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Critique Reflection (Honors Capstone)

Research has proven that there are six key emotions that should be easy to differentiate for children: Happy, Sad, Mad, Scared, Disgust, and Surprised (Kouo & Egel, 2016). These emotions usually are recognizable for neurotypical children by the age of 3. However, some children that have been diagnosed with autism spectrum disorder (ASD) have trouble recognizing these emotions in a social setting. With the support of the previous research studies, I am investigating how to better help Speech-Language Pathologists determine what materials are the most beneficial and how to provide the best strategies for these individuals who have difficulties recognizing emotions in a social setting.

In conjunction with my mentor, Dr. Diane Millar, we had twenty-eight college students complete a survey with two sections. The first section strictly focused on emotional recognition based on facial expressions alone from the stimuli presented. The second section included images of a person, or persons, participating in an activity along with visual cues and facial expressions. Both of these sections included widely used stimuli that Speech-Language Pathologists use as intervention and assessment materials when working with clients.

The survey's findings demonstrated that the only emotion participants successfully identified was happy. This suggests that the materials used regularly in therapy by speech-language pathologists may lack validity. Future research identifying more accurate depictions is needed. In addition, the accuracy of the assessment materials used to assess the visual interpretation of feelings was questionable. The highest accuracy by participants was for a photo representing someone who was very surprised. Much more research is needed in this area to allow for accurate assessments of social skills.

Overall, I really enjoyed presenting at the Virginia Collegiate Honors College Conference. Sharing my findings with other students and faculty from various universities was a fantastic experience. The input I got was insightful and opened my eyes to new possibilities for my research project. I was able to gather new perspectives and concepts for future research studies. I'm excited to carry on with my studies and expand on my research project as I continue in my education.