CULTURAL CONTEXT AND CHILDREN'S PERCEPTIONS OF CONFLICT AND PEACE

Chris Coughlin[1], Gloysis Mayers[2], Jesse Dizard[1], Judy Bordin[1]

Email: ccoughlin@csuchico.edu

[1]Department of Child Development Program, and Anthropology, California State University, Chico CA, USA

[2]College of Education, Zayed University, Dubai Campus, Dubai, United Arab Emirates

ABSTRACT

This is a cross cultural comparison of children's perceptions of conflict and peace. Thirty children, age 6-10 living in the United States and 33 children, of the same age living in the United Arab Emirates were interviewed and asked to respond to 18 questions concerning war, enemy, and peace. Analysis of responses included assessment of sex, culture, and age similarities and differences. Findings indicate that culture plays a prominent role in the way children experience their world and world events. The findings of this study support taking a cultural context focus towards understanding children's perceptions and using such insight in helping children learn cooperation and acceptance of others knowing that children see the world from the context in which they live.

Keywords: Cross Cultural Comparison, Children's Perceptions, Conflict , Peace. United States United Arab Emirates

INTRODUCTION:

This is the continuation of a cross-disciplinary, cross-cultural project designed to address our primary concerns that social science remains relevant to contemporary issues, and to offer undergraduates opportunities for practical research. Thus, the purpose of this research project was for our undergraduate students to help us investigate children's perceptions about peace, war and enemy and to compare our findings, inter alia, across cultural contexts, while considering both developmental (child development) and cultural (anthropological) contexts. The goal of this research was two-fold: 1) to learn more about how children perceive war and peace within the local and regional contexts of cultural and environmental influences, while taking into consideration sex and age; and 2) to create and maintain an opportunity for cultural and intellectual exchanges among university students through participation in an international research project. In addition to the main objectives, this project also served as the basis for an Honors Project for one California State University, Chico (CSU, Chico) student majoring in Child Development and a Special Research Project for a student majoring in Anthropology.

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

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

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

Frenkel-Brunswick's findings are supported by Hesse and Poklemba (1989, see Oppenheimer, 2005), who studied enemy images among 4-6 year old children in Germany and the United States. Interestingly, they found that while 4-6 year olds have no unambiguous images of political enemies, they do show evidence of clearly understanding the concept of enemy/enemies. Further, the categories of enemy/enemies and friends appear to be

permanent. According to Hesse and Poklemba, friends will never become enemies, and the latter are regarded as inherently evil and can never become a friend (p. 66).

Povrzanovic (1997), elaborated upon these findings to show that children who did not experience conflict directly did not apportion blame for causing war, rather they conceived of war as some kind of natural disaster or other passing phenomena. For children with direct experience of war, clear images of enemy/enemies were present. Her research demonstrated the importance of direct experience, nationalist propaganda, and parental attitudes and influence in the formulation of hostile, negative and unambiguous enemy concepts. This research highlights the importance of children's social context in formulating concepts of the enemy/enemies. But even without direct experience of war, Hesse and Mack (1991) show that 5-6 year old American children know what enemies are. Their subjects described the enemy/enemies in individual, personalized terms as 'angry 'people, who 'attack you,' 'fight and shoot people' and 'steal jewelry.'

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

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

A child's sex also appears to be an influential factor in understanding the concepts of enemies, peace and war. Studies have found that girls more frequently defined concepts of both war and peace in terms of relationships between human beings (e.g., peace is being friends, war is quarreling with friends), whereas boys tend to talk about peace as a result of war activities rather than negotiations (Hagglund, 1999; Hakvoort & Oppenheimer, 1998). Further, girls tend to personalize peace whereby they associate peace with their own social environment and relations, unlike boys who have been found to more frequently refer to peace as something distant (Hakvoort & Oppenheimer, 1993). Further support for both age and sex differences in children's perceptions of war have been reported by Buldu (2009) in his study of children, age five to eight, living in the United Arab Emirates. As reported by Buldu, Emirati children's responses reflect differences in both age and sex. Specifically, Buldu's study found older children, unlike younger children, were able to articulate causes and consequences of war. Females displayed more concern about the consequences of war, whereas boys were found to know more about weapons and displayed more interest in the elements of war. These findings support the familiar and consistent socio cultural and socio moral differences found among male and female children as well as age differences as previously discussed.

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

According to Raviv, Oppenheimer, and Bar-Tal (1999), factors within a child's environment also contribute to his/her understanding of many social concepts, including enemies, peace and war. From a social learning theoretical

perspective, this is certainly not a surprising finding given we know children learn vicariously through interaction and observation. In short, children's perceptions of war, peace and enemies are dependent on their direct or indirect experiences.

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

Oppenheimer's (2005 and 2006) investigations among Dutch children examined how images of the enemy/enemies develop (2005). Older children conceptualized enemies as aliens or animals rather than humans. As children age, more abstract conceptualizations become dominant, shifting from concrete personal referents like other children in the classroom to indefinite abstractions such as imaginary aliens or animals.

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

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

Cultural Anthropologists have long been interested in childhood. Boas (1912) described human plasticity on the basis of examining skeletal growth among immigrants to the United States, showing that environments can profoundly affect intellectual development. Mead went further to show that universal generalizations made on the basis of only one culture are invalid (1928, 1947). LeVine and New (2008) point out that cross-cultural studies offer powerful and compelling insights regarding local contexts and cultural meanings organizing the lives of families. For example, children are protagonists in their own lives, not passive recipients of norms and values. Also, parents are profoundly influenced by cultural norms and values at every stage of the reproductive process that contribute to maintaining the moral framework of communities. And culture gives meaning to the material and social experiences of individuals that constitute acceptable developmental pathways within specific communities.

Purpose of the Study

As noted by de Souza, Sperb, McCarthy, and Biaggio (2006), investigation of children's understanding of war, peace and conflict has tended to be conducted primarily with Europeans, and has included children's experiences in the context of surviving ongoing violence, the aftermath of violence and the absence of violence. Very little research has been done comparing Middle Eastern children's perceptions of war, peace, or enemy to those of American children. Thus the primary objective of our study was to gain a greater understanding of how children perceive war, enemy and peace

within the local and regional contexts of Western and Middle Eastern cultures. Specifically, interviewing children living in the United Arab Emirates (UAE) and the United States (USA), permits comparative analysis of the relative effects of proximity to, or distance from war, as well as cultural differences on children's conceptualization of peace, war and enemy.

METHODOLOGY:

This project originated during the fall of 2007 when we initiated a conversation between undergraduate students from CSU Chico, USA and Zayed University, UAE, based on common interests in gaining a better understanding of children's perceptions of peace and war, in addition to a mutual desire for cross cultural exchanges between the two campuses. To accomplish the above objectives, students from Zayed University and CSU Chico participated in a pilot study fall 2007 through spring 2008, in which undergraduate students on both campuses interviewed a total of 41 children, age 5-10, concerning their perceptions of peace and war (Coughlin, Mayers, Dizard, & Bordin, 2008, 2009). After completion of that pilot study, beginning fall, 2009, faculty and students from Zayed University and CSU, Chico reviewed and revised the interview questions, adding "enemy" as a category of inquiry and in the spring of 2010 conducted a second wave of

interviews with 63 children, ages 6-12, living in Chico, CA and the UAE, which is the focus of this paper. Interviews consisted of 18 questions concerning children's perceptions of peace, war, and enemy. In addition, children were asked to draw pictures of their concepts of peace, war and enemy, however, pictures are not included in this data analyses. The interview questions were first developed in English by the CSU, Chico participants. Taking into consideration cultural differences, the English constructed questionnaire was then translated into an Arabic version for the children in the UAE.

Data Collection

Data were collected through an interview process. Data collection included the use of audio tape recording of children's responses. Audio taped recordings for both groups were later transcribed. Undergraduate students from CSU,

Chico conducted interviews with 15 boys and 15 girls, age 6-12, who attended a local non-profit, local boy's and girl's club in Chico, California. The UAE sample consisted of UAE National children, 19 girls and 14 boys, age 6-12, and the interviews took place with undergraduate students interviewing family members. The UAE sample consisted of children from each of the seven Emirates.

CSU Chico students collected their data at a local community club for boys and girls, while in the UAE, researchers visited children's houses to collect the data. In the homes, researchers used a quiet place with no other family members present.

Informed consent: Prior to the interview process, researchers requested permission from parents for their children to participate in the study.

Findings

The data were analyzed using a phenomenological procedure as reported by Buldu (2009). Two primary investigators (faculty) identified key themes that emerged from the children's response to the 18 questions. Findings from the study are reported and discussed in terms of sex and cultural similarities and differences as well as differences based on age. The summary of the children's responses is reported in terms of the most frequent responses, thus not all responses are reported, only those that emerged as the most common/frequent. To highlight the children's responses in terms of sex and cultural similarities/differences, the findings are reported in terms of category classification and also in terms of within-group frequency of response (percentages, e.g., the percentage of children, by sex and country, who responded "an enemy can never be a friend"; "my country is at war"; "enemies are always men"; etc.). The last section reports differences in younger children's (age 6-9) and older children's (10-12) responses. As stated, children responded to a total of 18 questions, however, this paper will report on the children's responses to the following 16 questions (two questions were descriptive and do not lend themselves to categorical classification and thus are not included in this analysis).

Children responded to the following questions:

Peace

1. What is peace?

2. How did you learn about peace?

3. Do you hear people talking about peace?
4. What is war?
5. How did you learn about war?
6. Do you hear people talking about war? Where?
7. Is your county at war?
8. Are fighting and wars necessary? Why or why not?
9. What is an enemy?
10. What does an enemy look like?
11. Is an enemy a woman or a man?
12. Are enemies necessary?
13. Can an enemy ever become a friend or is an enemy always an enemy?
14. How does an enemy make you feel?
15. How did you learn about enemies?
16. Does your country (USA or UAE) have an enemy?

Questions concerning peace.

What is peace?

In response to the question, "What is peace?" the majority of male and female children in both the USA and UAE responded by stating that peace was the "opposite" of war or made reference to a "peaceful, quiet" environment (see Table1).

How did you learn about peace?

When asked how they had learned about peace, 60% of USA females reported learning about peace from family members such as parents, or grandparents, or both parents and grandparents. The majority of UAE females

reported learning about peace at school from readings, classes, or school projects. USA boys responded family, school somewhat equally and UAE boys discussed learning about peace but could not readily identify where they had learned about it (see Table 2).

Do you hear people talking about peace and if so, where?

In answer to this question, roughly 40% of USA females reported they did not hear people talking about peace and 40% reported hearing people talking about peace at home (20%) or school (20%). USA males responded that they

had heard people talking about peace predominately at school (33%) and also at home (27%) or on TV (13%). UAE female and male children's responses were similar in that home,

school, and TV were all sources where the children reported having heard people talking about peace (see Table 3).

Questions concerning war.

What is war?

In response to the question, "What is war?" the majority of USA females and UAE males responded briefly by stating, "It means to fight," or "It is fighting." USA male responses

were found to be a bit more detailed and included description of battles and conflict. UAE females were also more descriptive and more frequently included greater detail in terms of describing war in terms of death, blood, and destruction (see Table 4)

Table 1: Responses to "What is peace?"

Responses	USA Girls	USA Boys	UAE Girls	UAE Boys
Opposite war	33%	27%	26%	7%
Environment	20%	27%	10%	21%
Cooperation	7%	7%	31%	21%
Emotion	13%	0	5%	14%
Greeting	0	0	5%	14%

Table 2: Responses to "How did you learn about peace?"

Responses	USA Girls	USA Boys	UAE Girls	UAE Boys
Family	60%	27%	15%	7%
School	7%	20%	58%	14%
TV/Media	7%	0	5%	14%
Non-specific	0	0	10%	42%
Don't know	20%	27%	5%	14%

Table 3: Responses to "Do you hear people talking about peace and if so, where?"

Responses	USA Girls	USA Boys	UAE Girls	UAE Boys
Home	20%	27%	31%	14%
School	20%	33%	26%	7%
TV	0	13%	21%	21%
No	40%	0	10%	21%

Table 4 : Responses to "What is war?"

Responses	USA Girls	USA Boys	UAE Girls	UAE Boys
Word "Fight"	46%	33%	36%	57%
Battle/Conflict	13%	33%	26%	0%
Weapon/ Blood/Death/ Destruction	0	7%	21%	7%
Country	7%	0	15%	7%
People	20%	0	0	21%

How did you learn about war?

In comparison to learning about peace, the majority of USA males and USA females more frequently mentioned leaning about war while at school through their class discussions or assignments. In contrast, both UAE males and females predominately indicated television as the medium by which they had learned about war (see Table 5)

Do you hear people talking about war?

In response to the question concerning hearing people talk about war, USA males' and females' responses were similar to their responses to the same question concerning peace; they more frequently mentioned school as the place they hear people talking about war. The majority of UAE females (53%) reported television to be the where they hear people talking about war, and UAE males' responses reflected various sources but predominately school and TV. Unlike USA males and UAE males and females, USA females did not mention TV as a medium of information concerning war (see Table 6).

Is your country at war?

In reference to "Is your country at war?" all Emirati females, and all but one Emirati male, responded "no" their country was not at war. For children in the USA, responses were more divided with 60% of females and 27% of males responding "no" their country was not at war. Sixty percent of the USA sample, males and females, stated they did not know if their county was at war (Table 7).

Are fighting and wars necessary?

When asked if fighting and wars are necessary, the majority of USA and UAE males and females responded "no." However, about half the USA males responded "yes" wars are necessary or "sometimes" necessary (Table 8).

Questions concerning enemy.

What is an enemy?

The description most often provided by USA females in defining an enemy included reference to "someone hated" or "someone disliked." The UAE children in comparison to the USA children used descriptors that included "an enemy is evil" or "an enemy is the devil." Also, UAE children were more likely to describe an enemy as having the potential to be "anyone" given the right circumstances (see Table 9).

What does an enemy look like?

The majority of children describe an enemy as someone who "wears a disguise," is a "stranger or other (specifying a person)," "anyone," or someone who looks "scary/frightening." The majority of UAE children described an enemy as someone who is "scary/ frightening." USA females more frequently described an enemy as "anyone," and roughly a third of USA males described an enemy as a stranger (see Table 10).

Is an enemy a women or a man?

The majority of USA males and females stated an enemy can be either a woman or a man. UAE children, in comparison, was somewhat more likely to specify an enemy as someone who is male. None of the children responded that an enemy was always a "woman" (see Table 11).

Table 5: Responses to "How did you learn about war?"

Responses	USA Girls	USA Boys	UAE Girls	UAE Boys
Family	13%	13%	5%	21%
School	47%	21%	21%	14%
TV/Movies	7%	28%	68%	42%

Table 6: Responses to "Do you hear people talking about war?"

Responses	USA Girls	USA Boys	UAE Girls	UAE Boys
Home	20%	13%	5%	14%
School	27%	33%	21%	21%
TV	0	13%	53%	21%
No	20%	13%	10%	21%

Table 7: Responses to "Is your country at war?"

Responses	USA Girls	USA Boys	UAE Girls	UAE Boys
Yes	20%	33%	0	0
No	60%	27%	100%	93%
Don't know	20%	40%	0	7%

Table 8: Responses to "Are fighting and wars necessary?"

Responses	USA Girls	USA Boys	UAE Girls	UAE Boys
Yes	13%	33%	10%	14%
No	80%	47%	79%	71%
Sometimes	0	13%	10%	7%
Don't know	7%	7%	0	7%

Table 9 : Responses to "What is an enemy?"

Responses	USA Girls	USA Boys	UAE Girls	UAE Boys
Opponent	7%	47%	32%	28%
Someone you hate/dislike	87%	33%	16%	28%
Evil/devil	0	0	21%	14%
Anyone	0	0	16%	14%

Table 10 : Responses to "What does an enemy look like?"

Responses	USA Girls	USA Boys	UAE Girls	UAE Boys
Wears a disguise	13%	15%	21%	21%
Stranger/ other	27%	30%	5%	14%
Anyone	33%	15%	10%	7%
Scary/ frightening	13%	7%	47%	42%

Table 11 : Responses to "Is an enemy a women or a man?"

Responses	USA Girls	USA Boys	UAE Girls	UAE Boys
Man	20%	29%	53%	57%
Women	0	0	0	0
Both	80%	71%	47%	43%

Table 12: Responses to "Are enemies necessary"?

Responses	USA Girls	USA Boys	UAE Girls	UAE Boys
Yes	20%	29%	10%	7%
No	66%	50%	84%	93%
Sometimes	7%	21%	0	0
Don't know	7%	0	5%	0

Table 13 : Responses to "Can an enemy ever become a friend?"

Responses	USA Girls	USA Boys	UAE Girls	UAE Boys
Yes	73%	57%	53%	57%
No	13%	28%	42%	35%
Sometimes	13%	14%	5%	7%

Table 14 : Responses to "How does an enemy make you feel?"

Responses	USA Girls	USA Boys	UAE Girls	UAE Boys
Sad/bad	71%	71%	32%	28%
Mad/angry	20%	14%	5%	21%
Frightened	0	7%	58%	35%

Table 15 : Responses to "How did you learn about enemies?"

Responses	USA Girls	USA Boys	UAE Girls	UAE Boys
Home	21%	14%	0	0
School	21%	21%	21%	42%
TV	0	7%	63%	28%
Interpersonal Conflict	28%	0	5%	7%
Don't know	14%	14%	0	0

Table 16 Response to "Does your country have an enemy?"

Responses	USA Girls	USA Boys	UAE Girls	UAE Boys
Yes	43%	71%	32%	21%
No	0	0	58%	65%

Are enemies necessary?

The majority of UAE children, both male and female, more frequently responded, "No, enemies are not necessary." In comparison, half USA males and about one third of USA females responded, "Yes, enemies are necessary" or "sometimes necessary" (see Table 12).

Can an enemy ever become a friend?

In comparing responses between children in the USA and children in the UAE, UAE males and females more frequently responded, "No, an enemy can never be a friend." USA girls on average, in comparison, were more likely to state that an enemy can always or sometimes become a friend (see Table 13).

How does an enemy make you feel?

USA children, both male and female, responded more frequently that enemies made them feel "sad or bad." UAE children, more frequently, responded that an enemy made them feel "frightened" (see Table 14).

How did you learn about enemies?

None of the UAE children spoke about home or family in terms of learning about enemies. UAE males reported television as the medium through which they had learned about enemies. For UAE girls, the most frequent answer indicated learning about enemies at school. It is interesting to note that USA females more frequently indicated that they learned about enemies through their own personal experiences (interpersonal conflict), e.g., experiencing someone as an enemy (see Table 15).

Does your country have an enemy?

All of the USA children responded either "yes" the USA has an enemy or "I don't know." In comparison, the majority of UAE children responded "no" when asked if the UAE has an enemy (see Table 16)

Comparison of children's responses based on age.

The only difference found based on the age of the child was in response to two of the questions: "Can an enemy ever become a friend?" and "How does an enemy make you feel?" Older children (age 10-12) were more likely than younger children (age 6-9) to respond, "yes" an enemy can become a friend and older UAE children more frequently responded an enemy makes you feel "mad/angry" in comparison to younger children who more frequently responded an enemy makes them feel "sad/bad."

DISCUSSION:

Regarding questions concerning peace, UAE children in comparison to children in the USA made more frequent reference to cooperation as a means of defining peace. For example, comments included, "To be a friend with someone" (Emirati male, age 10); "Understanding" (Emirati female, age 7); "Group of people living together without problems" (Emirati female, age 11). As found in other studies (see Myers-Bowman, et. al., 2005), in response to questions concerning peace, children in our samples from both the USA as well as the UAE also referred to peace in terms of quiet and tranquil environments in addition to defining peace as the opposite of war. UAE children, however, were more likely than USA children to contrast peace to war, describing peace as the opposite of war. However, given limitations of this study, caution is warranted in terms of the generalizations that can be made. Limitations of the study concerns a small sample size and sampling procedures. Interviews in the UAE were conducted in the children's homes. This may have influenced children's replies. Nearly all of the children in the UAE sample were related to the students conducting the interviews.

In discussing where they had learned about peace/war and if they heard people talking about peace/war, television, or other forms of media, were presented as a more prominent medium of information for children living in the UAE. For children living in the USA, family and school predominately were the most frequent answers given in response to questions about where they had learned about peace/war, as well as where they hear people talking about peace/war. When asked if "their country was at war," male children living in the United States demonstrated more confusion in not knowing if their country was at war (40% responded "don't know"). In comparison, only one Emirati child stated he did not know if his country was at war, while the remaining children, 32, all responded 'no', their country was not at war. This is an intriguing difference and more research is required to explain why, after seven years at war (nine including Afghanistan), essentially the entire lifespan of the younger respondents, so many children from the USA sample, especially male children, did not know if their country is at war or peace. An explanation for USA children's response to this question might stem from the fact that children in the USA hear "the USA is at war" (at war with Iraq, Afghanistan) but they don't see "war" and they aren't exposed to the violence or chaos of the Global War on Terror, hence it is confusing; they hear their country is at war, but given it is not something tangible, they simply don't understand what war in that context means, and hence when responding to this question gave conflicting comments as an indication of their confusion. One can speculate further that perhaps American attitudes toward childhood as a magical time of innocence restricts discussion of or access to information about the Global War on Terror such that younger children are simply not exposed to the information in such a way as to make the concept of war and its implications understandable.

Almost half of the USA males reported "yes" wars are necessary or "sometimes" necessary in comparison to 21% of UAE males. In terms of sex differences, females more frequently responded, "No, wars are not necessary" and USA females were found to respond "No wars are never necessary" more often than any of the other children. This is one of the most striking differences found between children in the USA and children in the UAE. Roughly half of male children in the USA sample, 46%, stated that they believe war/fighting is necessary or sometimes necessary. In contrast, only 21% UAE males stated that they believe war/fighting is necessary or

sometimes necessary. We suspect, however, that a careful examination of the psychosocial environment of the children in the American sample will reveal a broad cultural preference for regarding conflict as a source of amusement (e.g., the 'fun' and 'happy' violence of many popular films and video games) and the means for assessing quality (e.g., may the best person win), and establishing superiority. This finding could have profound implications when considering a child's view of the world and his or her place in it. That children this young have developed a mindset that wars are acceptable and necessary may reflect broader culturally defined attitudes towards violence and how conflict is dealt with and resolved. However, as previously noted, caution in interpreting this finding is warranted and more research is needed before conclusions from this finding can be drawn.

In reviewing the children's' responses concerning enemy, children living in the United States more frequently described an enemy as someone you "don't like", "hate" or who could be "anyone." Children in the UAE most frequently described an enemy as someone who was "scary/frightening" in terms of appearance; for example responses included: "He is colored in white and black" (Emirati male, age 7); "looks like a criminal" (Emirati male, age 10); "He has lots of scars on his face" (Emirati male, age 9).

All the children included females as potential enemies; however, males as enemies dominated all the children's responses. None of the children stated female only as an enemy. However, children in the USA sample more frequently responded that an enemy could be both "male and female" in comparison to children living in the UAE. As with responses to the necessity of war, we found similar cultural differences in children's responses to the necessity of enemies. Children in the USA, both male and female, were much more likely to respond "yes" enemies are necessary or "sometimes" necessary. Both male and female children living in the USA, however, more frequently responded "yes" enemies can become friends, or "sometimes" can become friends in comparison to male and female children living in the UAE. The differences in responses may be explained in part by how the children reported learning about enemies. Females and males in the USA more frequently reported having learned about enemies through their own personal experiences (having an enemy) or learning about enemies at home or school. Children in the UAE reported fewer personal experiences concerning their understanding of enemies, specifically reporting that their knowledge most frequently was acquired through the television/media. It may be through these more personalized experiences that children in the USA have learned firsthand that enemies can become friends and further, that enemies can be male or female. It is also interesting to note, as previously discussed, Hesse and Poklemba (1989, see Oppenheimer, 2005) reported in their study of children age 4-6 the belief that enemies can never be friends. In our study, over half the children and predominately the older children responded that enemies could become friends. Given that our study, in comparison to Hesse and Poklemba, includes older children, this difference in response appears to indicate older children's more advanced understanding of relationships. Their response that enemies can be friends demonstrates a more complex understanding of interpersonal relationships as well as an understanding that relationships have the potential to change over time.

In response to the question, "Does your country have an enemy?" the majority of males living in the USA responded yes, however, the majority of females responded "don't know." The majority of UAE children, both male and female, predominately responded "no," their country did not have an enemy. The UAE does have a military. However, given that these children have never experienced their country's armed forces involved in international conflict, it is not surprising that they, unlike USA children, perceive their country as having no enemies.

Only two notable age differences were found specifically in terms of children's responses to enemies becoming friends. Older children were more likely than younger children to respond "yes" an enemy can become a friend (as previously discussed), and in terms of how enemies make you feel; older UAE children more frequently responded "mad/angry" in comparison to younger children. Even though striking differences were not found in terms of how children responded to the questions based on age, it became very apparent in reviewing all responses that older children in comparison to younger children demonstrated a much more

abstract understanding of peace, war, and enemy.

This study was concerned with investigating the role of culture on children's perceptions of the concepts of war, enemy, and peace while considering the sex and age of the child. In reviewing the responses of the children, it is evident that culture plays a prominent role in the way children perceive these concepts as well as the way they experience their world and world events. Thus, when we consider how children learn about conflict, peace, and the characterizations of, or identification with an enemy, it becomes evident that we must consider a cultural perspective knowing that children see the world from the context in which they live.

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