



Students study effects of COVID masks on kids' ability to detect emotions

They say eyes are windows to the soul. But can emotions be understood only by looking in someone's eyes? A group of Georgia College & State University Psychology majors attempted to see if that's true.

This year, students in Dr. Tsu-Ming Chiang's Social Emotional Research Lab returned to Baldwin County's Early Learning Center (ELC) to do emotional coaching with 3- to 5-year-olds. The work is especially important for these children, who spent much of their early years looking at masked adults during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Students compared the children's socio-emotional skills to previous years' data from previous years on children who saw entire faces during early development.

"We wanted to make sure kids still understood people's facial expressions," said senior psychology major Clara Eysel of Columbus. "We wanted to know if the COVID years—with the masks and distancing and separation—affected their ability to tell when someone's upset, happy or mad."

Initial results show COVID-19 and mask wearing had a negative impact.

Children who regularly saw only the eyes of adults appeared to have lower emotional knowledge. This means they could be at higher risk for social incompetence problems—like depression, social anxiety, trouble relating mind to body, post-traumatic symptoms and obsession-compulsion disorders or social withdrawal issues.

Teachers of this age group reported seeing more troubles with behavioral regulation, attention spans and language skills. Findings were based on teacher assessments, Chiang stressed, not children actually displaying these problems.

"In comparison, children exhibited more internalizing problems during the past year or so," Chiang said. "Some children from this age group, who grew up during COVID, could have mild forms of these behaviors. These problems can be related to a lack of social skills in people who poorly handle their emotions."



Clara Eysel (above) and Carson Beasley (below) work with children at the ELC.



Chiang has tracked emotional data on Baldwin County's children for 23 years. It's important work in an area where a high percentage of kids are raised by low-income, single parents who don't always have time to help their children build emotional skills.

Teachers don't often have the time or resources to support children who exhibit emotional issues either. Chiang often obtains grants to buy resources for local teachers and she coaches them in strategic classroom management.

"You've got to be firm but warm with these children and show them you care," Chiang said. "When emotion is so extreme, a person's brain shuts down and isn't processing. You need to find a way to modulate emotions to the point where you can talk with distraught children."

This semester, nine psychology majors worked twice a week at the ELC. They taught empathy training lessons—using storybooks, video, puppet shows, song, movement and art-n-crafts.

It's great preparation for Eysel, who wants to work in special education. As co-head teacher, Eysel starts labs by showing children large glossy pictures of expressive faces. Students talk to the children about emotions like happiness, sadness, anger, fear, frustration and surprise.

The head teacher reads a story or shows a video about emotion—stopping to ask lots of questions, like "What's this person feeling?" "Why does he look scared?" and "How would this make you feel?"

Senior Carson Beasley of Woodstock, Georgia, is majoring in psychology with a minor in criminal justice. He's a favorite in the Social Emotional Lab. He plays guitar, and they sing songs about emotions.

Beasley wants to be a school counselor. Being in Chiang's lab for two years, he's learned a lot about young children, assessment testing and data collection.

One boy told Beasley he used to hit when he was angry, but now he knows that's not okay.

Beasley beams when talking about their ability to learn.

"They're like sponges," he said. "From the first lesson that we did, there's been a huge, huge difference."

GCSU offers Georgia's first Healthcare Simulation Certificate for trainers

Healthcare simulation centers are powerful tools for training healthcare professionals. Now, Georgia College & State University offers a new certificate program designed to make these centers more efficient across the state.

The College of Health Sciences has developed a one-year, graduate healthcare simulation certificate program to equip educators with best practices for teaching aspiring healthcare providers. The new Healthcare Simulation Certificate is the first of its kind in Georgia.

"Healthcare simulation educators all share a common end-goal, which is to improve patient outcomes," said Dr. Sterling Roberts, director of the Georgia College Simulation Center and assistant professor of nursing. "With this program, we can prepare educators to conduct simulation training in academia and other settings according to best-practice standards."

In healthcare simulation centers, students practice patient care using tools like specialized manikins and standardized patients—someone



trained to act as a real patient.

Students need guidance from faculty and healthcare practitioners who understand the equipment and its use for training. In this program, graduate students learn best-practice standards, simulation design, policy development and more.

Following instruction, faculty work with each student to create a clinical path that fits students' individual needs.

"Where I work currently, we utilize simulation, but not as effectively as we could be," said Ashley Barnes, a doctorate student of nursing practice. "I have learned so much that will help grow my organization's current program, and really reignited my love and desire for simulation."

In August 2022, the Georgia College Simulation and Translational Research Center received provisional accreditation through the Society for Simulation in Healthcare—making the university one of two University System of Georgia with this distinction.

"Learning these new skills will better equip me as a nursing instructor to develop and promote critical thinking and knowledge for my own students—so they can be better nurses" said doctorate student Tonya Jewell. "I cannot say enough about the simulation team."

Did you know?

Three great music concerts help bring the academic year to a close this week.

"Sound Sculptures XIII: The World Around Us" is at 7:30 p.m. Thursday, April 27, in Max Noah Recital Hall. Directed by music faculty, Dr. David H. Johnson, this concert features newly-composed, electronic compositions by Georgia College students.

The 34th Annual JazzFest will be 2:30 to 8:30 p.m. on Front Campus Saturday, April 29. Georgia College & State University's Department of Music is partnering with Allied Arts in Milledgeville for this performance of local high school bands, the Georgia College Alumni Band and Georgia College Jazz Band with renowned guest saxophonist Mace Hibbard.

Sound Sculptures and JazzFest are free and open to the public. Donations are encouraged. All proceeds benefit music scholarships or the GCSU Department of Music through GCSU Foundation, Inc. For more information, please email music@gcsu.edu or call 478-445-8289.

Then, the "Dance Spring Concert" will be 7:30 p.m. Saturday, April 29, and 2 p.m. Sunday, April 30, in Russell Auditorium. There'll be original dance works, along with new pieces by student choreographers. For ticket info, visit tickets.gcsu.edu.

Education professor debuts 2nd season of Georgia travel show on GPB

His father gave him his first camera at age 12. Now Dr. Chris Greer, professor of Instructional Technology at Georgia College & State University, uses that passion to educate people worldwide about photography and travel.

His first TV outdoor-adventure show, "View Finders," aired last spring on Georgia Public Broadcasting (GPB). It was so popular, he was invited back for a second season.

"I love to educate the general public about history, ecology and the natural beauty of Georgia," Greer said. "A TV show like this provides me with incredible reach across the entire state and beyond. It's very gratifying to have that kind of impact when it comes to topics like conservation and preservation of natural resources."

Greer has been at Georgia College 17 years. He

teaches a wide range of technology integration courses to undergraduates and graduate education students. Until recently, he hadn't thought of developing a television show. The idea occurred after the publication of Greer's image-rich books on Photography: "Georgia Discovered: Exploring the Best of the Peach State" and "Naturally Georgia: From the Mountains to the Coast."

These books and the GPB show interest people who don't always have time to travel to faraway places. But they also give people options for nearby attractions—places they may not have thought to visit.

"The appeal of this show is it highlights beautiful locations that anybody in Georgia can visit on any given weekend. We try to showcase the natural beauty that can be found all over this

state," Greer said.

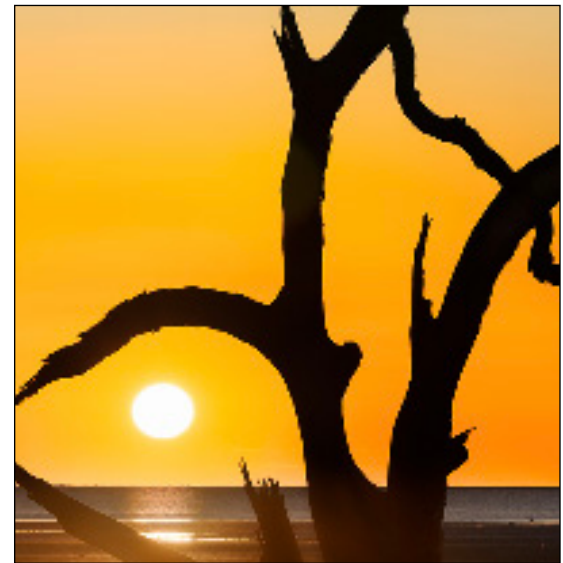
Last spring's shows were his first dive into television. The second season of "View Finders" began April 1st. It features 10 episodes—five airing this spring and another five in the fall. Every episode showcases a variety of music from Georgia musicians, as well. The series runs Saturday mornings and Thursday evenings for about 30 minutes.

Episodes record a variety of beautiful places in Georgia and just beyond.

Greer's aim and undimmed hope is always to capture gorgeous scenes and silhouettes in his camera's viewfinder and on video.

"The show offers a little something for everybody," Greer said.

View Finders can be found at gpb.org.



A photo by professor Dr. Chris Greer.

What's going on in Bobcat Territory?

Visit frontpage.gcsu.edu/events

Tuesday

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Wednesday

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1-4 p.m. GCSU Tennis doubleheader vs. North Georgia University at Centennial Center Courts.

4-6 "In the Media Studio" talk by 13WMAZ sports anchor Marvin James in the A&S Auditorium.

7-8:30 p.m. The MFA Graduation Reading in the Pat Peterson Museum Education Room at Ina Dillard Russell Library.

Thursday

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2-4:45 p.m. A calligraphy workshop and public lecture by guest scholar Mina Choksi in Peabody Auditorium.

7:30 p.m. "Sound Sculptures XIII: The World Around Us" concert in Max Noah Recital Hall.

Friday

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6-10 p.m. GCSU Baseball vs. Columbus State University at John Kurtz Field.

Saturday

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2-6 p.m. GCSU Baseball vs. Columbus State University at John Kurtz Field.

2:30-8:30 p.m. The 34th Annual JazzFest on Front Campus.

7:30 p.m. GCSU Dance Spring Concert in Russell Auditorium with a Sunday, April 30, performance at 2 p.m.