

Impact case study (REF3b)

Institution: University of Ulster
Unit of Assessment: 36 Communication, Cultural and Media Studies, Library and Information Management
Title of case study: Influencing the Media and Youth Policy Agenda
<p>1. Summary of the impact</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. This research has informed public debate and influenced public policy in relation to children, young people and the media and has contributed to producer training in Europe. 2. It has also contributed to a wider debate about public service broadcasting and citizenship. 3. It has provided: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> (a) Factual data, providing a baseline for surveys of media outputs and use by official regulators (BBC, Ofcom); (b) It has provided programme makers in the UK and internationally with evidence about children's responses for use in programme making; (c) It has contributed to consumer organisations, including the Voice of the Listener and Viewer (VLV), and the Children's Media Foundation in their representations to Government, effecting change in broadcasting regulation and the provision and funding of children's media.
<p>2. Underpinning research</p> <p>Over many years, much of the debate about children's relationship with the media has been derived from media 'moral panics' rather than rigorous research and has tended to be negative, overlooking both children's own tastes and behaviours and the voices and functions of producers. Máire Messenger-Davies has always tried to redress the balance by studying empirically both audiences and producers, and as a result, has produced data that has proved useful to both programme producers and broadcasting policy makers.</p> <p>Since the 1980s, she has been at the forefront of research into children's and young people's programming and has especially pioneered research into children's responses to programmes which have then fed back into the programme makers themselves. Since <i>Television is Good for Your Kids</i> (1989, 2001) was published (and helped to modify the 1990 Broadcasting Act to include Children's programming as a protected branch of programming by British PSBs) this ongoing research into children's and young people's relationship with the media has also been regularly adopted by a variety of public bodies to inform debate and decision-making.</p> <p>In 1997, Messenger-Davies was commissioned by the Broadcasting Standards Commission (whose functions were taken over by Ofcom after the 2003 Broadcasting Act) to conduct a survey of children's TV provision in the UK. This initiated a widespread public debate and provided a baseline for children's provision that was built upon by the new regulator, Ofcom. Ofcom has since produced regular data about children's media provision from this baseline. In 2004, the year she was appointed to run the University of Ulster's Centre for Media Research (CMR) Messenger-Davies was commissioned by the Department of Culture, Media and Sport (DCMS) to review the BBC digital channels and was instrumental in supporting the continuing existence of the BBC's popular children's channels in the face of arguments by commercial providers that they 'unfairly' distorted the market.</p> <p>Industry-related audience studies include the BBC-funded project on children and TV drama reported in <i>Dear BBC</i> (2001) and in 2007 the AHRC/BBC funded KEP project 'What do children want from the BBC?' This research was fed back to the producers of BBC's <i>Newsround</i> and was utilised in their redesign of the <i>Newsround</i> website.</p> <p>Over the last ten years, Davies has regularly been called upon for media interviews in TV, radio and the press. The CMR's support of this work has facilitated outreach to industry bodies; travel to industry events, such as the World Summit on Children and Media in Johannesburg in 2006, and the Prix Jeunesse in Munich, 2005, where Davies' funded work on children and TV humour, as part</p>

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of a team of international scholars brought together by IZI, in Munich, was presented to an international industry audience. The reach and significance of this strand of research has, in other words, been substantial.

3. References to the research

M. Messenger Davies, M. (2001), *'Dear BBC': Children, Television-storytelling and the Public Sphere*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. (Submitted for RAE 2008, part of a Unit which scored 75% at 3* or better and 95% at 2* or better).

Messenger Davies M. (2004): Mickey and Mr Gumpy: The Global and the Universal in Children's Media, *European Journal of Cultural Studies*, 7, 4, pp 425-440 (Submitted for RAE 2008, part of a Unit which scored 75% at 3* or better and 95% at 2* or better)

Messenger Davies, M. (2007), 'And what good came of it at last?: Ethos, style and sense of audience in the reporting of war in children's news programmes,' in Lemish, D. and Goetz, M. (eds), *Children and media in times of war and conflict*, Cresskill NJ: Hampton, pp 163-176 (Drawing on the AHRC/BBC funded *Newsround* study, part of the 3* score for Environment in RAE2008).

Messenger Davies, (2007) 'The future of children's television: Research report' – Academic literature review', Ofcom, <http://www.ofcom.org.uk/consult/condocs/kidstv/litreview.pdf>

Gotz, M., Bulbulia, F., Fisch, S., Lemish, D., Messenger Davies, M., Schauer, R., and Homer, B (2005) 'Is that funny anywhere else?' An international comparison of humour in Children's programmes, *Television*, 19/2006/E, http://www.bronline.de/jugend/izi/english/publication/television/19_2006_E/19_2006_E.htm

4. Details of the impact**(a) 'Ring-fencing the BBC's children's programme budget': Consultancy for OFCOM**

Ofcom commissioned Messenger Davies to write a Literature Review for its report on 'The Future of Children's Television in the UK' (2007). Since then Davies has continued to contribute to the Ofcom research department with a real impact on how its policy nationally has developed. As Alison Preston, Head of Media Literacy Research at Ofcom, has said: 'Both your academic literature review and also your previous research ... were used in our thinking and analysis ... and consequent policy recommendations. One of the related outcomes of this Review was that the BBC ring-fenced its children's programming budget.'

(b) Helping to win a local TV licence: CMR and Voice of the Listener and Viewer (VLV)

As a Board member of the broadcasting consumer group VLV until 2011, Davies organised and spoke at a number of VLV public events, and in November 2011 she organised a joint seminar with Ofcom, VLV and the University of Ulster's CMR in Belfast on the question of local television franchises in the UK. This event was attended by programme makers, policy makers and educators and resulted in the awarding of a contract to a Northern Ireland production company. The importance of the CMR research to this decision was confirmed by NI Ofcom Director, Jonathan Rose in an email, dated 10th October 2012.

(c) Training, Briefing and Promoting the work of Children's TV Producers**(i) IZI Munich:**

The International study of Children's Humour, reported in RAE2008, was conducted by the International Central Institute for Youth and Educational Television (IZI), Munich in association with among others, the University of Ulster's CMR. The study continued to have an impact internationally during this reporting period via the Prix Jeunesse, the international network on

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quality in children's TV. The Prix Jeunesse foundation organizes advanced training courses for television producers all over the world. In relation to the study, the Director of IZI, wrote in an email dated 13th May 2013: 'The project proved itself very valuable for international advanced training courses. It was presented ... more than 15 times in different countries, including:

2008 TRT, Bodrum (Turkey); 2010 Cinekid, Amsterdam (Netherlands); 2010 La Segunda Muestra; Iberoamericana de Televisión Infantil, Bogota (Colombia) and the 2011 PRIX Iberoamericano, Sao Paulo (Brazil)'

(ii) Children's Media Foundation (CMF). Davies is a founder member of the CMF Board. One of its aims is 'to support the production of media for children and young people in the UK while embracing stimulating content from all parts of the world'.

<http://www.thechildrensmediafoundation.org/wordpress/about-us/aims>

CMF Director, Greg Childs, wrote: 'Her contribution to the growth of this new organisation has been considerable.

(d) Informing the BBC's Media Literacy Strategy: BBC Factual and Learning

In 2012 Davies was commissioned by the Media Literacy section of BBC's Factual and Learning department to produce a strategic review of Media Literacy to inform production decisions. The BBC's Media Literacy Strategy was published in May 2013; the BBC editor of the strategy wrote to Davies to thank her as a 'key contributor', noting: 'Your [Media Literacy] report is referenced numerous times in our BBC Media Literacy strategy'. The report is available at:

http://www.bbc.co.uk/learning/overview/about/assets/bbc_media_literacy_strategy_may2013.pdf

(e) Improving Newsround: AHRC/BBC KEP Project

The AHRC/BBC funded KEP project, was a 'four-nation' study involving academics and teachers from Cardiff, Bournemouth, Glasgow and Ulster, and a number of BBC producers.

<http://www.bbc.co.uk/blogs/knowledgeexchange/cardifftwo.pdf>

(f) Contributing to the Media Reform campaign: Leveson

Arising from her work on young people and news, Davies is part of a group of academics and media workers in the Co-ordinating Committee for Media Reform (CCMR) who worked closely with journalists, lawyers and policy makers to inform the Leveson Inquiry into the conduct of the press. Her contribution to this debate is on the Leveson website at

<http://www.levesoninquiry.org.uk/evidence/?witness=professor-maire-messenger-davies>

This was posted on March 28 2012 on the Inquiry Website. This was in response to an email from Leveson Inquiry General Inquiries, 27th January 2012: 'Thank you for your submission/witness statement to the Inquiry. The information that you have provided is relevant to the Inquiry and we therefore would like to publish it as part of the Inquiry's official record'.

5. Sources to corroborate the impact

Head of Media Literacy Research, Ofcom (ID1)

Head of Ofcom, Northern Ireland (ID2)

Chair, Children's Media Foundation

Director, Children's Media Foundation (ID4)

Editor, Media Literacy, BBC (ID5)

Director, IZI, Munich (ID3)

Media Literacy Dept., BBC Factual and Learning

Head of Children's BBC (CBBC)

Secretary to the Board of the Voice of the Listener and Viewer

Events Producer, BAFTA

Head of Governance and Accountability, England: BBC Trust

http://www.bbc.co.uk/learning/overview/about/assets/bbc_media_literacy_strategy_may2013.pdf