What do these pictures have to do with the children?" These scenes are watched directly, especially by the people who live here.

This is a direct attack on an ambulance in Ramallah; searching the ambulances with injured people inside.

This is another scene. This is one who was caught by tear gas.

This is part of the wall, which we should maybe mention. In a way building the wall, which was started two years ago, is really one of these signs for continuous conflict. It will be built around the old Palestinian areas, east, west, all directions, and will stay there for forever. Of course it's a separation wall, an apartheid wall and it's to make the Palestinian state unviable in the near future. (I will talk at the end about my endeavours in building peace at the grass-roots level, as Peter mentioned.

This is how the wall looks. It's 12 metres high. Why I choose this picture is because it's built during the night. Building continues day and night. It's like fighting against time because the international justice courts have ruled it's illegal and should be dismantled and people should be compensated.

This is also a child facing a tank. You see the child trying to throw stones – it's like they are caught up in that. I think that children feel that their parents and other adults are really unable to protect them or do anything about the situation, so children sometimes take it into their own hands against their parents.

This is a scene from Bethlehem in the first invasion, when everything was destroyed in the road. This is a kind of humiliation, when Palestinians are caught either going to their work or coming back from work. This is something that a mother and child watched in their homes; all of a sudden soldiers came in, they went out to see what was going on and found these scenes.

This is a wedding, by the way. They are trying to cross the checkpoint – this is in Bethlehem. When there is no curfew, people can just go outside and start doing their business of getting married or going to school etc; they were caught by a tank just before they entered this nearby hospital. They were going to take their wedding pictures.

At the beginning of the Intifada which started in 2000 I was asked to help some teachers with dealing with traumatised pupils in their classes. One of the exercises we did was just to ask the children to draw pictures and try to see what was in the hearts and minds of the children. Out of 400

pictures which I collected – this was at the high point of conflict between 2000 and 2002, when there were real clashes and attacks and destruction, invasions and intrusions – the children's pictures taught us how they internalised the conflict and how they lived through it. I have chosen only ten to 15 of these pictures and we have tried to explain some of them.

This drawing is an aeroplane and these are Palestinians trying to protect this child. The children say 'we will never kneel' in Arabic, 'we will never give up'. This is also a symbolic picture with the Palestinian flag on top; here are two children's pictures with the Israeli flag and America flag: even the children understand there is a connection between the Israelis and the Americans.

This picture of a 14-year-old boy was taken in the year 2000. "There is no peace after this until after the Israeli occupation is removed from Palestine. We must take it back with force." That is what a 14-year-old child is trying to say. This is also very symbolic because near the beginning of the Intifada a Palestinian child was killed in his father's lap. So in most of the pictures this is a very dominant element – the father of Mohammed al-Dura shouting that the child is already dead. That's how the French reporter took that picture and we hear the voice of the father saying that. It's chaos, if you look at these pictures, there is so much going through the children's minds. They draw everything, they try to explain it; this is the Intifada, this is the Israeli–Palestine [conflict] for us.

... The first Palestinian Intifada in 1987 actually started with a popular uprising which still continues in the second Intifada. Although the second Intifada was more militarised from the Palestinian side which we think was wrong, to start to use military means. It says here [in this picture] "Oh my god, we need peace and justice in the land of peace." This is called the al-Aqsa massacres. These are the children's thoughts after such attacks: what struck me is the name of the supermarket – "this is the happiness market". Here are the cursed killers. There are also scenes of people being carried out to the ambulances.

Research with parents

[In the next section, Prof. Adwan showed a number of graphs and tables which cannot be reproduced here for reasons of space; his main findings are summarised, but not all the details of method and procedure.]

Now we will go into my research I did with parents. These are the questions.

What are the levels of media effects? In general, are there differences between the levels of media effects according to children's age? This is the general perspective. Overall it's high. The effects were to increase loyalty to homeland and society. Nervousness, anger, fear and anxiety are very high. There is an increased desire to control others by force: jealously, despair, frustration, depression, personality weakness, a loss of hope for the future, a lack of confidence, introversion, loneliness and isolation – overall it has become high. This is general across gender, across the whole population. There is also increased sympathy for victims; there's a fear of dealing with others; protests against social customs and traditions and also forming gangs and groups against others.

The other three components which are very low are: no desire to make new friends; weakness in relationships with friends; weakness in relation to families and relatives. In terms of language: they always talks about conflict (they use words of conflict such as hitting, killing, blood destruction etc; they use violent terminology.

... There are statistically significant differences between the psychological, emotional and other aspects in general according to gender. Fear affects both genders, but it affects females more; anxiety, introversion and self-centredness affect females more than males; also when we looked at jealousy it affected females more than males, but other aspects affected males more than females. The tendency to 'prefer to sit alone' affected females more than males; 'clings to mother/father/sibling' affected females more than males. When we look at the intellectual aspects, females are more highly affected more than males. When we look at the intellectual aspects, males are more highly affected than females in all items. I think this is partly because males are much more involved and

directly affected by the real conflict and by the media. Females tend not to watch media as much as males. Females in our society are too busy to watch media.

...

Just to wrap up [I'd like to] make some comments on the relationship mentioned between conflict and peace and negotiation. As I told you, I work in pedagogy, but I am involved in grassroots peace work, building up peace approaches with Israelis, and we are still working together. One of the approaches we actually established was the peace reception situated in the Middle East with a colleague from Ben-Gurion University from December [2004]. We are still working with the narratives, the text book issues, and we are now moving to the history because it is so much a part of the conflict. The last one we tried to work, through discussions and preparations, into the reconciliation process – that's applying the TRC [Truth and Reconciliation Commission] approach used in South Africa or Rwanda to the Palestinian–Israeli conflict. We also touched upon the *sulha* which is part of our local means of resolving the conflict.

We also feel that top-down decision-making and the leadership approach has to be scrutinised and changed from a top-down to a bottom-up approach at the grassroots level. We feel the failure of Oslo and its consequences partly related to the failure to bridge the gap between the top-down and bottom-up kind of approach. We as Palestinians feel it would be very harmful to us to look at the conflict and [treat both sides] equally, as if we have two nations involved in war. That is not the reality. We have to always remember there is an occupation, there's a government versus people policy. Yes, we have a government but it's not advanced and we shouldn't be involved in a military build-up. So we feel very sad when we are treated as equal.

Yes, we are involved in conflict, but people have to remember we are under occupation, with all its measures still in full operation even after we established a PNA [Palestinian National Authority] in 1994. We feel that the building of the wall is one of the destructive measures to block us, both Israeli and Palestinians, from reaching a peaceful agreement; but we also have on the other hand to sustain hope for both our futures. As we see it now as Palestinians, we don't think there is a positive future in the short term. I'm afraid we will have to wait another 10, 15, 20 years until the

measures of occupation start to be rewound. The conflict is so much internalised as you see from the children's eyes. They have lived through it and they are directly affected by it and we don't know how these images will be removed or forgotten. It has to take a long time. We should be hopeful at the same time. This difficult situation has itself become a very strong case for the adults before the children. Also, we touched upon schools: Peter was right when he said schools do not teach peace. Even when we try in our textbooks to put some peace images into children's minds, the children say 'that's [not] the reality, that's not how we live. We live in a different world than the one you try to get across.'

DISCUSSION

Máire M. Davies: I would like to thank Peter, Dafna and Sami for that informative enlightening presentation. Peter, it struck me that you were saying that the peace process wasn't such a big deal. Is that paraphrasing you correctly? You said the Oslo settlement wasn't a good divorce settlement?

Peter Lemish: I don't have any doubt at all that the Oslo Agreement was an important part of the process. Many people thought that this agreement was going to stick, that it was going to be the definitive way: but as an agreement, it wasn't going to bring peace. It was not a good contract if we look at contracts. It wasn't a well-thought-out contract. My point was that good contracts talk about what happens if one of the parties does not keep the agreement. There are ways in which they could be mediated. The process itself it was an important step, but one of the series of steps that have to take place in order to move to a position where we have a different set of arrangements between Israelis and Palestinians.

Máire M. Davies: What I took from what you were saying, I beg your pardon if I got it wrong, was that it was optimistic to think that Oslo would lead to peace, whatever peace is?

Peter Lemish: That's a correct understanding.

Karen Trew: I think that journalists did not always see it that way. … I don't know about within Israel but certainly here [in Northern Ireland], I

think we have had the same experience here – we have had the Good Friday/Belfast agreement. The chance that it would actually lead to peace, whatever peace is, especially the next day, was pretty remote, but journalists didn't see it that way. It's interesting I think in Northern Ireland people probably don't talk about the peace process they talk about the Good Friday Agreement.

The point I was going to get round to was I was thinking that children are not as naive as journalists - with my colleague Frances McLernon, who is sitting over there, and another colleague, who should be here but isn't, it just happened that before the Good Friday Agreement we had asked children a whole lot of questions but by accident had asked them one interesting one: "Is there peace or war in Northern Ireland? Are you not sure?" Before the agreement they said there was war and after the agreement they said we are not sure. They didn't immediately say, like the journalists were saying, "Wow – peace at last" and "peace in our time" and that sort of thing.

Dafna Lemish: You've brought up a really interesting point. Researchers in Israel and in the news arena have pointed out that journalists are very quick to celebrate whatever seems to be the mood of the day. After Rabin's assassination and afterwards, when the Intifada broke out, they were blamed for not foreseeing that something like this was boiling up. They were so blinded by the possibility of peace and a very optimistic kind of narrative that they weren't covering the reality of things both in Palestine and Israel. Which led to those events being a big surprise to Israel when there shouldn't have been a surprise, because anybody who has been living in the Occupied Territories would have known that they were not very happy with the agreement; everybody living in Israel should have known that there were a lot of people opposing the Oslo Accord. The same thing is happening now in Israel with the disengagement. There's been much criticism now by scholars that the journalistic professions are now so heavily into supporting Sharon and seeing this disengagement as if it is going to be the start of a new shiny peace that they are neglecting to see what is really happening. So the same thing is happening again. In journalistic practice around the world, it seems that journalists are very eager to accept whatever discourse has been offered to them or whatever frame of seeing the world is offered to them by whoever is currently the

political force. The same thing happened in United States with coverage of the Iraq war at the beginning. It takes a long time to kind of get out of it.

Sami Adwan: I think also the agreement has to be judged in its historical moment. When it was signed there was great hope and expectation, especially among the Palestinians, who went into the streets and tried to celebrate these Oslo agreements and even started, in Ramallah and other areas, handing Israeli soldiers olive branches and sweets. It was a breakthrough. It's the first time in history that there was such an agreement between Palestine and Israel. So historically it's highly valuable. Now the expectation that comes out of that now differs. I think, if I may say, the Palestinians also considered the Oslo agreement as one step, an important step towards reconciliation and resolving the old conflict issues like the ending of occupation, establishing a Palestinian State in the 1967 borders and so on. These expectations had not been felt or experienced from 1993 to 2000 – what we used to call the Peace Era. Also from the Israeli side, which I cannot really judge, I think the majority of Israelis felt that the Oslo Agreement had already ended the conflict since there were no attacks, no conflicts. So the expectations of the Israelis fell short in that area – it's quiet, people are travelling back and forth, there is no threat from Palestinian side attack, so that's it. I think the Oslo Agreement was an important step but expectations were flawed.

If someone wanted to analyse the consequences of what happened from 1993 to 2000, we would expect that the Oslo agreement would fail. First because the implementation of the agreed upon issues, those parts of the Oslo Agreement, has not been fulfilled. Secondly, and maybe it's a failure from the start, [it] didn't touch the five hardcore issues: the settlements, the refugees, the water, the border and Jerusalem. Would it be a bad strategy to start from the easy issues [and then go] to the difficult issues, or would it be better to touch on the hard issues and then move into the easy issues? We should allow a lot of grassroots-level [activity] to take place; hundreds of Palestinians and Israelis, NGOs and individuals, societies and universities could start working with each other, and hopefully their work would rise to a level where it could influence or change the language or the perspective of the politicians.

Now when I say the politicians, I really would like to make a distinction between a state where politicians are under siege and one where they are in control; also when politicians are afraid to state their measures. We cannot compare the Palestinian government to the Israeli government in many respects. We feel that the orientation of Israeli policy at the governmental level is the continuation of the settlements and the expropriation of land – we feel it's very clear. The second Intifada was saying again "No, the Oslo Agreement has failed after seven years." At least as a Palestinian I've got a passport I can travel with; I've got a lot of symbolic things. But, if you ask me "Are you free?" then [I have to answer] "No. I am still under full Israeli occupation."

Frances McLernon: I'm Frances McLernon from Department of Psychology on this campus. If I could go back to the beginning of today's proceedings, Dr Lemish, you told the story of the father who kept his son off school to watch the peace images on television. I am sure that the Israeli-Palestine situation is the same as the situation here in that when children see images of peace on television or in the newspaper, they will evaluate them in terms of their socialisation. We found this quite consistently in research both in interviews, poems and even in children's drawings, that a lot of children gave a negative evaluation of peace. In other words, they were saying things like we don't want peace if it means the other side has won – we don't want peace at any price. We don't want peace if we have to give up what we have spent all these years fighting for. That came from both sides. So if the media are targeting children to try to give a positive image of peace, I think it has to be a double targeting in that they have to target the parents as well. And the targeting of the children has to go hand in hand with the targeting of the parents, because the children are the product of their social group. If peace doesn't fit with what their social group wants, then they won't see it as positive. The father who kept his son off school was teaching his son "this is positive", "this is a good thing" – but there are many parents who teach their children "this is not good", "this is peace, but it's peace on their terms". We have found that quite consistently in Northern Ireland. I wondered if you would comment on that.

Dafna Lemish: It's an interesting point. I think one way to answer it, to relate to it, is the fact news coverage knows very well how to show war.

War is very illustrative. There are a lot of ways to show war that make it very clear. But there is no way really to show peace; at least, we haven't found a good way to show peace. The only images of peace that children see, as we adults see, is signing a contract, shaking hands. This is not peace; obviously, this is just a kind of a ritual, signing a peace. But what peace actually means, we don't get from the news coverage. There isn't really discussion of what it means, of how if we have peace this and that could happen, or life is going to change in this or that way. So I feel in many ways journalistic practices are just not helping us generally, and children in particular, to understand what peace means and what the benefits can be from having peace. So all this shaking hands, what do I get from that? This is one level of answering this.

On a second level, I am not familiar with research that actually asks children about [peace]. I can imagine – I'm just speculating on it because I don't know – but I think it depends which population in Israel you want to refer to. If you are referring to children of settlers, I am almost sure they would take the perspective of "I don't want peace if they are going to get whatever". But if you think of the majority of Israeli population, again I am speculating, I would guess that they would not react this way. Again the general discourse in Israel is that you are supposed to say you're for peace. That would be the norm. That's the expectation; that you are for peace. The question of how much you are willing to give up for peace; that is a different question. But children – it would be inappropriate for them to say publicly that they are against peace. Of course there's a difference between what they would say and what they think. But you are supposed to say you are for peace. I would doubt if you would get the same results.

Peter Lemish: As a peace scholar one of the first things that I would recommend is that we really try to avoid the word peace. I think it's a conflated term that few of us really understand or have experienced. Having said that, two points I want to make in relation to this. First I'm combining two things that Dafna and Sami said. Sami reminded me a bit of the spirit of what it was like between the two cycles [of violence], when we had the Oslo period – a three- or four-year window – where enormous amounts of positive energy were developed. Even in the settler communities there was an anticipation that some kind of way to resolve

this was going to work out. And actually there were quite a few reports where Palestinians and Israelis were getting together. But there was not a lot of reporting about positive activity in the post-Oslo implementation period. . . .

Sami Adwan: I think you raise very important issues. In this approach, which we are also trying, the TRC Palestinian-Israeli model could develop if through the process we can agree a definition of terms. If we can't agree the definition of terms, everybody will have to interpret it from their own side. What does peace mean? Everybody talks about peace. As Dafna was saying, nobody dares, to say "I am not for peace". But we now have to combine the words with action. It's like using the Habermas approach for validity claims, trust and truthfulness. I will just give you one good example from the Palestinian side. The Palestinians are living in the paradox of the Israeli government's the disengagement plan. We don't know to whether to celebrate or to mourn or to be upset, to be negative. Why? Because from one side, yes, we want the Israeli occupation to end for their benefit and for our benefit. The Palestinian-Israeli conflict has to be completely ended. To look at the withdrawal from one side we should be happy, but from the other side the policy of the Israeli government in the West Bank, is the opposite, enlarging settlements etc. So here we are in a paradox: if you ask a Palestinian "Are you happy because of the disengagement?" "I don't know. I don't think so because it's like moving from place to place and changing Gaza into a big jail etc." That's one thing. What really is disengagement? What really is peace?' The definition has to be agreed upon by the two parties involved in the conflict.

The other thing that is important is how to connect the media to reality. The media failed to present the positive aspects that have been going on in a very directional and very dynamic way. It's more attractive to present the conflict side of the process. What does it mean to the children? Is it the media or reality? I'm not trying to play down the effects of media, but I think daily life has so much power over how children perceive themselves and see reality. . . For example after the election of Abu Mazen, which I support, the Palestinian TV station started not to show conflict scenes the way they used to. Day and night TV used to just show these conflicts. Now if you want you can see just a brief news at seven o'clock or six in

the morning or at night time, but you don't see episodes the whole day, what I would call reproduction of the conflict. I think it's a matter of the reality and the media going side-by-side, and also individual interests and collective interests. That's why disengagement has a conflictual feeling among the Palestinians. We don't know. If you ask many Palestinians they say "no, it's not true. It's not serious. It's changing from the place to place", etc.

Máire M. Davies: When it comes to children, I think what underlies both of our disciplines is that we hope that if you can get to the younger generation young [enough], you can somehow intervene. Children are seen as a means of intervention, whether it's through education, through psychological interventions or through education, information and entertainment via the media. What media scholars are interested in is looking at where those things intersect. And when it comes to doing something tangible about making the world a more peaceful place, is there any way of doing it through children? I think that's what underlies our concerns.

Following on from that, picking up what Frances said, there is a sense in which children will not always fall into line and agree with their parents. So is that a means of intervention? Is that a means of making the world better or is it just increasing the level of conflict? I don't know, but in some of my research with children and parents, I found very marked disagreement between what children said and what their parents said on the same thing.

Aphra Kerr, Centre for Media Research, UU: Coming from a media studies prospective, I'm interested to see to what extent you can say that in both countries television – we are mainly talking about television – buys into nationalist narratives. Peter, you talked about it in terms of school. Are we talking mainly about television that is national, terrestrial, produced within the country? To what extent do people have access to alternative perspectives or diversity within terrestrial [TV stations]? Are they getting other channels? Here, for example, we can view news from the Republic [of Ireland], then turn on the local news: and if we want [we can] view BBC World or CNN and get entirely different perspectives on the same event.

Dafna Lemish: Technically you can get almost everything in Israel. We've got regular national television, we've got cable, satellite; at home we can watch CNN, Sky News, BBC. There are three Israeli television stations that also produce their own news, and I would say from what we know from ratings, the majority of the population does not watch. When they talk of diversity they mean they are diverse between the three Israeli television stations which are somewhat different, but basically they are the same. They present different versions of the news but basically they follow the same narratives. In many ways they are pretty much the same even though they are three different stations. So I would say the majority of the population has the possibility of watching alternative news but does not, through choice. Part of it is because they don't believe the other perspectives. They believe the Israeli perspective. The feeling is that the other perspectives are automatically anti-Israel, they don't understand our circumstances or are pro-Palestinian – whatever, there are lots of rational ways they don't trust them. So the answer to your question is yes, there are alternatives; no, most people do not watch them, or do not trust them if they do watch them.

Sami Adwan: On the Palestinian side we have one national TV [station] and it's still not at the stage of developing its own productions: a lot of it is just reporting news and just clips, for many reasons. We have a lot of local TV channels – in each district you can find five or six channels. Unfortunately they are not censored enough – I mean [they do not have] staff who are qualified enough to decide what to show and what not to show. … Now the Palestinian Authority is trying to find out if they are in the line with their policy in general or at the time.

We have satellite and it's available to two-thirds of the Palestinian population; children keep running from channel to channel without parental influence. To come to the point about the struggle between parents and children, it is very similar also on the Palestinian side: [children] are free to choose, they decide what they view. My children – they are young, from 8 to 17 –are starting to put pressure on each other: "we don't want to watch the news all the time"; they want to watch football. They enjoy it and remember all the teams who won, the names, it's amazing. Maybe I do not represent the majority of Palestinians, but that's how I am.

Maurna Crozier: I work in the Community Relations Council in the cultural diversity branch and we have been commissioning television programmes for young children for about 8 to 10 years so I am very interested in all the presentations you have made. My question also was going to be about what was actually being broadcast in Palestine and Jordan and in Israel and so the follow up question is, given how many reconciliation peace bodies there are … have there been any attempts apart from *Sesame Street* to take the same format or take the same questions [in] television for children? Israel sounds entirely blessed – it has got three television channels for children. All of you have differentiated between those who have direct contact with conflict and those who don't. We have a tiny population here comparatively but in none of the children's programming that I am conscious of has there really been any attempt to differentiate between those who have experienced conflict directly and those [for whom it is] a historic truth and reality.

Dafna Lemish: Especially after the last few years with the terrorist bombings, the general assumption is that all Israeli children are affected directly by conflict. Even if you were not actually in a place where there was a terrorist attack, you are under the fear threat. So from the perspective of TV in Israel for children, all children being raised in Israel are affected directly by conflict. I don't want to speak for Sami but I'm sure it's even more so for Palestinian children. There is no distinction between those affected and those not affected; they all perceive themselves as being affected. *Sesame Street* is the only systematic attempt to produce something that directly relates to conflict and tries to make a difference in terms of breaking stereotypes, introducing the situation of Palestinian children and Israeli children on the screen. The assumption being that both Israeli children and Palestinian children only see the other, either in real life or on TV, as an enemy; because when do you see Palestinians on TV? Only when there are suicide bombers. You don't see Palestinians like Sami who looks like a human person; you only see them as terrorists or potential terrorists or whatever. Most Israeli children have never seen a Palestinian close, who is a child just like them who likes to watch football on TV.

Maurna Crozier: Does that mean then that the reconciliation bodies have not seen TV as a useful vehicle for addressing attitudes?

Dafna Lemish: I don't think there are reconciliation organisations in the sense that you are thinking about: we are not there yet. As Peter was saying, we are far away from even starting to think about reconciliation. We are still in a situation of occupation and killing and bloodshed. I wish we were here talking about reconciliation but we are just not there yet at all; we are still in middle of the conflict. Peter hasn't said it but he was alluding to it in many ways – that we are talking about peace and war in a very dichotomous way. There is peace on television, there is war on television, [but] actually there is a huge continuum between peace and war and we are still very far away from worrying about reconciliation.

Peter Lemish: I just want to make two comments. First in terms of reconciliation activities, let me just reverse it. I want to add just one comment and an empirical impression that I have about alternative sources of information. The first thing that has to be said is that most Israelis do not feel comfortable reading or listening to news in English, where all these alternative sources are. I've had hundreds of media students over the last couple of years and I have asked them what the sources that they use for information, thinking these are the people most attuned to looking at a variety of media sources, and they almost all use either Israeli television, radio or the Internet, and if they are going online it's to sites that aren't necessarily news-related.

The second point that I want to make is in regard to socialisation. I think, looking a little bit down the road, just the opposite picture from what [we] are proposing in terms of children is going to happen in Israel. I was asked about this child who I presented who was taken out from school to watch the news. What's going to happen in the future, in just the next couple of months, is that settler children are going to be taken out of school in order to be involved in preventing the disengagement. We have seen that already. They are out there in the morning blocking the roads, chaining themselves to tyres that they set on fire. Throughout history, on both sides, children have been used by parents and by politicians to advance the conflict. It's very different from the idea of keeping the conflict away from children, it's just the opposite. The idea is that in order to achieve the

results that we want for the conflict, children need to be involved. It is an important part of the socialisation process, not to mention the number one thing for Jewish children, that they all know from [an early] age, probably as embryos, that their future is to be in the army at 18. So the reality is that they are part advancing the conflict, not the resolution...

Sami Adwan: I just want to say we are not in reconciliation, that's true. We are preparing the work for reconciliation. I think that reconciliation and conflict cannot work, and I have six steps, I don't want to repeat them, to reach reconciliation. But I would like just to emphasise that all Palestinian children are affected directly, physically by the conflict. How do we prepare these children to move from that traumatised situation to see a better future? I found in my research, which I did just few years ago, that most Palestinians still see Israelis as settlers or soldiers. They can hardly imagine an Israeli like Dafna; they only see a bulldozer, a tank, a settler or their guns. That's the overall image the Palestinian children have of the Israelis. So changing the image does need the media, but it needs more than the media. [We have] to change the reality. We have to work on the reality to try to get those children to experience each other in a more human way; otherwise we are only regenerating the manipulation of children. And I'm afraid we traumatise them by forcing the children to see others in different ways while they still have the memory and the experience of the others. My teachers, who I train to be good teachers, face the same thing with their children. Give the children and teachers a better situation or better reality so they will not be traumatised again and not be under subjugation or oppression. Do they have to do this because it's needed? No, they want to do this because they like to do it. Not because they have to.

AFTERNOON SESSION

Máire M. Davies: We thought it might be useful to frame this afternoon's discussion within the origins of our interest in this topic. My co-presenter is Dr Cynthia Carter with whom I've been doing some work at Cardiff University on children's perceptions of traumatic news events: this also involved Dr Stuart Allan at the University of the West of England who

recently brought out some collections of papers on journalism and journalism studies around conflict[1].

We started being interested in this after September 11th 2001. I went to a conference where some producers of children's news programmes – the BBC's *Newsround*, a programme produced by channel 4/ITN called *First Edition*, which was for schools and is now finished, and the producer of a Welsh-language news programme called *Felin Foel*, talked about the responses to their programmes when September 11th happened, which were enormous. The way we are going to frame this, is within the distinction that's already been made this morning, between children who are directly involved in conflict and children who are not. Obviously the world impinges on their consciousness and certainly when our country is at war, as Britain was during the Iraq war, there are other ways in which children can become involved. One of the things Cindy and I are particularly interested in is the political awareness of children and the way in which children and young people were politicised in Britain during the run-up to the Iraq war in ways which were very unexpected and surprising – taking to the streets, leaving school of their own volition, not because their parents were keeping them away. On the contrary, they decided they would take to the streets to protest about this war of their own volition. So there were clearly some interesting things going on among child audiences around questions of the representation of conflict. We followed up these producers' presentation at this conference talking about the way their programmes had to respond to children – 2,000 e-mails to *Newsround* instead of [the normal] 200 a week after 9/11. The producers clearly saw there was something going on that they had to respond to. *First Edition*, the Channel 4 programme, had children writing to them every week, and after the conference the producer asked me if would I like to see those letters, and of course I said yes.

To cut a long story short, we were able to get permission to have copies of those children's letters and we have this archive of material of children's letters to *First Edition* for the last two years. Hundreds of letters responding to the news as it was presented in *First Edition*: the archive is

[1] *Journalism after September 11th*, edited Barbie Zelizer and Stuart Allan, Routledge, 2002
Journalism: Critical Issues, ed Stuart Allan, Open University Press, 2004

held at Cardiff University. If anybody is interested in it you can go to the Cardiff website and click on and it will give you information on how to access that material, it is very valuable[2]. We have also got a complete archive with *First Edition* tapes and various other production documents and newspaper articles around the events. We got all the letters from the producers of *First Edition* when the programme closed. And they very kindly said to us would you like our material? So this is a word of advice to you: don't ever let any media organisations that you are in touch with junk their archives or their files. For goodness sake go and say please can we have them?

We also did some follow up research with the children. We went to two schools in Glasgow: one was involved in writing to *First Edition* and the other school, a control school, wasn't. We did questionnaires with them and we did interviews with focus groups, and we did them two years in a row. We were particularly interested in very broad questions about how interested children are in news and much less about the traumatic affect of events. We weren't really asking these psychological questions that we have heard about this morning. We were just trying to get a sense of whether in fact its worth doing research about children and current events at all. I'm saying this in the UK context, and I also think it is important to stress that Glasgow has its own version of sectarian politics, rather similar to what goes on here [in Northern Ireland]. There was a very interesting mixture of children in these schools; there were Muslim children and there were children from other kinds of backgrounds.

... So - an example of a letter [to] *First Edition*. This child is very upset about what happened on September 11th, and the news coverage. Feels very strongly, wanted to cry but the reason I chose this letter is at the end: "One more thing, what about the continued bombing in Ireland? I would like to know more about that too." So, this is the response of a child to awful events going on across the Atlantic but who hasn't forgotten the events closer to home. So clearly children are interested and do want to know. This is a child in Glasgow but she does still feel that she has a

[2] Cardiff University, School of Journalism, Media and Cultural Studies, http://www.cardiff.ac.uk/jomec/en/Archives/index.html

concern and interest in what's going on in Ireland. All of these children are eleven-year-olds; they were in year 7.

We mentioned this morning that children are used and the word *exploiting* was actually used repeatedly in the coverage of traumatic events for signification purposes. They symbolize certain kinds of things; usually how dreadful it all is and why they are they killing each other and so on. Occasionally you would get the child warrior with guns, or the children throwing stones at tanks, so you have got these two images of childhood: the potential terrorist, the junior terrorist and hooligan, or you have got the helpless passive victim. We did a little content analysis of the war coverage. This is a fairly typical example: out of 83 stories, a third of them showed children. Only one out of the 27 showed children in active roles – these were war protesters and in fact they were lying down and pretending to be dead: so it was at least an act of political agency. But 26 out of 27 showed children passively, either as victims, hospital patients or as part of refugee families, being held and carried. Always held, always carried, always lying down, always on the receiving end. That's just a very brief example but it can be replicated over and over again and we talk about it in our article in Stuart's [Allan] book about how children do turn up all the time in media representations of conflict, but hardly ever as political agents. Whether or not they are copying their parents is neither here nor there. I mean they simply aren't being heard from, represented or interviewed at all as people who might have a stake or a say in what's going on.

Now there is a sort of journalistic assumption that children don't like news and they're not interested in current events so it is very hard to get them to pay any attention to it. So we just asked [the Glasgow children] about their news consumption. These statistics were quite surprising to me: 34 per cent watch adult news often, 59.2 per cent sometimes and only a small minority of 6.8 per cent say they never watch adult news. They mentioned numerous radio outlets: I think local media are very important for children outside the metropolitan area – which people in London, the big media centre, sometimes forget. They mentioned 15 radio outlets: local radio outlet Clyde One was most often mentioned by nearly one-quarter of them. They mention 19 different newspapers – I didn't think there were 19 different newspapers! … So regionally and locally local and regional

news are a very important source of information for children, it seems to us from just this little survey; perhaps that's something that we tend to overlook in our concentration on the national and international. They [also] mentioned 14 websites [including] bbc.co.uk – again, the trusted broadcaster.

So what we got from this study was a sense that children are engaged in the news. They monitor it, they review it, just like the Israelis. They say they don't but in fact they do and the recognition factor is very high, as Dafna has already said. A lot of the images that we see are clearly drawn from the news. The vocabulary is drawn from the news. My final example before I hand over to Cindy is from an 11-year-old child who clearly has really got his finger on the button of what is going on in the news. 'Tory Tony' is Tony Blair as you all recognise of course. "He will not change my mind" written in capitals. George Bush said "this is the war against global terrorism. This is a war against a dictatorship ran and led by terrorists". "Tony can't improve our transport" – and this is where the monitoring of the news comes in – "investing in the NHS or even giving fire fighters 30,000 a year" – there was a fire fighters' strike going on at the time – "but they can put aside a healthy 5.5 billion" – and again he has got the exact figures – "for the war." "Madness! As the Mirror said" – the *Daily Mirror*. So this is a child who clearly is writing from memory, has got all the information at his fingertips, monitoring the fire fighters' strike and so on, very indignant with all the capitalization. To say that a child like this doesn't have any stake or anything to say in political issues of whatever kind seems to me to be a bit of a mistake.

So that is what I would say in terms of our research in children, I think certainly here we have underestimated them and it may be that they have been underestimated elsewhere. Quite apart from the conflict situation or the extent to which they are identified with the older generation, they may have other things to say, not only about local conflict. They do have opinions, and quite valuable ones, about what is going on in the world.

DR. CYNTHIA CARTER [AND PROFESSOR STUART ALLAN]

Cynthia Carter: This follows on from what Máire said about our research in Glasgow [the team consisted of Máire Messenger Davies,

Cynthia Carter, Karin Wahl-Jorgensen and archivist Frances Meredith of JOMEC and Stuart Allan of UWE]. As we got immersed in that project and I started reading my way through the vast literature on children in media and specifically news, it struck me over and over again the anomaly between what I was reading, what researchers were saying – not everybody, but a sizeable bulk of that literature about children and trauma and fright reactions and all of that – and actually what we were finding in the Glasgow research. We found that the children did express certain fears and were apathetic and so on. However, there was a whole other thing going on there where they were demanding information. They wanted to know, they wanted to speak and it felt very much to me like the circuit of communication was very talked down to by adults – 'we are going to tell you how much protection you need, we are going to tell you what is appropriate for your age' etc. Coming from a very different perspective – I don't have a psychology background – I suppose immediately my back went up about certain aspects of that literature, probably unfairly.

Anyway, our research led to thinking about how children are involved in that circuit of communication. Are there instances where children are actually talking about how they are relating to these events, whether it's September 11th or Afghanistan or war in Iraq? Around that time we knew that *First Edition* was about to finish. And we knew that the only kind of feedback that that particular group of kids we talked to had with *First Edition* was through letter-writing and occasional visits. On the website there wasn't really any interactivity between newsmakers and kids. There were a few postings, but nothing live or ongoing. And that led me to looking at the *Newsround* website, the BBC children's news website, which is really very good. The television show isn't very good, in my opinion, but it's a good advertisement drawing kids into the website. In fact at the end of their programme they say 'if you want to know more visit our website', which is really very good advice, because there is a lot of very good stuff going on here. As you can see from this overhead a year after September 11th, they actually built up a sizeable proportion of their website around aspects of September 11th – you can see here that kids go in and find out. Children all around the world were remembering what it was like when they first found out what happened on September 11th. So it's their stories, also things that are currently going on. The minute of silence that a lot of people were [observing] on the anniversary;

also Muslim kids talking about their remembrances and what their lives are like today. As you can see, [there are] lots of different possibilities for kids to get involved, to have their say, to talk with other children and to talk with news makers – it's quite extensive.

It began to strike us that what we had stumbled upon here, while probably not earth-shattering, is moving research in the direction where you take into account how kids are actually responding to the news and then in what instances are news makers responding to what kids are saying about the news and a range of different responses. That led me to some research that I did at the beginning of the Iraq war which I presented in Munich. I followed that up, and I have also been involved with some of Stuart's [Allan] research on Iraq. And this has led us to looking at the *Newsround* website [where] one of the things a child can do is click on to a [icon] and when you bring up the team you find out about the news organisation so you can find out the history of *Newsround*. Going behind the scenes, you can play a game where you are a reporter collecting all of the facts and if you collect all of the facts then your story gets in the news. But what I looked at specifically was the *Newsround* feedback – watching the news. And it's constant. You can go in and ten minutes later there are ten more additions. There was a lot around Iraq: opinion was fairly varied, mostly against the war, but there were a number of kids in favour of it.

This [overhead slide] is a more recent bit of chat from January where the children were talking about a report that came out on faith schools: there were a lot of children saying whether or not they felt that it was a good idea, so you can see they are very clearly following the news. And *Newsround* can then see what they are saying about reports not only on *Newsround* but also in the adult media. I should just note as well that there is a certain problem with doing research on these websites: that is, you are not exactly sure who you are dealing with. You can see this angry girl. That could be anyone. It could be a young girl writing in or it could be a male grown-up, but probably by and large [they are] kids. There is a level of monitoring that the *Newsround* people do. When you sign up you can call yourself by your first name or pick an anonymous name: they do have a number of safeguards, but it still could be an adult.

The other thing I want to say is that [while] there is that circuit of communication, there is also something very interesting going on in *Newsround*, which is that is they try to tie into citizen education in the UK. A few years back the government introduced this thing called citizenship education for different levels. Eleven to 14-year-olds, key stage 2, is where citizenship studies really kick in, supposedly in a serious way, and *Newsround* has actually diverted quite a bit of attention in its citizenship education parts of the website [where] you can click on the icon "for teachers". So, there are all kinds of resources that teachers can use in teaching citizenship education. There are a wide range of issues, but there is also a section devoted to media literacy.

This particular website is teaching kids how to report conflict – what does a reporter have to do, an overview, some learning aims and there is a set of exercises that kids do: they go away and write stories, that sort of thing. So, it's completing the circuit of communication if you like. You have the news and children watching it, reading it and responding to it and going back to news workers as well being linked with the educational system. Just to show that they have actually broken down their operations into the television programme and the website. They tell you how they operate as journalists and give kids and teachers and whoever else goes on the website some insight. Thereby allowing kids to be more informed about the constructed nature of the news. There is a schedule every day that takes you to the editorial meetings and decision-making process, scanning other media, so [children] are aware that [the news] is not just a reflection of stuff happening out there but there's actually a team making a series of decisions along the way.

That's what I have been working on, with Stuart [Allan]. We're trying to explore this research avenue on which there hasn't yet been a whole lot done – looking at children's online feedback to on children's news sites (primarily BBC's *Newsround*) and how such news organisations are contributing to educational efforts around citizenship and also to raising children's awareness of how the media operate.

PROFESSOR ED CAIRNS

Ed Cairns: I crave your indulgence here because I am using today as an opportunity to talk about something which I haven't talked about in a long time, and some other things I have never talked about before. In the good old days [prior to the Research Assessment Exercise] you were able to follow your nose about things that you wanted to do: you don't get the same opportunity any more.

So once upon a time I was interested in children and the television news. My kids are grown up now but when the eldest one was about 4 or 5 we were walking through a local town – you know the way you talk to children at that age – and I said look at that old tumbledown house over there, I wonder what happened to that. And this small child said to me "Maybe a bomb did it". There hadn't been any bombs around here at that time. We didn't even know she knew about bombs. We thought we were bringing her up totally innocent of it all.

This would have been in 1976 and we didn't talk about things like this in front of her. I wondered how she knew about this, so that started me off on that. But anyway, once upon a time, the great thing about doing research on children and television in those days was first of all there was only one television in the whole house, and probably only two channels in Northern Ireland. Another thing, if your father said the news was on the news was on. And I did have some students, I remember, doing observations of kids. I mean, it wasn't that they [the children] were forced to watch, but it was probably the only room in the house where there was heating – that was another thing in Northern Ireland in those days – so the kids would be out playing and so on. It just happened one Christmas there was a story about a fuel delivery drivers' strike and this was going to close schools down: my students reported that kids playing in the corner with a reading book would suddenly whiz round and [watch the] television when this news item came on about school. So I did get the feeling that children were monitoring the news even if they weren't sitting down in their favourite armchair to watch it.

Psychologists like to measure things, but it was very difficult to find a good sort of metric about how often children watched the news. But in another little study we showed photographs of tumbledown houses and things [like that]. An undergraduate from London compared children in

Northern Ireland and children in London, and the children in Northern Ireland were much more likely to say 'bomb'. There were a few children in London who said it – that was 30 years after the Second World War. But one of the interesting things is that as the Troubles went along in Northern Ireland, the rest of the world, I think, got a little less interested, but the media here felt an obligation to report virtually every incident. Talking about the way Israelis monitored the news ... we were like that at one stage. I think we are a little less like that now. You'd listen to the news all the time because you weren't sure whether you could drive this way or that way because of 'suspect devices' on that road and not on that road. So you listened to [the news] all the time – and often you didn't notice you were doing it. So absolutely everything was reported, and I got to be interested as to whether children were following up on this. This is illustrated by the fact that when the Troubles started there were a lot of deaths due to political violence and then it sort of levelled out for a long time. It became constant violence and from early research I talk about in this period [which] as I say wasn't getting the world's attention – incidentally one of the lowest levels of violence was in the year of the ceasefires … as you will see it has been climbing since then.

So these were the sort of things we saw on television – marches, young people behind barricades, Free Derry. I was living down near Belfast and I was sick on my birthday. Bombs were going off. I remember I had to get home for a birthday party and I remember thinking will I drive down this way or that way. These were things we saw all the time. Often, probably, warnings were found. I don't know how they managed to be there to take photographs of the bomb going off but anyway they did.

What we hit on was that one of my relatives came back from Scotland. He said he couldn't get the Northern Irish news there. I said really. Then it dawned on me. I remember phoning a BBC engineer in Glasgow and saying "Is this true?" He said "Yes, sorry about that, we are working on it, we are trying to change it." I said "Don't do anything. Leave it like that." Because, what we did was, we then looked at children in Northern Ireland and children in Scotland who could only watch the news from Northern Ireland – that was the local news – and then children in Scotland who couldn't see the Northern Irish news. For those of you who don't know, you are up here and not very far across here is the Island of Isla in

Scotland. Which apart from being famous because of the research I did there also produces three or four single malt whiskies. Dublin, the capital of the Republic of Ireland, is away down there, so actually you are much closer to Scotland [here]. So we looked at the kids here and the kids up there who could see Northern Irish TV news and then the kids in another part of Scotland that couldn't and we did various things with them.

One thing that amused me most was that we hit on this idea of asking them to write a little story called "Here is the news" to finish off. I have to say the children entered into very readily: "There have been a lot of bombs in New Zealand" one child wrote – "I knew it was somewhere that began with an N but wasn't quite sure where." But what I like best was because in those days when you switched on the TV news no doubt there was a bomb went off and a bomb was defused. So this kid just wrote "a bomb let off in Belfast and that is the end of the news". He just summed it up perfectly. The point is we were able to show statistically that children in Northern Ireland and the children in Scotland with no violence around them, in a very peaceful part of the world were more likely to talk about bombs and things than the children in the other part of Scotland. So probably my four-year-old daughter had heard about bombs on the news after all.

Then things moved along. [In the 1990s] there was an awful lot of advertising around. We had a referendum on our peace process. So things got rather more political: we still had things happening. For example, these Orangemen marching down the Ormeau Road and these are the local inhabitants protesting by holding up black flags – it's a tit-for-tat thing. This was Holy Cross primary school – you remember where people tried to prevent children getting to school – and of course we still had the odd bit of violence. These are scenes from Omagh[3].

So there's still some violence on television and still some death [in Northern Ireland]: this is the period in which this research I am going to talk about was carried out, around 1999–2000, 2001, but there was more emphasis probably on politicians, local politicians that we ever had before. This was our first, it was a cabinet composed of people from

[3] Omagh, a town in Northern Ireland where a bomb planted by the Real IRA exploded in 1998, killing 29 people.

different parties – and although it's not part of what I want to say, it's interesting that if you look over here, this man seems to be looking at this man [in a negative way] and would you believe they are both from the same political party? So there is not a lot of togetherness there; but there were a lot of elections and stuff like that and I began to wonder: were children now learning something different? Just recently I had a student who asked children to draw pictures of Northern Ireland and pictures of Iraq. Half did one and half did the other, and all the Northern Ireland pictures are trees and green fields and so on, while the Iraq pictures are tanks and bombs and so on. So Northern Ireland's media to that extent has changed.

Someone else did [an experiment] where they showed children flags of the Republic of Ireland and the flag of the United Kingdom and asked them which flag they liked best. I had a student who did this but she added in flags of Canada, America and Wales and would you believe the children liked the stars and the stripes best of all, whether they were Protestants or Catholics. I am presuming that comes from the media somewhere.

We did a find-the-politicians test. We had 20 faces, 12 of whom were politicians – they are looking a bit younger. [We said] "I am going to ask two things: is this a politician and can you name him or her?" This seemed to work: kids certainly recognised the politicians but they found them much harder to name. We did this with young children and we did it with 17/18-year-olds. It's probably too easy to do it with 17/18-year-olds. We then developed a find-the-newsreader test: these are people from local television who at that time were reading the news and we asked children to name them. My simple idea was that if they could recognise or name a lot of politicians, and if they could recognise or name a lot of newsreaders, perhaps the two bits of information were coming from the same source. So we looked at 8 and 9-year-old children: Adams, Trimble, Paisley and McGuinness were the most recognised but these young children only really named Adams and Trimble. Paisley got just 11 per cent and McGuinness and the others dropped off into almost nothing. Of course we didn't penalise children for spelling – Trimble was spelt in all kinds of funny ways but if they had any sort of a stab at it at all we told them it didn't matter about spelling. But they clearly seemed to be

recognising these sorts of politicians. John Hume incidentally comes further down – it was quite surprising because he and Trimble both got the Nobel peace prize – but I think these are revolving around local elections. Gerry Adams wasn't part of the power sharing government but he was very much the spokesman for his party.

We did the same thing again with slightly older children. This time recognition was slightly higher and naming definitely higher; still not perfect by any means, but these 10 to 11-year-olds are much more likely to have a bash at naming the person. Then we did the same thing for newsreaders. … [This was] quite similar in a way for the younger children: recognition isn't too bad for the top four but naming is actually very poor apart from this one person who was named by about a quarter. For older children recognition goes up a little bit but naming is still very poor, but there is one thing that unites these people. They are all from UTV rather than the BBC: these are our two main local TV studios and they fight it out or they have their news coverage at slightly different times. In 1999, 2000 and 2001 they hadn't thought of *The School Around the Corner* but he maybe presented the weather sometimes as well. It was maybe a mistake to include him: his name is Frank Mitchell. But I thought it was interesting that they all came from UTV – even the older children were really not much better. Older children learn to recognise both newsreaders and politicians and some of them are able to name politicians, but I thought it was interesting that they were actually worse at naming the newsreaders. That surprised me because after all the newsreaders are on the TV all the time.

The other thing we looked at was how these things were correlated. For the younger children there was quite a healthy correlation between naming a newsreader and naming a politician. Recognising was still positive so that's suggesting that there is some relationship. The surprising thing was that for the older children, naming was slightly worse and recognition was about the same. I am hoping someone is going to tell me what that means. The older children have got another source perhaps for learning about politicians – perhaps they are more likely to look at newspapers.

So is there a role for media in citizenship education? We are in the middle of an election in the UK at the moment, people seem to be talking about

the media more often, that's a turn-off at least for adults that you get so much news about politicians. But at least this may be a way of educating young children. What I would like to do – except the RAE will not permit me until I have retired – is to do something like that say in the year before an election and then the year during the election and really see if there's a difference.

PROFESSOR JEAN WHYTE; KAREN TREW

Karen Trew: Jean Whyte is very sorry she couldn't come and she phoned me up in desperation; the Minister is coming to the launch of one of their reports from the Children's Research Centre and her director's away and she had to do it. So I am giving this paper on behalf of Jean Whyte. I don't work with Jean Whyte. But I knew about this project because it's been ongoing since she was in Belfast. She has basically been concerned with factors contributing to the development of social intelligence and children's knowledge of conflict. She has been interested in the kind of intelligence which enables the development of expertise for working on the task of social life - the area where you need to know what knowledge people have of society. So her connection with the media is coming from the social intelligence perspective because she wanted to know where children acquired their knowledge - what aspect of the media. Particularly she has been interested in the conflicts in Northern Ireland, although this is meant to be a view from the South. Her research was carried out in Northern Ireland and Southern Ireland from the period 1981 to 1998 so she actually did work in Belfast, Dublin and London and she did it longitudinally. What she was interested in was the extent that young children are interested excessively in the media as opposed to other ways of spending their free time ... So she is comparing 12 year olds at one point in time with children from the same schools at the same age ten years later. She said would you expect 12 year olds in the same location 11 or 12 years later to have to same or different degrees of exposure of the media, so she is able to look at questions like this. So this is her research. It's in 3 phases; it's very interesting research. She has got books and articles out of it. In 1981 she had a cohort of 12 year olds in east Belfast, west Belfast, London and Dublin. She said London is not being reported here but she does report a bit on London. Phase 2 then she went back to the same schools with another cohort of children in 1992 we see very

different conditions. She got more research money in 1997/1998 when in Dublin … she was able to follow up both groups so she had someone trace them so the 1981 people …were 27 and the 1992 people were 17. Fantastic study. This is the sample she was able to follow up. What she did was questionnaires completed in their schools, when they were still at school and for the older ones they were interviewed in hotels by her researcher. The east Belfast [ones] were as far as I know Protestants and west Belfast was Catholic, both areas were economically disadvantaged and it was a very long questionnaire and all we are going to do here is look at a very few questions: this is her paper.

[What follows is Jean Whyte's paper, which was read by Karen Trew]

Research from the Republic of Ireland on children, media, conflict

The topic of this seminar is children, media, and conflict. My research can, I think, contribute somewhat indirectly to the discussion in that in that I can report some findings in relation to the media and children and some of the findings touch on children's awareness of conflict through the media. My research was however basically concerned with factors contributing to the development of social intelligence as an aspect of identity in the individual.

Social intelligence has been defined as that kind of intelligence which enables the development of expertise for working on the tasks of social life in which social goals are especially salient. Social intelligence has been seen as composed of at least two elements - declarative knowledge and procedural knowledge (Cantor and Kihlstrom, 1987). Declarative knowledge is interpreted as being the individual's static concepts about other people, social situations and themselves which help them to make sense of social events and procedural knowledge involves dynamic processes such as forming impressions of people, making attributions about causes of events and predicting the likely events in a social situation. This is where the connection with the media comes in because some of this knowledge comes through the media - newspapers, magazines, books, television, video, radio. And the media covers current events among which in the last 35 years or so has included the situation of conflict in Northern Ireland. So, some of the findings in relation to the contribution of the media to the development of social intelligence are of relevance for this

seminar on media, conflict and children - since my research was carried out in Ireland North and South over the period 1981–1998, a period of conflict with greater and lesser degrees of intensity in Northern Ireland.

And while the title of this paper focuses on research in the Republic, it is true that my research was partly about the Republic and the latter stages were conducted from the Republic, but the research was actually about participants on both sides of the border and the comparisons are interesting and I think relevant, so they are included in this presentation.

How conflict as represented in the media may have an effect on children is indeed a topic of great relevance because presumably it can shape their attitudes and perhaps eventually their behaviour whether or not they actually live in the location in which the conflict is taking place.

What is also of relevance and is indeed a prerequisite for an effect to happen is

- the extent of children and young people's interest in accessing the media as opposed to other ways of spending their free time,
- the amount of time they spend accessing the media,
- the particular events which attract their attention,
- the kinds of media they access *and*
- the frequency with which they access them.

We can find out about these factors. They are factual and some of my findings cover these very issues….

There are questions of space, time and cohort. Take space for example: Do 12 year olds in one location, say a location where conflict is taking place, area A, we'll say, tend to access the media to the same extent as children in another location, area B, we'll say, where there is no conflict? When accessing it do they focus on items of purely local interest – i.e. to do with the conflict – or do they notice items of what you might call wider import? Do children in area B who have access to media that portrays the situation of conflict in an area not their own tend to be attracted by items relating to the conflict in that location, or are they more interested in other items?

The answers to those questions will be relevant for the development of social intelligence for if the children in area A are more or less transfixed by items relating to the conflict, they will be missing out on other kinds of items and information which in turn would be contributing to their declarative and procedural knowledge. The children in area B who are not subject to the conflict situation in their own area and who might be accessing a wider variety of items and information might be expected to have a higher level of social intelligence.

In terms of historical time: if 12 year olds at one point in time have a certain degree of exposure to and interest in the media, would you expect this to be the case for 12 year olds in that location at all points in time? For example, would you expect 12 year olds in the same locations 11 or 12 years later, to have the same or differing degrees of exposure to and interest in the media as the previous cohort? If they have, it would probably mean that conditions in the environment external to the children had remained the same and the opportunities to develop social intelligence had not changed. If they have not then what are the implications for social intelligence – opportunities for development or for constraint?

In terms of cohort: would you expect any differences between cohorts to persist over time and to manifest themselves, perhaps, in other ways? For example, say if cohort A – the older cohort – had particular preferences in terms of newspapers read or TV programmes watched or the numbers who accessed newspapers or television or who remembered items of local interest and they differed from those of cohort B, a younger cohort, would you expect these preferences to be evident still in the teenage and adult years and to be manifested for example through attitudes to the importance of knowing about current affairs? – Again with implications for social intelligence and the exposure of individuals to differing kinds of media presentation.

My research was carried out in three phases:
Phase 1: 1981 – a cohort of 12 year olds (EB, WB, L, D) (London not being reported here)
Phase 2: 1992 – another cohort of 12 year olds in the same schools
Phase 3: 1997-98 - a follow up of the earlier cohorts with some additional 17 year olds in Dublin.

It could also be described as having two waves with a follow up for each wave.

Totals in the study:

Wave 1: 1982 (age 12)				**1997-8 (age 27-8)**		
	F	***M***	***Total***	***F***	***M***	***Total***
E. Belfast	41	34	75	20	14	34
W. Belfast	49	47	96	15	26	41
Dublin	51	56	111	30	26	56
Wave 2 1992 (age 12)				**1997-8 (age 17-18)**		
	F	***M***	***Total***	***F***	***M***	***Total***
E. Belfast	64	56	120	44	24	68
W. Belfast	52	78	130	61	44	105
Dublin	44	71	115	64	74	138

Questionnaires were completed by participants in their schools while they were still at school and the 27-28 year olds were contacted individually and completed the questionnaires with the researcher. The schools served socio-economically disadvantaged areas and the same schools were involved in all the waves and all the phases. The questionnaires covered a range of topic areas, some of which have been written up elsewhere.

The questions of interest for the present paper are as follows:

- What do children and young people like to do in their free time and to what extent is accessing the media part of this?
- About how much time per week does that represent?
- Which newspapers do they read?
- Which programmes on television do they watch? Do they watch the news?
- What kinds of information do they glean from the news in newspapers and on television?
- To what extent do they report items related to the NI conflict?
- Which has more impact – newspapers or television?
- How do they rate the importance of knowing about current affairs – locally and internationally?

- Do the answers to these questions differ according to time, space and cohort?
- What are the implications for social intelligence?

. . .

Discussion:

The findings of a greater interest in local affairs in Belfast than in Dublin or London at age 12 could of course simply be a reflection of the kind of items reported on the television screens. Events affecting the Belfast children's everyday lives were more likely to come up on NI television news and it is likely therefore that they watched with greater interest. Or it could simply be that because of trouble on the streets which, especially in 1981, sometimes included rioting, barricades, ambushes, they were more confined to the house than children elsewhere with nothing else to do but watch the news.

Since Northern Ireland items frequently dominated the television news, it is not surprising that the children in Northern Ireland were more aware of them in 1982 and 1992. Such items also appear on the Dublin and London-based channels, but the Dublin children were considerably more aware of Northern Ireland items than were the London children. It is possible that their television screens carried more news of Northern Ireland than did the screens of the London children. And it could be due also to an interest arising from group identity and a feeling that Northern Ireland was closer than the rest of the world. But that would not explain why the Dublin children were just as aware of United Kingdom-related items as the Belfast children and as aware of international-type items as the London children.

The findings would seem to indicate a different approach to reading the newspapers on the part of the Belfast children at age 12, perhaps a more focused one, in that specific items may have caught their attention and they pursued those rather than generally scanning the pages. This approach could be related to the choice of newspapers available to them to read and to the events which were being given prominence at the time. As we have seen, a much higher percentage of children in Belfast than elsewhere had read locally produced newspapers, which tend to give greater space to local news

items and this could explain why they remembered such items rather than others.

If it had been a function of the salience of Northern Ireland events in the news in general one might have expected children in the other locations to have also recalled items related to Northern Ireland, as they would have figured prominently in the national newspapers produced in London and Dublin. But Northern Ireland-related items hardly figured in the responses of the Dublin and London children at all. If it had been a function of an inherent interest in local events by virtue of being at a 12 year old stage of development, one would have expected the Dublin and London children to show similar degrees of awareness of events local to themselves. But this was not the case. The overwhelming interest of Belfast children in Northern Ireland-related matters was something special in 1981.

In addition, the finding that more of the Dublin and London groups than of the Belfast children showed an awareness of non-local events could be interpreted as indicating that these groups had moved beyond a concern with local events to an awareness of the wider stage of world happenings; that they had moved beyond the local arena as the centre of their interest towards the periphery and perhaps how it might ultimately affect the centre. Unlike the Northern Ireland children who read about locally relevant Northern Ireland events, then 'crimes and deaths' and then headlines, more of the Dublin and London children were showing an awareness of and an interest in specific happenings outside their own locality.

Trends over time - explanations?

Several explanations are possible for the shifts in Dublin and Belfast among the 12 year olds. One is that more of the Belfast children were reading non-local newspapers. As reported above, slightly more of the Northern Ireland children in 1992 than in 1981 were reading London-based tabloids which have a wider and very different baseline of interest from that of local Northern Ireland newspapers. It is possible that fewer items of purely local Northern Ireland interest were reported in these papers. The decline in the awareness shown by Belfast children in NI matters between 1981 and 1992 could therefore be due to what they were reading and to the kinds of events being reported. The importance of the kinds of events which were being

reported becomes more obvious when we consider the interests of the Dublin children in local matters in 1992.

Perhaps the explanation of the Belfast figures is that less was going on in 1992 than in 1981 and less publicity was being given to NI events in the newspapers in 1981 than in 1992. This would be supported by the figures on deaths and injuries alone resulting from the 'Troubles' which were much lower in 1992 than in 1981. The lessening impact of NI news items might have been expected to encourage an advance in cognitive competence and social intelligence as the children would no longer have been overwhelmed by the flow of incidents being reported on Northern Ireland and would have been freer to take an interest in wider issues. This was perhaps supported by the higher percentage who said that they read 'headlines' thus gaining a broader view of current happenings. And this advance might be reflected in their level of general knowledge about politics. But we would also have expected to see a greater interest in specific international or non-local events to compensate for the reduced awareness of NI events. That was not the case.

The increased awareness of the Dublin children in 1992 in local events was probably a function of the general election. But it was interesting that more of them at both time points were interested in non-local events than was the case for the other groups and that fewer of them just read 'headlines'. A possible explanation along the same lines as that advanced for the Belfast children would suggest that they felt sufficiently at ease with their own situation to be able to take an interest in events outside it and they took an in-depth interest, not simply the more superficial one of skimming the headlines.

Impact of television versus newspaper reports

Whereas there had been a decrease overall in the percentages mentioning items read in the newspapers over the time period studied for the 12 yr olds, there was an increase overall for those mentioning current affairs items seen on the television news reflecting the increase in viewing recorded earlier. Television appears to make more of an impact in this respect than newspapers - the number of responses for this question were far higher than for the newspaper question. In addition the responses giving this kind of

item were far higher for the television question. In fact, children in all locations in both 1981 and 1992 were more likely to recall items of local interest to themselves than other current affairs items from television news to a greater extent than from newspapers. At the older ages we don't have the data from this study to compare the impact of television news as distinct from newspaper news.

Now this could be explained in a number of ways – the effects of historical time in terms of what was actually going on at the time – the level of conflict if you like, the kinds of items reported, the way in which they are reported, the intensity with which they are reported, the amount of media time/space devoted to them – and of course we could easily be having a cross-over effect here with people misremembering items from one medium or the other.

What are the implications for social intelligence?

Our original question in this chapter asked if the children in Northern Ireland were open to opportunities for mind-broadening experiences through the media which differed in range from those available to children elsewhere and which might be having an effect on the development of their ability to process diverse information with implications for their cognitive functioning. Results suggested that the scores of 12 year olds on access to events reported in the media, was higher than that of children in London and Dublin in both 1981 and 1992 and that they should therefore have been exposed to even better opportunities for mind-broadening experiences than their peers in Dublin and London. But the kinds of items they were interested in, which were possibly contingent on the quality of the news to which they had access, were much more limited than those mentioned by the children from Dublin and London.

It could be that the kinds of access to information offered to them was closing off options rather than opening up possibilities. It was inevitable probably that locally based media should concentrate on local events, but it looks as though this might have been at the expense of broader issues. The effects appeared to be a narrower range of interests in, and a lesser awareness of events, outside their own immediate environment on the part of the Belfast children and also a lower appreciation of the importance of knowing about current affairs both nationally and internationally at the later

ages of 17 and 27. The cognitive consequences of this diminished exposure could have been that the Belfast children had less chance of developing cognitive strategies for processing and integrating more complex information. The open-systems adaptation model sees personality development as a complex of different processes through which the major systems of personality become fixed to situations as a function of experience with those situations (Hettema, 1989) and applying it to the Northern Ireland situation one can see how these findings could explain greater rigidity, more conformity, in the Northern Ireland psyche than in that of the Republic.

A final interesting finding for discussion is the possible relationship between attitudes towards the media in terms of access and memory of items at age 12 and ratings of the importance of knowing about current events at later stages which has been found to be related to other aspects of politically relevant behaviour and attitudes (Whyte, 1999, JSI, 2004)

AFTERNOON DISCUSSION

Máire M. Davies: The sort of discussion that we would like to have is [to] identify some questions which we could take away with us. Firstly what's the role of the media in a positive and negative sense in children's perception of conflict: do the media make things worse, does watching representations of violence – whether you are involved in it personally or whether you are at a distance –make it worse or can it help? This is something that we could address as researchers, and following on from that, what research questions still need to be addressed coming out of today? Are there things arising out of today that we think we need to know more about? And the third thing [is] what can psychologists and media studies scholars learn from each other through these questions, and are there ways of bringing these disciplines together in joint research projects of various kinds?

Andrew Hill, **Centre for Media Research at the University of Ulster**. I have been thinking about photography recently and its relationship to conflict and war, and two or three people have [talked] about photography and the way the camera depicts things is that it actually lets you see with a sort of intimacy and in a way that you wouldn't be able to see normally.

… Isn't there a sense that these media present children with visions of conflict, visions of war of a nature that even if they are in a conflict zone they wouldn't see in such an intimate way, in such a horrific way, if the media weren't representing it in those terms? I realise this is a contentious question but I just wondered what people thought about that.

Máire M. Davies: Are you saying you think media might exaggerate the conflict?

Andrew Hill: Not necessarily exaggerate – but they actually let people see things in their everyday lives, even if they are in a conflict zone, that they wouldn't maybe see in such detail, in such a lurid fashion, in such intimacy: there's a sense that they make things look worse. I'm not saying this is actually right or wrong, I'm just saying what have other people written about that? What do people think is it completely wrong or is there a certain truth to that?

Audience member: One of the things said in the last decade [is that] up to 20 years ago, the newspapers and television in the UK were censored and we didn't see things in lurid detail. I don't know when that shift occurred and why it occurred [but] we never saw dead bodies.

Audience member: When there was a bomb in Oxford Street bus station, [Belfast] if you remember, the local media caused a furore because they showed a fireman shovelling a body or the remains of a body into a bag, and after that there was such a fuss about that we never saw any images like that again. There was a debate about it at the time, but not a very big one, as to whether this is a good thing or a bad thing. So although we did see these things it was very rarely, apart from that one occasion …

Audience member: There was a very big debate, I'm less familiar with the other broadcasting channels but it was a big debate both in Belfast and in London, and there was a debate with broadcasting people – I was one of the professional broadcasters – about the moral position that the broadcaster should take in showing what a body looks like blown to bits, when the viewers would say that that was my mum or whatever. It was debated very thoroughly. It wasn't just here, there were debates going on in Beirut and many of the conflicts worldwide. The BBC would broadcast

from those places and those local broadcasters there were debating the same sort of issues. There were different positions taken by local broadcasters.

Peter Lemish: I was going to say a few comments in relation to this. We have the same debate in Israel in terms of changing norms and ethical practices of journalism etc. Two things: one, I think we have to remember that news coverage has to be understood in the context of the change in media interest in general, with changing norms of presentational films and Internet sites and what children are seeing today in terms of fiction; we can't just talk about the norms of what is happening in the news. You have to take into account that children see all kinds of things. The second comment I want to make is that I think your question hits exactly the point, there aren't really right or wrong answers to whether media or news coverage is helping or worsening the situation, because one approach says that children are seeing horrifying things on the news [and] yes its terrible, its causing them fear. At the same time we can see it the other way around: if you see the horrific side of conflict then they have to see it's horrible, and yes it's terrible, it's painful, it's frightening, but it's the truth. So there is no good answer. I think it's really a mixed thing – it depends on who the child is and on what the media coverage is and on the mediating voices of parents, family.

Andrew Hill: Sure, what I am partly driving at, though, it that this sort of media sets up a way of seeing conflicts and people [who] experience conflict don't see [it] in visual terms; you don't necessarily see things in a very focused detailed way when you are part of the conflict that the media let you see.

Sami Adwan: I would like to pick up on this issue also. At a certain time I think media will become our reference of where to go and where not to go – here, Ed was talking about that today. [With] a complete siege and curfew in Bethlehem, we all refer to the media to know when the curfew will end. In that course of waiting, we have to listen – the children, too, of course because they want to know if tomorrow there will be school or no school – we have to listen to the local TV to see if the curfew will be lifted or still exists. So is it a matter of need that we listen to the media or is it a matter of choice? That's really very important. When we were under

that situation; we were all glued to the media because we wanted to listen to something.

The other thing is it depends what side of the conflict you are on. It's maybe more likely that the side being victimised listens to the media, giving a kind of evidence of their suffering. People become totally in need of it because people notice the suffering and the subjugation to all kinds of conflict aspects of the situation. In the country – I am talking about Palestine – when the conflict is at a high peak and there is nothing reported in the media, we start questioning what kind of media do we have? Does it really represent the people and the living conditions? In this direction I have an almost conflictual dialogue with my brother-in-law, who is the Director General of the Palestinian Satellite Station at Ramallah, saying 'Can't you stop just showing these pictures to the children?' He told me that they get calls from people and they want to know what is going on; hundreds and hundreds of calls asking why people aren't reporting what is happening. So some part of the population asks the media to give something. The second point of what he said was that if we don't report it, what would our job be? Our job in the media is to report these things, even if people don't like it. So as you said there is no one position. You have to take it in a contextual framework. But, the victimizer side does not like media, they put pressure on media not to report, they harass reporters, forbid them from entering the conflict zones and in many cases confiscate or damage their cameras or videos. In cases reporters were shot at, injured or even killed. This is because they do not want the world to know their acts of violence, war crimes and their violation of human rights.

The other thing we talked about was the media in a war zone, in conflict and war; but there are also conflicts that are practised by the police and security men. There is a lot to be commented on. There are street gangs or mafias; there is violence in schools and you see pictures, teachers beating a child or a husband or wife beating each other. These are reports of the conflict [with a] social, educational perspective. I think the issue, to a certain extent, is not to avoid to seeing scenes of conflict, it's more a matter of how to help children to be less affected by these scenes. There are millions of dollars invested in such media; it's a choice between immunisation or just going into prevention medicines. There is a big fight

between these. What happens we find – people like psychologists and social scientists – is that there is big investment in such media, and the media get more financial support if they have more viewers. It's a really complicated issue. People need the documentation of media either for reconciliation or for trial purposes. People have the right to know what had happened to their ancestors or neighbours.

I would like to ask one question to you. [Depending on whether] the producer is male or female, will there be a difference on what they show on the TV?

Máire M. Davies: Let's ask a female with knowledge of broadcasting.

Audience member: I wasn't a producer; I was a lay person in the BBC, on the Broadcasting Council. I don't think I could just divide it down straight gender lines. I think one of the things that happened here was that the best investigative journalism for quite a long time happened from people who usually came from [other parts of] the UK, and sometimes from Europe – although we very often didn't see the European programmes. That was for two reasons: one was that local journalists were often intimidated if they did investigative journalism or documentary programmes that looked under particular issues let's just say of conflict or violence. There used to be jokes about people flying in, staying in the Europa, walking up the Shankill and down the Falls and doing a programme and leaving again. But there were serious challenges for local journalists and I think that local journalists got very courageous and did some very courageous documentaries – and that included both men and women. The subject matter might have been slightly different initially but in fact anybody who has been trained in journalism has probably gone through the same school, and the gender issue doesn't really arise.

Máire M. Davies: Could I ask Colm who trains journalists about these issues of professional practice, on whether it makes a difference if you're male or female, local or national?

Colm Murphy, Lecturer in Journalism, University of Ulster: I don't think there is a difference between male and female. You might get this more in Israel and in Palestine, but I think certainly from my experience

that the females who reach senior editorial positions or producers tend to be harder than men. To get up the hierarchy in what had tended to be male-dominated type media they tend to be harder. Maybe in the Middle East it might be slightly different. Was there anything else you wanted me to address? What's an interesting thing – looking at children in Dublin and looking at Northern Ireland more – and that is that you have to consider other factors. If you look in Dublin, for the last 20 years they have cable TV, so they would watch the Northern Ireland news from Belfast and they would also get UTV as well as Euro news. So that could be one of the factors that would mean that they would get more than in Northern Ireland. That's got to become more important as you get a proliferation of channels and people have more chance to see different channels.
...

Ed Cairns: There is one study carried out in Kuwait directly implicating television in post-traumatic stress disorder in children and that is because, as I understand it, when the Iraqis invaded they did carry out some public executions which were actually shown on television. Even though parents kept children in their homes, children saw these on television, it was later reported anyway – and it was quite a good study. These children were living right in the city but if it hadn't been for television they wouldn't have seen what was going on maybe only a mile or two from their homes. But they saw it, and it wasn't good for them.

Máire M. Davies: Could I just ask about that, the question I would want to know [the answer to] is would this increase the political resentment? It's not just about traumatising the child – as it would me, seeing somebody beheaded – but does that stoke up grievances, by seeing very explicit images of the other guy hurting your guy. Is that something that is contributing to the political polarization?

Dafna Lemish: [There is] evidence from Israel: there has been some research on the coverage of terrorist attacks – not the recent ones but those in the 1980s and '90s – and there is evidence such as that the more explicit the coverage was of terrorist attacks, the more stronger the voting was for the right-wing Sharon party rather than the Labour Party. And as a matter of fact when Shimon Peres lost the election in 1996, one of the arguments that was at least supported by research, was that it had to do

with explicit coverage of the terrorist attacks. So that would support your suggestion that possibly showing too much detail, too gory detail, too much highlighting of the terrible acts and atrocities carried out by your enemy strengthened more extremist voting behaviours. The argument in Israel [is that] the media has often been blamed, like in other places in the world, for being too leftist in Israeli terms, being too supportive of the peace process and not critical enough. But another argument is that it's the other way around, that the media might *think* of itself as being leftist but, if it covers the terrorist attacks with such exaggeration, dwelling again and again and again, the 'disaster marathon' that I mentioned before, then it's really supporting the right wing rather than the left wing.

Peter Lemish: The photograph of the bomb exploding is rather unique. We generally see the consequences of an act of terrorism. Very rarely is the camera there to catch the entire event. What we see in Israel is the consequences that are played over and over again. The same scenes are repeated not in sequence, they are cut and pasted and so if you try and analyse the texts it's really a very complicated process. Just to mention a way of trying to understand the complexity of this, the evidence that I have that I wanted is a very good documentary that was done about the first Intifada. It was called *Testimonies*. This was basically a set of interviews conducted by clinical psychologists [with] military officers and enlisted soldiers and reservists who were involved in a variety of oppressive and very violent events, from simply road blocks all the way to very oppressive and violent events against Palestinians. These were interviews that were conducted to have them speak about these incidents. It was done with a person sitting in front of a black screen, and the criticism of it was it was a very condemnatory and very accusative kind of film. Interspliced in this film were two sequences of actual conducting of violence against Palestinians from the beginning to the end. This was during the time of Rabin's policy of breaking bones which was [that] if a Palestinian was seen to be some kind of a threat, that he might be involved in some kind of violent action, you could actually capture him and break a bone. That was the policy. None of this was shown, no one saw this except for two sequences of film I am aware of that were captured by foreign broadcasters. The sequences were interspliced into the film. When I showed this film to middle high school and high school students, the same results always happened. About a third of the students would get up:

the first time that the actual footage of a violent act was shown, they would get up and leave the room or they would start crying.

Andrew Hill: Why did they leave the room, was it in protest?

Peter Lemish: They couldn't stand that this was actual footage that was being shown of an act of violence. Now sometimes the act of violence –I'll just give you an example – was [when] a soldier took a stone and hit a Palestinian's arm.

Sami Adwan: It was not only a soldier, they were three soldiers together breaking the arms of three Palestinian children at that time: one is holding the arms and the others beating them with big stones.

Peter Lemish: It's very famous footage. This takes place and they sit there, it goes on for about two minutes. They (the children watching) sit there for about 30 seconds and they we start hearing rumblings and "Why do we have to see this?" and "Don't show me this anymore". The first time I saw this kind of reaction I was saying to myself, well this is an interesting situation. They've seen many more violent scenes and fictional accounts and that doesn't seem to bother them, but when it is actual footage, then it really is very disturbing for them. I just want to make two comments. The first is that during both Intifadas, there was very little actual coverage of what was going on in the Intifada. We see the terrorist attacks and we see the outcomes of those terrorist attacks but one of the criticisms is that we don't see what we are doing to the Palestinians. It's not news any more, all the scenes that you saw in Sami's initial set of photos are not things that we generally see on Israel television unless there is some kind of very specific event, for [example] a road block. So [we] don't have exposure to them. These were not allowed to be shown on Israeli television, these two sequences that I'm talking about. [Israelis] have very little exposure to the actual footage of the conflict. What they see are results. The example that Dafna gave, seeing the results of terrorist attacks during the election: you have only part of the images. I think that Sami is absolutely right about this asymmetry issue, it's really important to look at where you are situated in relationship to the conflict. I think that Jewish Israelis don't know what's going on in the Intifada, don't know the daily events, don't know what's going on with the wall, only when there

is some sort of policy decision in relation to it. So we could make the argument, as Dafna pointed out, that we should be looking for more of this kind of reporting by the news about what's going on. After almost 20 years of road blocks, the first film about what's been going on in the road blocks was made just two years ago, even less I think.

Dafna Lemish: Just to balance it off, I think Sami would agree with me – at least I heard when I attended a conference with Palestinian journalists – that the same argument is made for the other side. From what we know of covering war, and Stuart [Allan] is more an expert here than I am, each side does not cover the misery and suffering of the other side, and to the best of my knowledge Palestinian TV is not going to show bodies of Israelis been blown up by terrorist attacks. This kind of unfair coverage is true for both sides. Of course I am not making a comparison in terms of justifying it, just to say that this is common practice – you always humanise and personalise the suffering of your own side and you just ignore the suffering of the other side.

Máire M. Davies: Can I just say at that is not actually the case in Northern Ireland. The BBC [or UTV] is not supposed to be on anybody's side and so one expects the BBC to show both sides, but what that tends to lead to – and I will hand over to Ed, he has been here longer than me – is the sense that it's hopeless. There's one side then the other side, there is no real source of an argument that can be resolved. That's the impression that this endlessly balanced reporting certainly gives to me.

Ed Cairns: When the Troubles started at first Protestants particularly who were of a certain generation, who remembered the BBC as being 'their BBC' who was on their side during 'The War', in other words the Second World War, were just hurt – I think that was probably was the word, certainly incensed – that the BBC then apparently at times showed the other side sympathetically. Certainly many Protestants thought that the BBC should always be on their side. That didn't happen in the beginning – I have an uncle, he's elderly now but he was in his 50s back when the Troubles started, and that was the only one and only time in his life he phoned the BBC to complain. It was obviously because they weren't properly biased.

Andrew Hill: In the light of what you are saying about how one side doesn't represent the harm done to the other side, maybe that's one of the things that has to happen before reconciliation can take place. One of the signs that reconciliation is taking place is that one side can represent the harm it has done to the other side and say, yes this took place.

Audience member: [In terms of future research questions] I'm looking at programmes for young people, so it may not be a deep enough research question, but we have a generation now for whom the Troubles are actually history and most of the approaches here have been kind of affirmative, positive, ignoring contemporary events; the way contemporary events have been analysed has been mostly in textbooks and not actually in the media. You would have to devise a question I guess, but I would be very interested in looking at the 12 to 17-year-olds at secondary school who have very little experience of the Troubles but are still being influenced by the images of many of the things that are common worldwide –it can be a cross cultural study – and how that is still affecting their partisan affections now and therefore how those might be addressed.

Christel McMullan, School of Communication, University of Ulster, Jordanstown campus: We are actually doing a study on young people between 16 and 24. The study is not really about media but the media have come up at some point. In part of the study I asked them questions about sectarianism and how they are feel about people from the other side. Many young people have said to me that they are scared of the other side and when I asked them why, they can't give me a reason except that they look at the TV – last week a Protestant was killed by a Catholic and vice versa. They look at TV news reports or whatever and they think it's true and they generalise everything from what they see on TV. They are scared of the other side because of what they see on TV.

LIST OF ATTENDERS AT COLLOQUIUM

TITLE	NAME	SURNAME	SCHOOL/DEPT	UNIVERSITY/ORG	ADDRESS 1	TOWN	POSTCODE	E-MAIL
Dr	Stuart	Allan	School of Cultural Studies	University of the West of England	Coldharbour Lane	Bristol	B516 1QY	
Mr	M	Appleton			25 Bathgate Drive	Belfast	BT4 2BA	
Dr	G	Baylis	School of Media and Performing Arts	University of Ulster	South Buildings	Coleraine	I	g.baylis@ulster.ac.uk
Ms	A	Bryan	Peace & Reconciliation Group		18/20 Bishop Street	Londonderry	BT48 6PW	allison@peaceprg.co.uk
Dr.	Cynthia	Carter	Cardiff School of Journalism	Bute Building	King Edward VII Avenue	Cardiff	CF10 3NB	
Ms	Anne	Crilly	School of Media and Performing Arts	ROOM D007	University of Ulster	Coleraine campus		am.crilly@ulster.ac.uk
Ms	M	Crozier		Community Relations Council	6 Murray Street	Belfast	BT1 6DN	mcrozier@community-relations.org.uk
Dr	A	Davis	School of Media and Performing Arts	University of Ulster	South Buildings	Coleraine	INTERNAL	a.divis@ulster.ac.uk
Dr	D	Dickson	School of Communication	Room 17E08	University of Ulster	Jordanstown Campus		da.dickson@ulster.ac.uk
Dr.	Neil	Ferguson	Psychology	Liverpool Hope	Hope Park	Liverpool	L16 9JD	
Dr	Andrew	Hill	School of Media and Performing Arts	ROOM C206	University of Ulster	Coleraine campus		aeph@aeph82.fsnet.co.uk
Ms	Helen	Kielt			25 Bathgate Drive	Belfast	BT4 2BA	Fergusn@hope.ac.uk
Ms	Rae	Kirk	WAVE Trauma Centre	13 Castlecroft	Main Street	Ballymoney	BT53 7HU	
Ms	Carmel	Lewis	Social Study Conference		c/o 189 Culmore Road	Derry	BT48 8JH	carmeltlewis@aol.com

Ms	Ann	Marshall	CCEA	29 Clarendon Rd	Clarendon Dock	Belfast	BT1 3BG	
Ms	C	McAuley	CCEA	29 Clarendon Rd	Clarendon Dock	Belfast	BT1 3BG	cmcauley@ccea.org.uk
Dr	T	McClintock	BBRU	School of Life & Health Sciences	University of Ulster	Coleraine campus		t.mcclintock@ulster.ac.uk
Dr.	C.	McGlynn		Stranmillis University College	Stransmillis Road	Belfast	BT9 5DY	c.mcglynn@stran.ac.uk
Dr.	Frances	McLernon	School of Psychology	University of Ulster	Coleraine campus	Coleraine	BT52 1SA	fmla.mclernon@ulster.ac.uk
Ms	C	McMullan	School of Communication		University of Ulster	Jordanstown		c.mcmullan@ulster.ac.uk
Dr.	Ulrike	Niens	School of Education	University of Ulster	Coleraine campus	Coleraine	BT52 1SA	ucp.niens@ulster.ac.uk
Ms	MT	O'Hagan	WAVE Trauma Centre		5 Chichester Park South	Belfast	BT15 5DW	
Ms	S	O'Hagan	School of Communication		University of Ulster	Jordanstown		s.ohagan@ulster.ac.uk
Ms	K	Phillips			144 Longley Road	London	SW17 9LH	katherinephillips@yahoo.co.uk
Dr	R	Porter	School of Media and Performing Arts	University of Ulster	South Buildings	Coleraine	INTERNAL	r.porter@ulster.ac.uk
Dr	J	Reilly	School of Education	Room B103	University of Ulster	Coleraine campus		j.reilly@ulster.ac.uk
Ms	M	Riddels	WAVE Trauma Centre		5 Chichester Park South	Belfast	BT15 5DW	
Dr	Andy	White	School of Media and Performing Arts	ROOM C206	University of Ulster	Coleraine campus		ap.white@ulster.ac.uk
Prof	Sami	Adwan	Faculty of Education	University of Bethlehem		Palestine		sadwan@bethlehem.edu
Prof	Dafna	Lemish	Chair, Dept of	Communication	Tel Aviv University	Israel		lemish@post.tau.ac.il

Dr	Peter	Lemish	Department of Communication	Tel Aviv University		Israel		lemish@post.tau.ac.il
Dr	Karen	Trew	Psychology	Queen's University		Belfast	BT7 1NN	
Prof	Ed	Cairns	School of Psychology	University of Ulster		Coleraine campus		e.cairns@ulster.ac.uk
Prof	Maire	Messenger Davies	Director, Centre for Media Research	University of Ulster		Coleraine campus		m.messenger-davies@ulster.ac.uk
Ms	Barbara	Curran		Queen's University		Belfast		Barbara@peacepapers.com

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In the School of Media & Performing Arts
At the University of Ulster
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Coleraine BT52 1SA
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