

Helping Kids!

AIMS & OVERVIEW

This year the *Helping Kids!* research team expanded on previous 'Name Game' projects. The focus of this project is to understand how and when children begin to recognize certain names, symbols and social cues within their cultural context. In addition to running this study in Northern Ireland, the project was extended to two additional contexts: Kosovo and Macedonia.

The studies focused on children ranging from five to eleven years old. A total of 723 children from Northern Ireland, 234 children from Kosovo, and 219 from Macedonia participated in this study. Each child played a series of kid-friendly 'games' on a laptop or tablet with a trained member of our research team. Children were asked about their own preferences, what they might expect another person to prefer, and how they might categorise different names or icons.

With ongoing analyses, we are excited to explore how children from different countries begin to recognize various cultural symbols across development.

Northern Ireland: Three games

In Northern Ireland, the study was expanded even further into three separate games with slightly different foci.

The first, titled 'Symbols and Signs' was predominately about preferences for different images, symbols and icons across Northern Ireland. The second, titled 'Where do these go?' encouraged children to sort those images into different social categories and labels as they saw fit. The third game, titled 'What's in a name?' was focused on a number of names that historically have been attributed to a particular cultural background.

Across all three games, we explored how children begin to recognize these social cues with greater detail as they age.



MEET THE TEAM

Queen's University Belfast:

Laura Taylor, Ph.D.
Jocelyn Dautel, Ph.D.
Risa Rylander, MSc

University American College Skopje, Macedonia:

Ana Tomovska Misoska,
Ph.D.

The Rochester Institute of Technology, Kosovo:

Edona Maloku Berdyna,
MSc



WHAT'S IN A NAME?

This game focused on names commonly associated with different backgrounds in Northern Ireland.

Results from this game showed that as children get older, they prefer names from their own community background, they are able to categorize names more accurately, and they show a tendency to share more resources with members of their own background.

However, results also showed that if children have positive experiences with children from another community background, they are more willing to share resources across group lines even with those they do not know personally.



Across all three games, as children get older they show a greater understanding of and familiarity with social cues in Northern Ireland.

WHERE DO THESE GO?

The 'Open Sorting' game encouraged children to organise various images into categories. This game set-up was unique from the others as it allowed for less structured responses from the children.

Similar to the other two games, results showed that as children age, they become more aware of the cultural associations tied to different common symbols and icons such as flags, sports, and community activities.

Further analyses on this survey will help us better understand which icons in particular are more salient across ages.

SYMBOLS & SIGNS

The 'Symbols' game, by comparison, focused on different cultural images and icons found throughout Northern Ireland.

Results from this survey showed that as children age, they categorize various images more accurately and they develop a preference for images from their own background.

Results also showed that the more children wanted to play with kids from another background, the more likely they were to also share resources with kids from another background.



Which one do you like better?

This is a shamrock.



This is a poppy.





Our collaborators from Kosovo and Macedonia in the Balkans region of Europe

BALKANS GAMES

Kosovo

The Kosovo games were most similar to the Symbols survey conducted in Northern Ireland, but with a few additional sections. These games were first translated into the two official languages of the country, Albanian & Serbian.

Results show similar findings to those of Northern Ireland. As children grow and develop, they recognize various social cues more readily and they develop a preference for their own community background's names and icons. Children's preference for sharing resources with kids from their own community is also reduced by having more positive experiences and interactions with children from another background.

School Feedback

Parental consent was provided for all of the children who participated in these games. At the start of each session, each child was also asked whether they wanted to take part. Children frequently shared that they really enjoyed playing the games and answering our questions!

"This study was a completely new experience for students in my class. They never participated in any kind of research project before, so this all was very novel and innovative for them. Playing games, winning prizes and eventually getting 'certified' as young scientists proved to be very motivating for them. They spent hours talking about it afterwards. It was a pleasure to become part of such an important project that aims to help reconciliation and peace-building in our country. I think we desperately need that!"

- Teacher from a primary school in Prishtina/Kosovo

A BIT OF BACKGROUND: KOSOVO

- ◆ The Kosovo War lasted from 1998-1999.
- ◆ In 2008, the Republic of Kosovo declared independence.
- ◆ Today, the majority of Kosovo's population is ethnic Albanian, with a small population of ethnic Serbs.
- ◆ Schools in Kosovo are separated by the language that students primarily speak: Albanian or Serbian.

Which one do you like better?

This is Flija.



This is Sarma.



LOCAL ICONS

Images and names used in each of our partner countries were adapted to local culture and context. For example, certain foods are more commonly found in particular regions of Kosovo than others, as pictured above.

A BIT OF BACKGROUND: MACEDONIA

- ◆ Macedonia gained independence in 1991.
- ◆ Currently the majority of Macedonia's population identifies ethnically as Macedonian, while a minority identify ethnically as Albanian.
- ◆ Classrooms in Macedonia are separated by which language the students predominately speak: Macedonian or Albanian.

ADDITIONAL RESEARCH

The *Helping Kids!* research team looks forward to continued analysis of this study and future exploration into these findings!

Helping Kids! is involved in a number of ongoing areas. For example, some of our other projects include exploring children's prosocial behaviours and attitudes such as sympathy and empathy.

For more information about these or any other areas of *Helping Kids!* research efforts, please visit our website or contact a member of our team directly!

Contact Us!

School of Psychology
David Kier Building
BT7 1NN

Our website: <http://helpingkidsqubblog.wordpress.com>

Phone: 0289097309

Email: helpingkids.qub@gmail.com

Macedonia

The Macedonian games were also most similar to the Symbols survey in Northern Ireland. Similar to the Kosovo survey, it was translated into the two dominant languages of Macedonia; Macedonian and Albanian.

The survey results from Macedonia also showed a notable relationship between children's age and their recognition of social cues as belonging to one community or another.

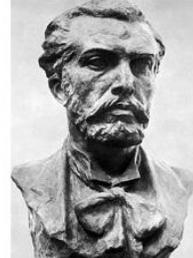


This is a boy from Macedonia. He is Macedonian. Which one does he like better?

- This is a statue of Cyril and Methodius.



- This is a statue of Naim Frasheri.



THANK YOU!

On behalf of the *Helping Kids!* team and Queen's University Belfast, we would like to express our sincere appreciation and thanks to every individual who supported this project.

We are especially grateful to the principals and teachers of the many primary schools who worked with us for their enthusiasm, cooperation, and involvement.

We would also like to extend our sincerest thanks to all the students and their parents for their participation; without whom, this study would not have been possible.

We would also like to note our international partners, schools, and students for their unique contributions to this study. A special thanks is dedicated to our international project coordinators, Ana Tomovska Misoska and Edona Maloku Berdyna, and their excellent teams; Ardit Zllatku, Ratka Kjoseva, Lina Rogac, Eva Baramacheva, Bisera Nikolova, Meri Cvetanoska, Besa Arifi, Krenare Lleshi, Anđela Mirković and Genta Shabani.

This project, *Helping Kids! Promoting positive intergroup relations and peacebuilding in divided societies*, would not have been possible without the generous financial support of the Department for the Economy (DfE) - Global Challenge Research Fund (GCRF) Award (DFEGCRF17-18/Taylor).