Bidirectional Effects of Parent Behaviours and Child Language Development Following Parent Language Training for Children with Autism

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Purpose of Our Pilot Study

To explore the early natural language learning environments of families who have toddlers diagnosed with autism spectrum disorder (ASD).

Specifically:
   (1) how much and what is the nature of the communicative interaction between toddlers with ASD and their parent(s)?

   (2) to what degree does a parent education program (*Hanen More Than Words)* influence the nature and frequency of communicative interactions?

Autism and Parent-Child Interaction

➔ **CHILDREN WITH ASD: LANGUAGE AND COMMUNICATION DELAYS (SILLER & SIGMAN, 2008; WETHERBY, 2006)**

➔ **KNOW LITTLE ABOUT NATURAL LANGUAGE LEARNING ENVIRONMENTS**

➔ **IMPACT OF PARENT TRAINING PROGRAMS WITH THIS POPULATION?**

➔ **CHARACTERISTICS OF PARENTS/CHILDREN THAT MAY RESPOND TO PARENT LANGUAGE TRAINING PROGRAMS?**

Transactional Theory
# (Sameroff & Chandler, 1974)

Methods: Participants

- Twelve toddlers diagnosed with ASD and their families
  - Chronological age: 28-39m (m=33m)
  - Developmental age: 2-22m (m=9m)
  - Gender: 8 males; 4 females
- Recruited from a local service provider
- Demographic information:
  - Ethnicity: 7 Caucasian; 3 Asian; 2 African Canadian
  - ESL: n=3 (e.g. Urdu, Tagalog, Amheric)
  - Primary Caregivers mother n=11, father n=1
  - Age of Primary Caregiver: 21-42yrs (m=34.7yrs)
  - Sibling: n=11

Methods: Intervention
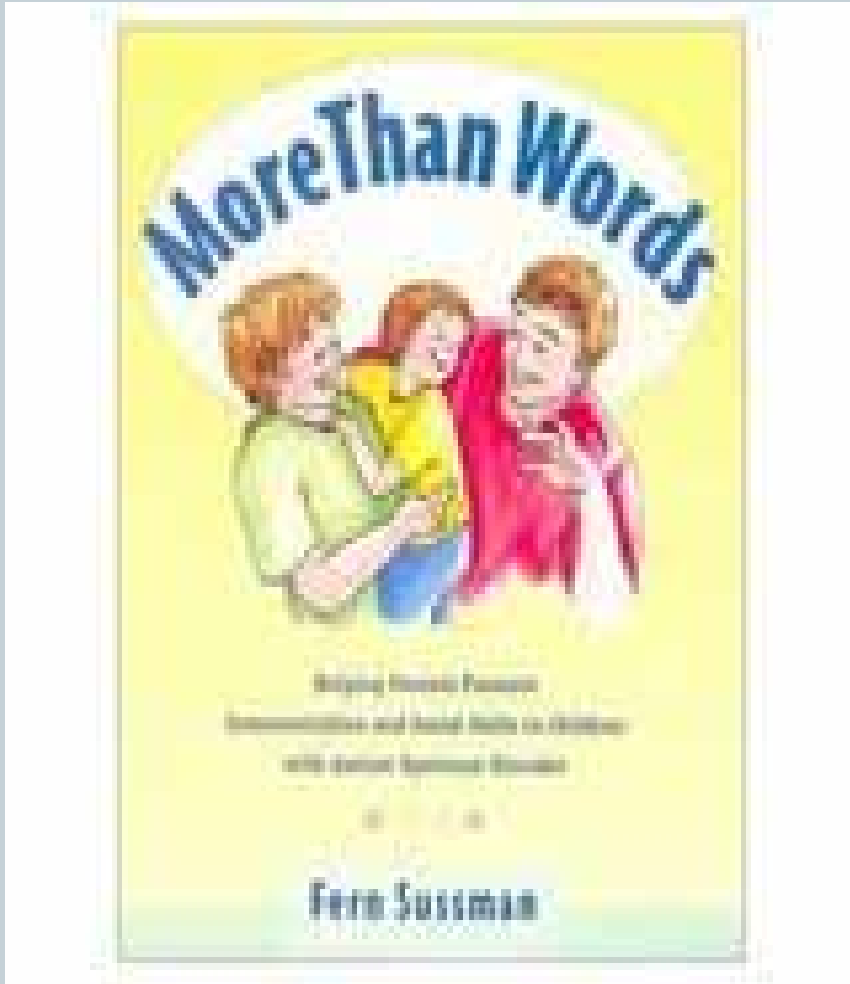
- **Intervention:** Parent participation in the Hanen *More Than Words* (MTW) Parent-training program targeting early language development
- Eight 2.5hr sessions (weekly)
- Three 1.5hr home visits with the SLP

Data Collection

Four Methods:

(1) Use of a Digital Language Processor (DLP) to obtain in home parent-child interactions (4-5 times points),

(2) Child language development questionnaire (MCDI-Words and Gestures) (4-5 time points)

(3) Parent-child interaction video (3 time points)

(4) Parent self evaluations and clinician evaluation of parents' skills (Post MTW)
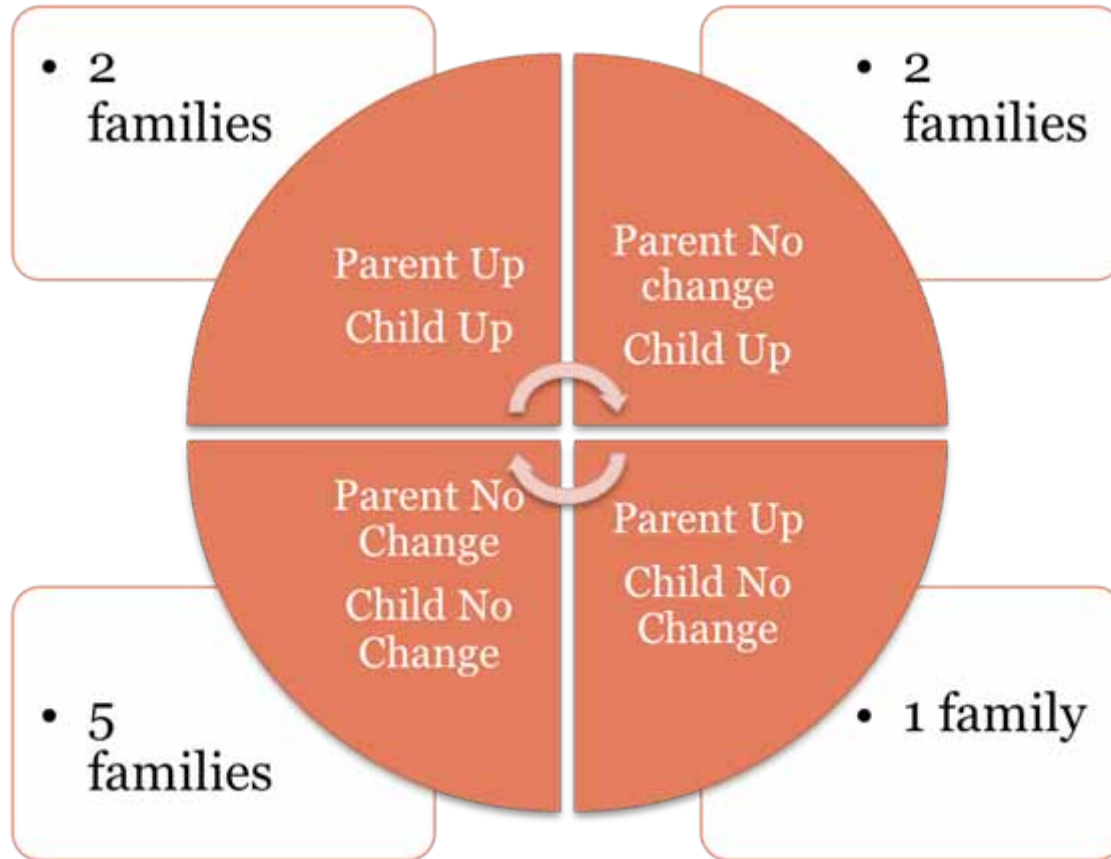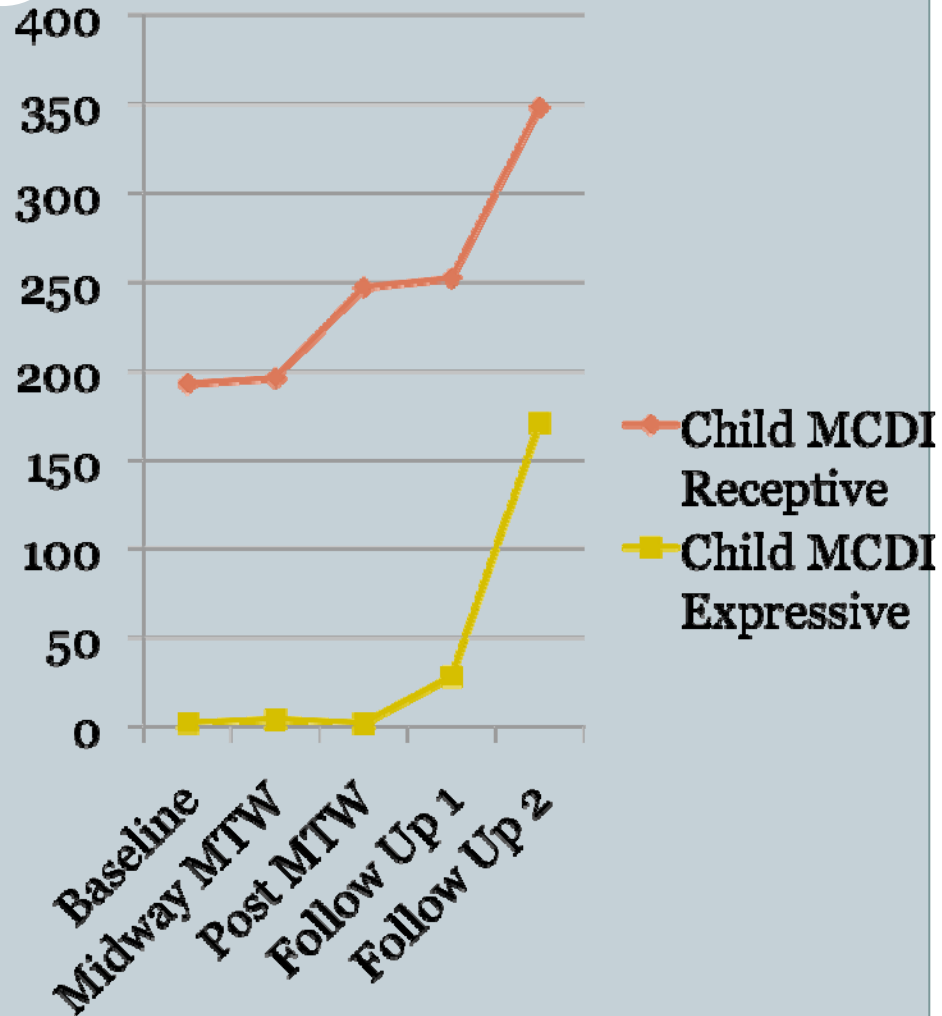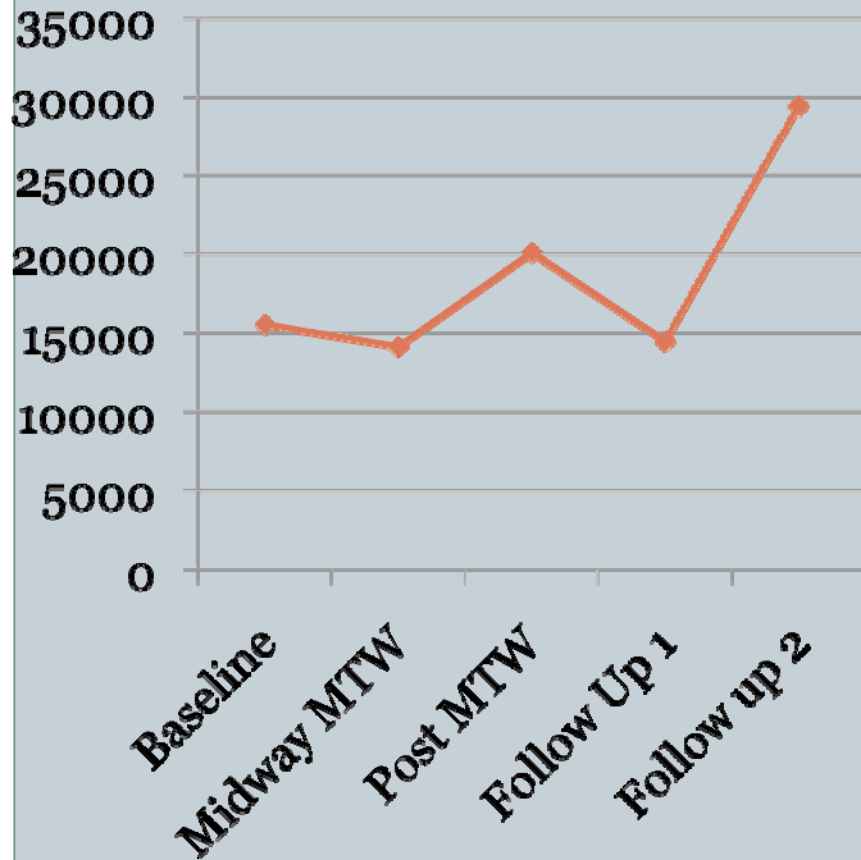
Adult Word Count
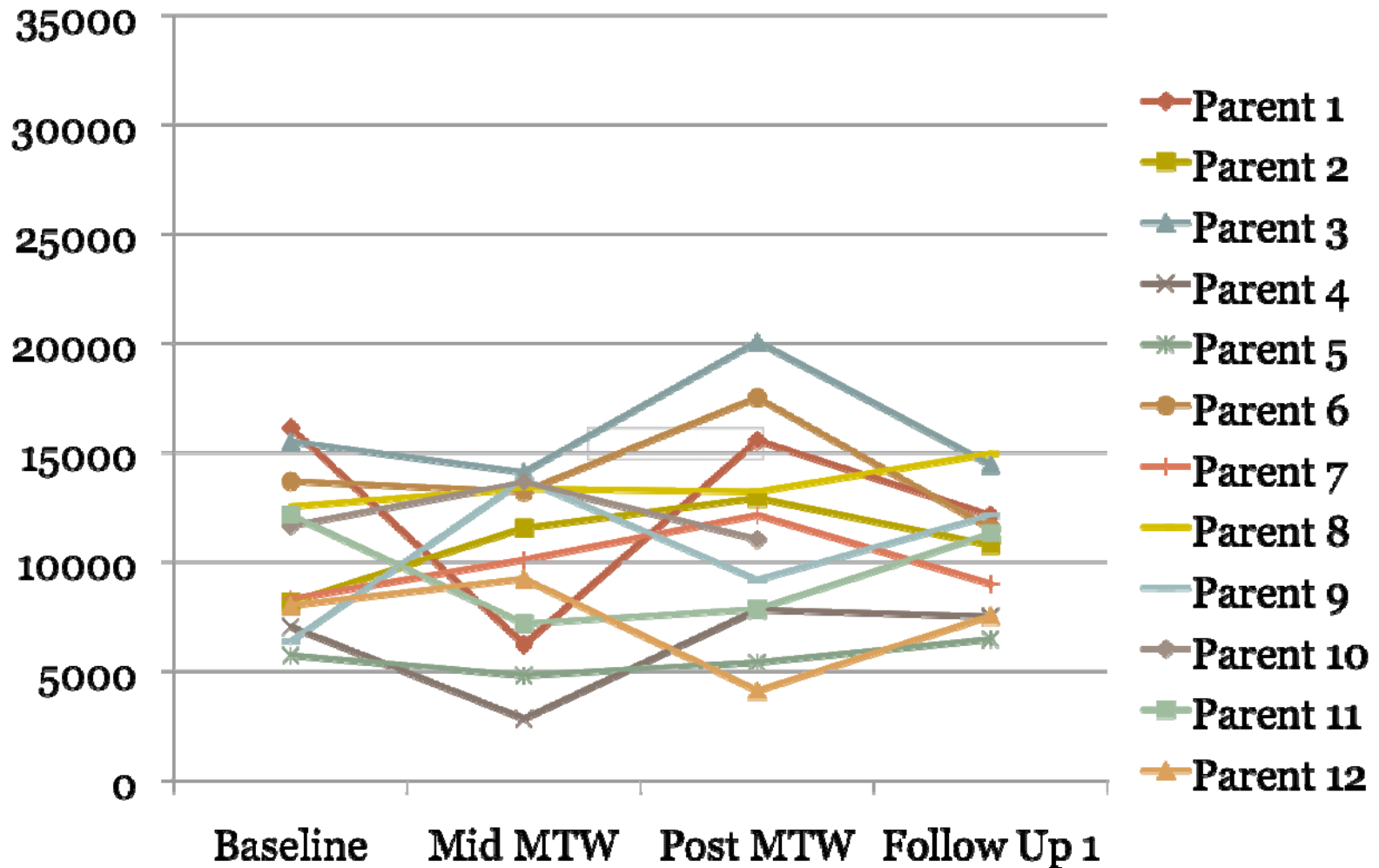
Mean Adult Word Count
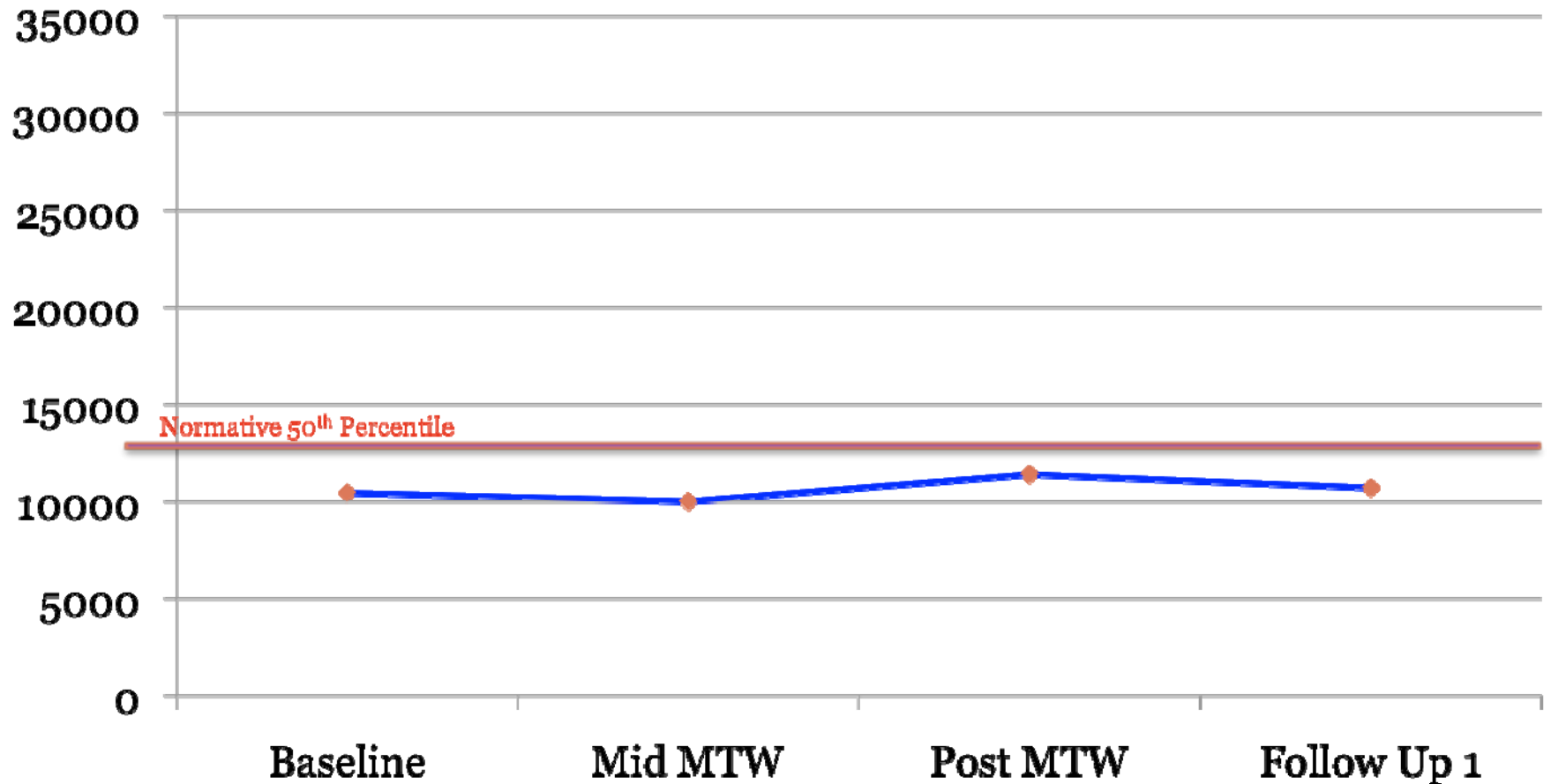
Parent-Child Talk Profiles

- 2 families

Parent Up
Child Up

- 2 families

Parent No change
Child Up

Parent No Change
Child No Change

Parent Up
Child No Change

- 5 families

- 1 family

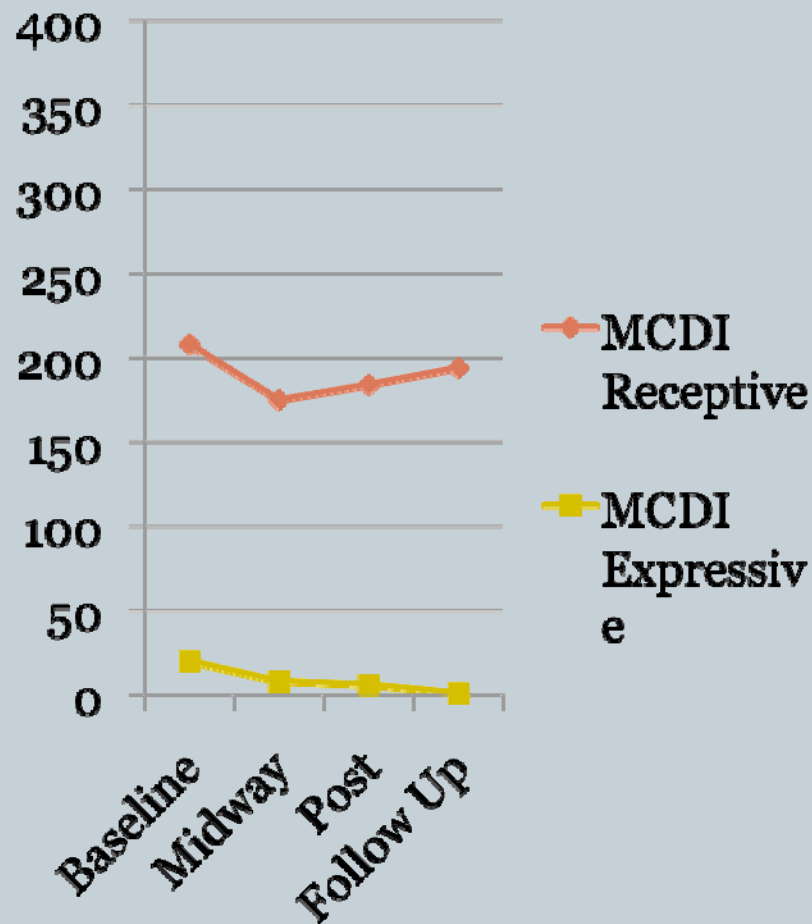Unsure:
2 families

Profile 1: Parent Up, Child Up

Profile 2: Parent No Change, Child Up
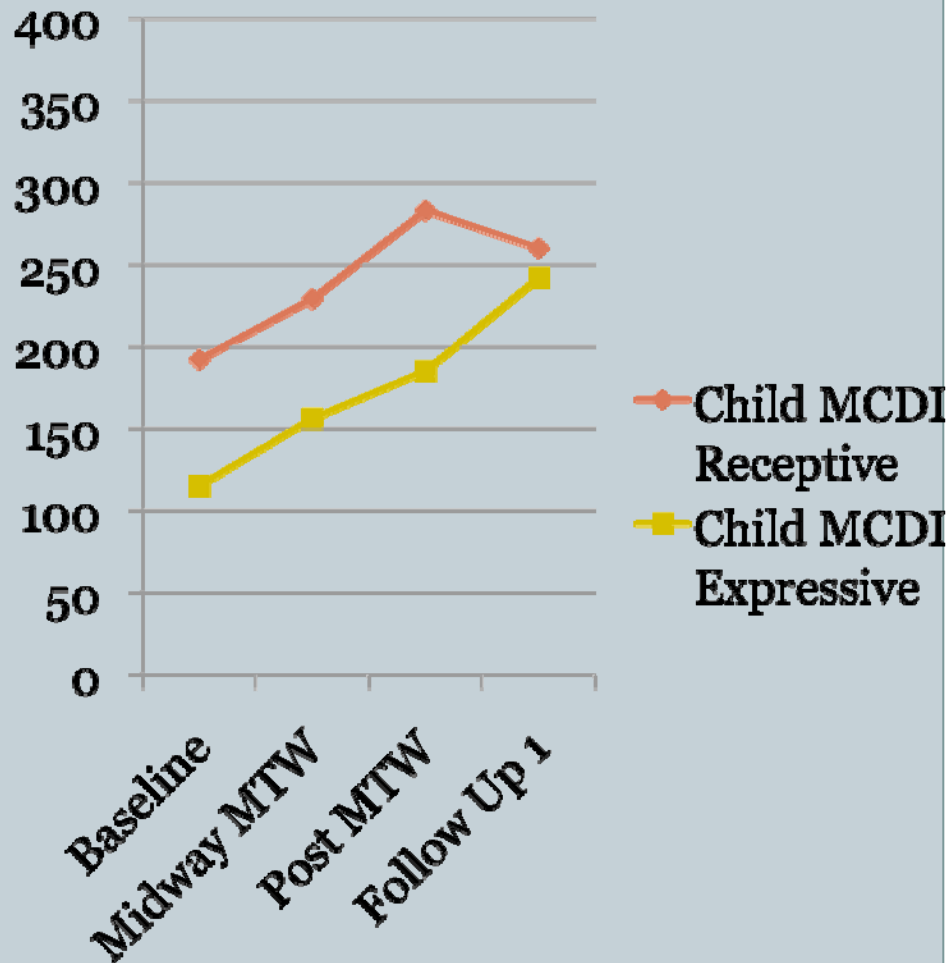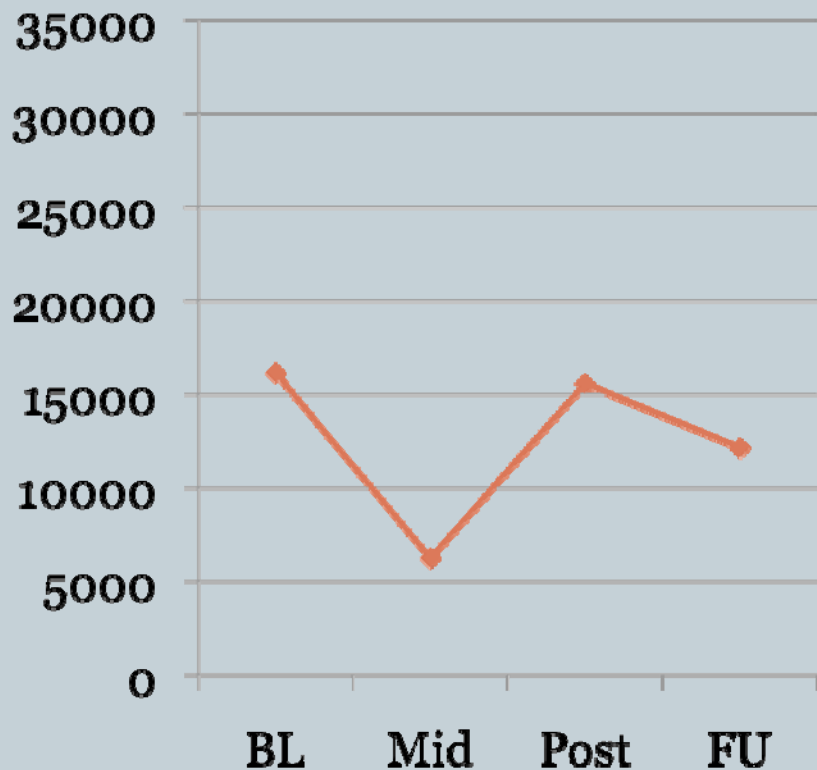
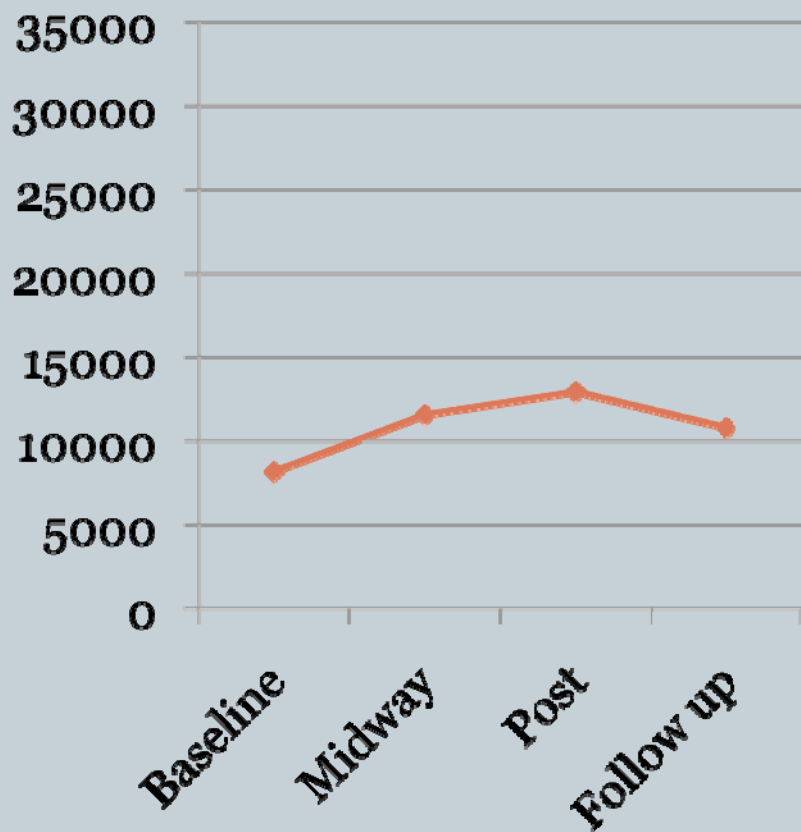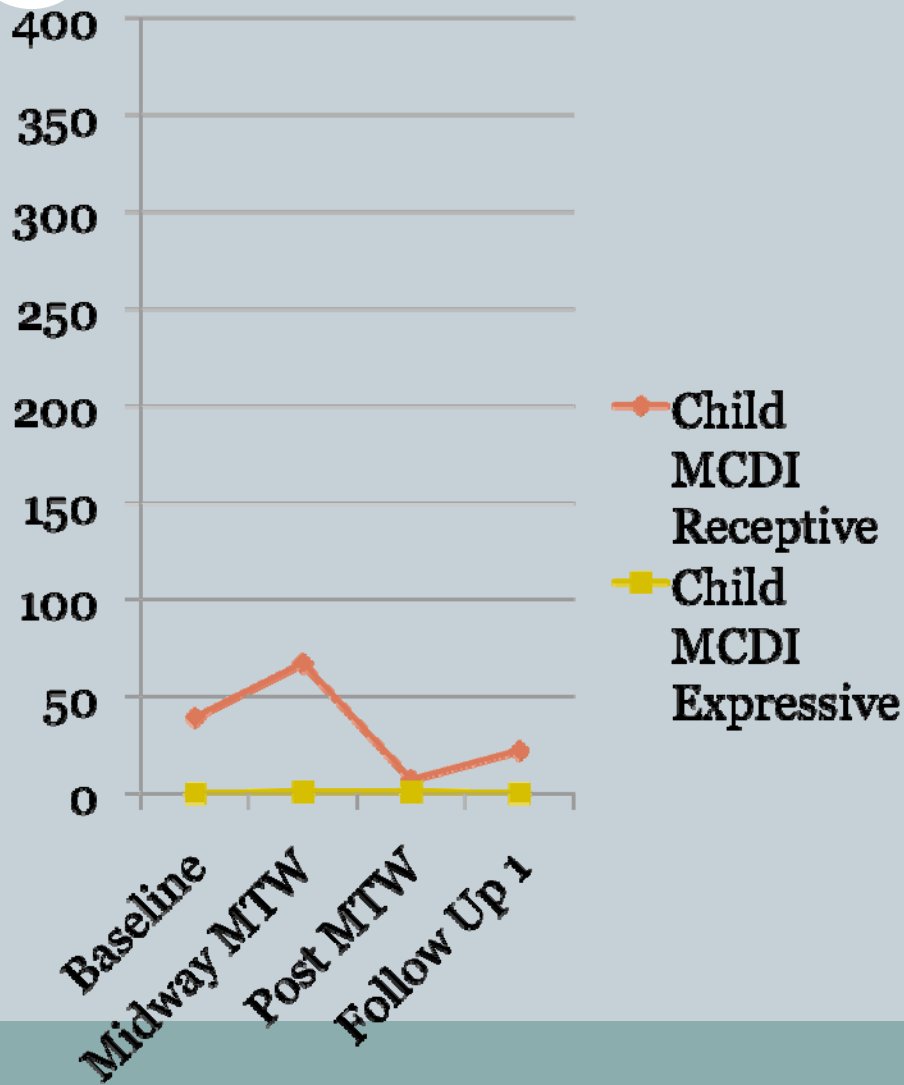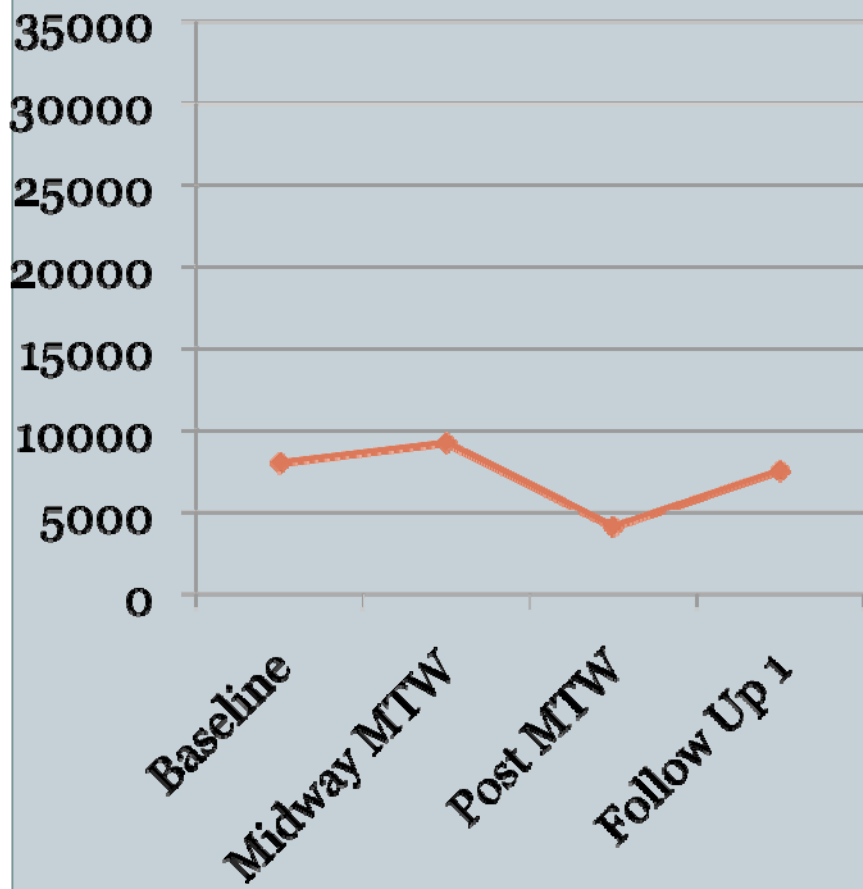# Profile 3: Parent Up, Child No Change

Profile 4: Parent No Change, Child No Change

Challenges and Questions

Findings

- Limited maintenance of parent talk gains
- Stability of patterns within families
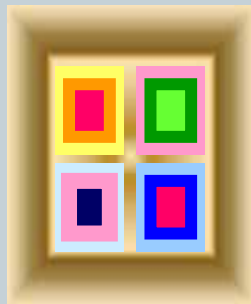- Large variability between families

Limitations

- Small sample
  - Spring and fall groups
- Natural setting and variability
  - Examine parent experience
- Nonverbal communication
  - Video data

Feedback Welcome!

Thank you to the Families!

- Acknowledgements:

A UTISM

R ESEARCH

T RAINING

Program

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