Aarti Bodas, M.S.

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Education

2021-	**Boston University** ***PhD, Developmental Science, Expected August 2026*** Department of Psychological and Brain Sciences
Dissertation	The Development of Children's Explanatory Expertise and the Influence of Cognitive, Contextual, and Identity Factors
Committee	Dr. Deborah Kelemen (1st Reader), Dr. Melissa Kibbe (2nd Reader), Dr. Peter Blake (3rd Reader), Dr. Tara Mandalaywala (4th Reader)
2021-2023	**Boston University** ***Master of Arts in Psychology*** Department of Psychological and Brain Sciences
Advisor	Dr. Deborah Kelemen
2019 – 2021	**Villanova University** ***Master of Science in Psychology*** Department of Psychological and Brain Sciences
Thesis	Investigating the Influence of Educational Media on Children's Environmental Views
Committee	Dr. Deena Weisberg (Chairperson), Dr. Janette Herbers, Dr. Irene Kan
2015 - 2019	**University of Washington, Seattle** ***Bachelor of Science in Psychology*** Department of Psychology ***Minor in Global Health*** School of Public Health
Honor's Thesis	"Can I Count on You?": Infants' Expectations of Prosocial Behavior Across Contexts
Mentors	Dr. Jessica Sommerville, Dr. Kelsey Lucca

Profile

- Cognitive developmentalist with an interdisciplinary approach to studying how children learn from and evaluate explanations
- Research examines how cognitive, social, and identity factors shape children's information processing
- Skilled in translating cognitive and developmental research into applied contexts
- Committed to improving public engagement with science for children and adults

Research Appointments

2021- **Child Cognition Lab, Boston University**

Graduate Researcher

2021- present Children's Explanatory Expertise and the Roles of Cognitive, Contextual and Identity Factors

Children build their understanding of the world by learning from others, often through explanations. It is therefore critical to understand how children process these explanations, and this influences the development of their own knowledge. This project investigates the development of explanatory expertise in 5- to 8-year-old children when reasoning about non-living natural phenomena. Through two multi-measure studies employing a single-explanation approach, we also examined how these abilities develop and interact with broader cognitive, contextual, and identity-related factors. To accomplish this, I conducted two multi-measure studies employing a single-explanation paradigm. This project aims to provide a comprehensive understanding of how children's explanatory behaviors develop.

2022- present Children and Adults' Understanding of Science and Science Identity

People's understanding of science is shaped by a range of factors, including their experiences engaging with scientific activities, their knowledge, age, and social identity. This project investigates how both children and adults conceptualize what it means to "do science" and how these views relate to their science identity (that is, the extent to which they see themselves as being connected to science). We explore whether individuals who strongly identify with science are more likely to define it in ways that align with how scientists themselves describe their work. By examining these relationships across age groups, the study aims to shed light on how conceptions of science develop and the factors which influence individuals' sense of belonging from childhood to adulthood.

2022- present Evolving Minds Project

The Evolving Minds project is an evidence-based curriculum intervention aimed at helping elementary-aged children understand evolution by natural selection through the use of explanatory models. As a graduate research assistant (2022–23), I contributed to the design of curriculum materials and observed teachers during field-testing to support implementation. My research focused on how children's conceptions of science and their science identities influenced their learning outcomes. Findings from this work (*Bodas & Kelemen, in prep*) showed that children who entered the curriculum with a stronger belief that science is explanatory demonstrated greater learning gains. This research sparked my broader interest in how children interpret and use explanations to engage with complex scientific ideas.

2019-2021 **Scientific Thinking and Representation Lab, Villanova University**
Graduate Researcher
2020- 2021: Story-Transfer: Sustainability Project
As part of my Master's thesis, I designed and conducted a study exploring whether preschool-aged children can learn about resource conservation from an animated episode of *Nature Cat*. In addition to assessing children's understanding of conservation, the study examined how watching the episode influenced their environmental worry and their self-efficacy—their belief in their ability to "help nature." While children showed only modest gains in conservation knowledge, they demonstrated significantly heightened concern for the environment after viewing the episode.
2019- 2021: Content Analysis of Children's Science Media Projects
These projects analyzed the content of children's science-themed books and television shows to investigate the topics they emphasize and the extent to which they incorporate fantastical elements. We found that a vast majority of children's educational media includes fantastical components—often interwoven with scientific content. These findings, alongside insights from my Master's thesis, raise important questions about the effectiveness of educational media in supporting children's science learning, particularly when fantasy and factual content are closely intertwined.

2019-2021 **Adversity and Resilience in Development Lab, Villanova University**
2020- 2021*: Investigating the relationship of use of pretend play and mutual response orientation (MRO) among parent-infant dyads living in homeless shelters*
This project investigated whether parents' living in shelters used pretend play while interacting with their infants, and whether this was related to sensitive parenting and mutually responsive behavior between infants and their parents.

2018-2019 **Early Childhood Cognition Lab, University of Washington.**
Undergraduate Research Assistant and Honor's Thesis Student
2018- 2019: TRUST Project
This project examined the consistency of infants' expectations of prosocial behavior across contexts. I developed and conducted an independent research project involving eye-tracking and coding looking-time data. This was my undergraduate honor's thesis research.

Manuscripts

Published Research Manuscripts

Bodas, A., Chlebuch, N., & Weisberg, D. S. (2025). Water woes: The effects of children's science media on conservation knowledge, self-efficacy, and environmental worry in the United States of America. *Journal of Children and Media*, 1–21. https://doi.org/10.1080/17482798.2025.2472666

Chlebuch, N., **Bodas, A.,** & Weisberg, D. S. (2023). What does the cat in the hat know about that? An analysis of the educational and unrealistic content of children's narrative science media. *Psychology of Popular Media.* https://doi.org/10.1037/ppm0000388

Research Manuscripts in Preparation

Bodas, A., & Kelemen, D. Conceptualizing Science as Explanatory Predicts Elementary-Aged Children's Science Learning. *Revise and resubmit.*

Bodas, A., & Kelemen, D. Children's Explanatory Preferences about Non-Living Natural Phenomena. *Manuscript in preparation.*

Bodas, A. & Kelemen, D. The Influence of Children's Conceptions of Science and Science Identity on their Explanatory Preferences about Non-Living Natural Phenomena. *Manuscript in preparation*

Chlebuch, N., **Bodas, A.,** & Weisberg, D.S. Still Hidden Figures: Gender and race representation in children's educational science media. *Manuscript submitted for publication*.

Ting, F., **Bodas, A.,** Harfouche, L. & Kelemen, D. Children's sensitivity to physical and cognitive disability status when judging norm violations. *Manuscript in preparation.*

Professional Membership

Graduate member of Cognitive Development Society
Graduate member of the Society for Research on Child Development
Graduate member of Psi Chi: National Honor Society for Psychology

Grants and Fellowships

2025-2026	Graduate Teaching Fellowship, Boston University
2024-2025	Graduate Teaching Fellowship, Boston University
2023-2024	Graduate Teaching Fellowship, Boston University
2023	Boston University Frederick S. Pardee Center for the Study of the Longer-Range Future Graduate Summer Fellowship ($6000)
2022	Boston University Center for Innovation in Social Science Mini Grant ($1500)
2021	Graduate Teaching Fellowship, Boston University
2019- 2021	Graduate Student Assistantship, Villanova University
2020	Villanova Graduate Research Fellowship, Summer 2020
2019	Undergraduate Research Conference Travel Award
2019	Hagenstein Endowment Travel Scholarship
2018	Research Scholarship from the Mary Gates Endowment

Honors and Awards

2024	Clara Mayo Research Award ($2295)
2020	Induction into Psi Chi Psychology Honor Society
2019	Guthrie Prize for Best Empirical Research Paper

Invited Talks

Bodas, A. (2024) Children's explanatory preferences about non-living natural kinds. Invited Speaker for Developmental Science Program Brown Bag.

Bodas, A. (2023) Children's explanatory preferences about non-living natural kinds. Invited Speaker for Developmental Science Program Brown Bag.

Bodas, A. (2022) *Children's learning from science media.* Invited speaker for Boston University Academic Immersion program in Psychology.

Bodas, A. (2022) Children's explanatory preferences about non-living natural kinds. Invited Speaker for Developmental Science Program Meeting of the Minds.

Bodas, A. (2020) *Children's environmental learning from fictional media.* Invited speaker for Villanova University Cognitive Science Brown Bag Group.

Conference Presentations

Bodas, A., & Kelemen, D. (2026, April). *Conceptualizing science as explanatory predicts elementary-school children's understanding of counterintuitive scientific ideas.* Poster to be presented at the Cognitive Development Society Biennial Conference, Montreal, Quebec, CA.

Bodas, A., & Kelemen, D. (2025, May). *Children's Learning of Adults' Scientifically Warranted and Unwarranted Explanatory Preferences.* Symposium talk presented at the Society for Research on Child Development Biennial Meeting, Minneapolis, MN.

Bodas, A., Kelemen, D., Khandelwal, M., Latorre, C., & Kumar., A. (2024, April) *Examining Science Identity: Contributions of Social Factors to Individuals' Belongingness to Science and Explanatory Tendency.* Symposium talk presented in American Educational Research Association Annual Meeting, Philadelphia, PA.

Bodas, A., Kumar., A., & Kelemen, D., (2024, March) *Children's sensitivity to scientific ways of explaining natural phenomena and the role of science identity.* Symposium talk presented in Cognitive Development Society Biennial Conference, Pasadena, CA.

Bodas, A., Khandelwal, M., Latorre, C., Kumar., A., & Kelemen, D., (2024, March) Relation*ships between children's and adults' explanatory tendencies and science identity.* Symposium talk presented in Cognitive Development Society Biennial Conference, Pasadena, CA.

Kumar, A., **Bodas, A.,** & Kelemen, D., (2024, February) *Explain me this: Science identity does not prevent children from valuing other people's bad explanations.* Poster presented in the Eastern Psychological Association Annual Conference, Philadelphia, PA.

Ting, F., **Bodas, A.,** Harfouche, L. & Kelemen, D. (March 2023). *Children's sensitivity to physical and cognitive disability status when judging norm violations.* Flash talk presented for the Society for Research on Child Development Biennial Meeting. Salt Lake City, UT.

Chlebuch, N., **Bodas, A.** & Weisberg, D.S. (March 2023). *Still hidden figures: Gender and race representation in children's educational science media*. Poster presented at the Society for Research on Child Development Bi-ennial Conference. Salt Lake City , UT.

Bodas, A., Chlebuch, & Weisberg, D.S. (April 2022) *"An inconvenient truth: Educational media increases preschoolers' worry about the environment, but not their knowledge.* Poster presented at the Cognitive Development Society Biennial Conference. Madison, WI.

Weisberg, D. S., Chlebuch, N., & **Bodas, A. (**March 2022). *Impossible elements in children's educational media*. Paper presented at the annual meeting of the International Society for Fiction and Fictionality Studies. Chicago, IL.

Chlebuch, N., **Bodas, A.,** Weisberg, D.S. (April 2021) *Wile E. Coyote, physical science genius: A content analysis of children's science media*. Poster for the Society for Research on Child Development Biennial Meeting.

Herbers, J.A., Jennings, K., Cutili, J.J., Abdul-Masih, M., & **Bodas, A.** (April 2021) *Parent-child relationship quality among dyads with infants and toddlers experiencing family homelessness*. Paper Symposium presentation for the Society for Research on Child Development Biennial Meeting.

Bodas, A., Kyuchukova, K., Lucca, K. & Sommerville, J. (May 2019) *"Can I count on you?" Siblings influence infants' expectations of trustworthiness of fair and unfair agents.* Poster presented at the Association for Psychological Science 31st Annual Convention. Washington D.C.

Bodas, A., Kyuchukova, K., Lucca, K. & Sommerville, J. (May 2019) *"Can I count on you?" Siblings influence infants' expectations of trustworthiness of fair and unfair agents.* Presented at the University of Washington Undergraduate Research Symposium. Seattle, WA.

Bodas, A., Kyuchukova, K., Lucca, K. & Sommerville, J. (March 2019) *"Can I count on you?": Infants notice inconsistencies in prosocial behavior across contexts.* Presented at the Northwest Social Cognitive Development Conference. Friday Harbor, WA.

Chaired Conference Symposiums

Bodas, A. (2025, May). *Contextual Factors Influencing Children's Questions and Explanations.* Symposium to be presented at the Society for Research on Child Development Biennial Conference, Minneapolis, MN.

Patel, K. & **Bodas, A.** (2024, April). *Science and me: How scientific thought and engagement is shaped by identity factors and diverse learning contexts.* Symposium presented at the Cognitive Development Society Biennial Conference, Pasadena, CA.

Teaching and Mentoring

- **Malvika Khandelwal,** Boston University, Recipient of 2022 Kilachand Honors College Award
- **Ankita Kumar,** Boston University, Recipient of Undergraduate Research Opportunities Program Awards (Fall 2022, Summer 2023)
- **Mrinalee Reddy,** Boston University, Recipient of Undergraduate Research Opportunities Program Award (Spring 2024)
- **Fari Mabud,** Boston University, Recipient of Undergraduate Research Opportunities Program Award (Summer 2024)
- **Kate Saluti,** Boston University, Recipient of Undergraduate Research Opportunities Program Award (Spring 2025); Directed Study student
- **Eira Wang,** Boston University, Directed study student
- **Ezzah Tariq,** Boston University
- **Allaa Bouzaghou,** Boston University
- **Sophia Lapp,** University of Pittsburgh
- **Cristian Latorre,** Boston University
- **Anika Kumar,** Boston University

Academic Service

2024- Boston University Developmental Science Prospective Students Day Co-Organizer
2022- present Boston University Developmental Science Colloquium Series Co-Organizer
2020-2021: Villanova University Psi Chi Vice President

Professional Service

Ad-hoc Journal Reviewing: Cognitive Development (co-reviewer); Translational Issues in Psychological Science
Conference Reviewing: CogSci Conference (2022)

Community Outreach and Service

Bodas, A. (2022) *Pursuing a career in Psychological Research.* Invited speaker through Skype a Scientist at Rossal School, Lancashire, North West England.
Bodas, A. (2022) *Pursuing a career in Psychological Research.* Invited speaker at Weston High School, Weston, MA.
Bodas, A. (2020) *Applying to experimental psychology masters programs, navigating the first year of graduate school, and staying positive during Covid-19.* Invited speaker for Emerging Minds Lab, Arizona State University.
2018-2019: Social Media Coordinator, Diversity in Psychology, Co-organized conference for high-school students from under-represented minorities to learn about the Psychology program at UW.
2016: Mentoring high school students through the University of Washington Dream Project.

Professional Skills

- Conducting quantitative and qualitative psychological research
- General linear modeling, interaction effects, statistical analysis with latent variables, confirmatory factor analysis, structural equation models, latent growth models, psychometrics
- Designing qualitative data coding schemes
- Conducting research in applied (museums, preschools and elementary schools) and in laboratory settings.
- Using SPSS, R, and RStudio for data analysis.
- Using Eye-Tracking programs to collect child participant data.
- Developing scientific research studies, designing data collection methodology and planning analyses
- Writing scientific research proposals, manuscripts, and giving research presentations
- Bilingual: English (native speaker), Marathi (native speaker)