

Jean Garvin Fellowship Awards

2016-2017

Title of Study: Visual Attention to Photographs and Cartoon Images in Social Stories™: A Comparison of Typically Developing Children and Children with ASD

Awardee: Chelsea Sedyn (Communication Sciences and Disorders)

UVM Faculty Advisor: Tiffany Hutchins

Abstract:

The literature review suggests that children with ASD demonstrate strengths when processing visual information from cartoons. It is suggested that cartoons are effective for intervention due to their decreased ecological-validity (i.e., BM) indicating that there is less social information to be interpreted. Although real images may be more complex to process, additional research surrounding the effectiveness of highly ecologically-valid images for intervention purposes is needed.

There is also debate in the research surrounding how children with ASD attend to static visual social scenes. Eye tracking studies have revealed a mouth over eyes preference, but there is controversial evidence as to why this is observed. The following study focuses on the disparity in the literature by analyzing how children with ASD and typically developing peers attend to static visual social scenes and how these fixations differ between cartoons and photographs. The goal of this research is to build on the study done by Gillespie-Smith et al. (2014), using photographs and BM images in the context of a Social Story™. As noted by Riby and Hancock (2008) “comparing cartoon images versus photographs... may be particularly important when associating visual fixation patterns with social cognition and understanding” (p. 2856).

This study looks to provide more information on the effectiveness of different social static stimuli (e.g., photographs vs. cartoons [BoardMaker]) in the context of a common intervention strategy (e.g., Social Stories™). Also, the study addresses whether differences in attention to photographs and or BM images correlate with indices of ASD severity, executive functioning, weak central coherence, or intellectual functioning.

Title of Study: Effectiveness of the Adoption of Restorative Practices within The Burlington School District

Awardees: Whitney Keefner, Taylor Stephens, Nick Grudev, Alexandra Barnett, Amanda Payne, Chelsea Jewell, Rebecca Sullivan, Jamilah Vogel, Alyxandra Herbert, and Kelly Boardman (Clinical Mental Health Counseling & School Counseling)

UVM Faculty Advisor: Lance C. Smith, PhD

Abstract:

The proposed research endeavor aims to measure the effectiveness of the adoption of restorative practices within the Burlington School District.

Restorative Practice (RP) in schools is rooted in the paradigm of restorative justice. As stated by Howard Zehr, (2002), restorative justice rests upon “the belief that we are *all* connected through a web or relationships and when a wrongdoing has occurred, the web becomes torn” (as cited in Kline, 2016, p. 97). Restorative justice is a world-view adopted from non-western, indigenous peoples around the world that understands crime and wrongdoing as harm done to people and communities (Thorsborne & Blood, 2013). When wrongdoing occurs within a restorative justice model, all stakeholders involved with the harm are given an opportunity to

participate in discussions about the incident, to process who was affected and how it has impacted the community, and to determine collectively what needs to be done to repair the harm (Zerhr, 2002). RP can perhaps be best described as the expression and operationalization of restorative justice in schools: an umbrella of tools that school staff and faculty can use for prevention, to establish positive relationships with all school stakeholders, and to repair relations that have been damaged by conflict and harm (Kline, 2016).

In contrast to restorative justice, the criminal justice system and schools around the world have been colonized by Western practices of retributive justice. Rather than viewing harm as a violation of people and relationships, retributive justice views wrongdoing as the breaching of laws and rules. Rather than aiding the agent of harm in understanding their obligations to repair community relationships, retributive justice apportions blame. Rather than asking how the harm can be repaired, retributive justice asks what punishment must be imposed (Thorsborne & Blood, 2013). The paradigm of retributive justice as practiced in schools results in zero tolerance and exclusionary discipline practices that disproportionately hurt children from traditionally marginalized groups such as children with disabilities, child or color and children from poor and working class families. The result of retributive practices in schools informs academic failure, dropout, and the school-to-prison pipeline amongst such groups (Kline, 2016; Payne & Welch, 2015).

Recent data collected by the Burlington School Board suggests that there exists a disparity in discipline for students from traditionally marginalized groups. Therefore, the authors of this proposal are working in collaboration with representatives from the Burlington School District to support the research and development of restorative practices in order to achieve the goals of lowering suspension rates across the board—including inequitable suspension rates across racial, socioeconomic and ability-status lines—reducing achievement gaps amongst traditionally marginalized groups of students, and improving school climate for all.

Title of Study: Exploring Think College Academics and Employment

Awardees: Nicole Villemaire and Nicole Bogucki

UVM Faculty Advisor: Shana Haines, PhD

Abstract:

Think College provides an inclusive classroom experience, internship opportunities, and successful employment outcomes after graduation. Think College also provides: college mentors, opportunity to learn important life skills (time management, responsibility, and holding ourselves accountable), and become involved with social activities (cafeteria, clubs, events, etc.)