



## CDCLR RESEARCH ROUND-UP

2016 - 2018

Thank you for participating in the Center's research program! Below, we share progress and results for studies that took place within the past two years, and give you a "heads up" about future study opportunities.

2018

**The Role of Gesture in Young Children's Learning** (PI: *I. Bradburn*; Undergraduate Research Assistants: *Elizabeth Smith* (HFNE) and *Megan Michaels* (HDFS)). This exploratory study consisted of extensive reading of research literature, classroom observations, and discussions with teachers. Gesture has been extensively studied in toddlers (regarding language learning), elementary school children and adults. A robust literature indicates that when children and adults gesture in ways that conveys conceptual, non-redundant information (i.e, information that is not articulated in speech), people learn concepts earlier or faster than when information is processed only through speech (especially vocabulary and math/science concepts). We wondered whether we could observe this phenomenon in naturalistic settings, since the great majority of this research is experimental. Further, most work has been done on younger or older children, so we wanted to extend research into the preschool period.

Observations across the three classrooms indicated a high degree of deictic gesture (pointing, referential) in the Blue Room, where children are most intensively learning language, but representational gesture (i.e, gesture that conveys concepts) was less obvious in older classrooms. Children engaged in pretend or building play gestured with animation, but it was challenging to determine whether their gestures underscored their words or added new or different information.

Next year this project will continue with additional more focused classroom observations, and some individual child games and assessments (for which we will send out permission forms). A poster the students presented to CDCLR teachers and administrators is hanging in the hallway.

2016-2017

**Young Children's Understanding of Emotions** (PIs: *I. Bradburn*, VT; *Susanne Denham* and *Hideko Bassett*, George Mason University). This year-long study testing a computerized version of social-emotional assessments is being written up for publication. We combined our results with data collected in Northern Virginia and Chicago to test regional variation and for a more robust sample size. Once published I will share the article with the CDCLR community.

2015 – 2017

**Making Emotions Explicit: Hear ME (Hear My Emotions)**

PIs: *Isabel Bradburn* (CDCLR), *Angela Scarpa-Friedman* (Psychology), *Ben Knapp* (Institute for Creative Arts and Technology), *Martha Ann Bell* (Psychology)  
Graduate students: *Brennon Bortz* (Computer Science); *Deanna Swain* (Psychology), *Saeid Kianpour* (Human Development), *Manpreet Hora* (Computer Science/ICAT).  
Undergraduates: *Lauren Furtner*, *Elizabeth Graviano*, *Qittar Jessani*, *Catherine Kilday*, *Becky Neeley*. High school volunteer: *Aran Garnett-Deakin*).

This series of studies culminated in several international conference presentations and a grant to the National Institute of Mental Health in 2017 (see previous Research Round-Ups for results). The study was not funded ☹. The team is considering how best to proceed and we will keep you posted.

**Coming up:** As mentioned, I will be spearheading a continuation of the Gestures research next academic year. Meanwhile, CDCLR parent and Research Assistant Professor Vanessa Diaz will soon be asked your help for a new study she is launching.

Thank you for giving us permission to invite your children to participate in our research and best wishes for a wonderful summer!

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