

# FRIENDS PROJECT Newsletter

Social Development Lab | University at Buffalo, SUNY

## Contact Us

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## FRIENDS Year Five Summary

Children Participating: 319

Preschools Participating: 20

Kindergartens Participating: 52

Saliva Samples Collected: 1,541

Nail Samples Collected: 386

Hair Samples Collected: 181

Dear Families, Teachers, and Directors,

I hope you had a great summer! We are excited to share that we are working with our fifth and final cohort of preschoolers! It was great meeting our new preschoolers and we look forward to hearing more about their adventures in kindergarten. We also had so much fun catching up with our fourth cohort of children who transitioned into kindergarten this year! We cannot thank all our participating families enough for their active involvement in our FRIENDS project. Thank you for completing our surveys and interviews. We also thank all the families who helped with saliva and/or nail/hair sample collection this year!

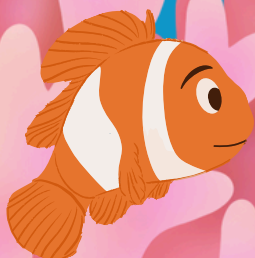
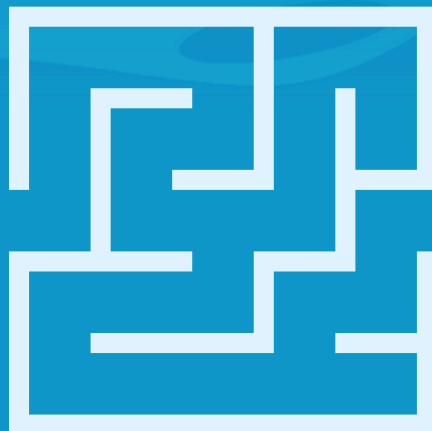
We greatly appreciate our school directors and teachers for going above and beyond to recruit participants in our community and assisting with data collection. We could not do this project without everyone's help and willingness to participate!

With gratitude,

Dr. Jamie Ostrov

Director, UB Social Development Lab

Can you help  
the clown fish  
home?



## Preliminary Findings

The FRIENDS Project collected data throughout the pandemic and has explored how COVID-19 may have impacted children's social development. Recent findings that were presented by Dr. Jamie Ostrov at the International Society for Research on Aggression (ISRA) World Meeting in Munich, Germany suggested that hybrid learning was associated with some social challenges for preschoolers from low-income backgrounds. In-person masked learning was also associated with higher levels of relational aggression (e.g., calling peers names, excluding peers) for girls.

The FRIENDS Project is interested in how children's ability to regulate emotions is associated with their peer relations in kindergarten. Ph.D. student Katy Gardner presented findings at the ISRA World Meeting that suggested children that better regulate their emotions in preschool experience lower levels of relational victimization (e.g., being called names, being excluded by peers) in kindergarten. FRIENDS is also interested in how children's biology and context, such as hormones and parenting, impact their peer relations. Ph.D. student Maggie Azu presented a project at the ISRA World Meeting examining how peer victimization, warm parenting, and children's stress hormone levels relate to their aggressive behavior in preschool. Relational victimization in the fall of preschool predicted increases in relational aggression across the preschool year. Additionally, children with low levels of stress hormones and high levels of physical victimization (e.g., being hit or kicked by peers) had lower increases in physical aggression (e.g., hitting or kicking peers) than those with high stress hormone levels and high levels of physical victimization. These findings demonstrate how children's biology and context may relate to their social behavior.

## What is next for FRIENDS?

We will be following up with families from cohort 5 this fall for their final kindergarten timepoint. During this timepoint, we will ask for your child's kindergarten teacher to complete a similar survey to the one their preschool teacher completed.

If you have your child's kindergarten school name, teacher name, teacher email, and phone number, you may email it to us at [devlab@buffalo.edu](mailto:devlab@buffalo.edu) or click [here](#)

## Lab Updates

- **Bri Memba** has completed her Clinical Psychology Doctoral Internship at University of Chicago Medicine (UCM) and received her Ph.D. in Clinical Psychology.
  - **Gretchen Perhamus** has passed her dissertation defense, has begun her internship at The Medical University of South Carolina (MUSC), and has been awarded the Society of Clinical Child and Adolescent Psychology APA Division 53 2024 Student Achievement Award – Late Stage Graduate.
  - **Maggie Azu** presented a poster at The International Society for Research on Aggression World Meeting (Munich, Germany), has passed her 2nd year project proposal, and received the Psychological Association of Western New York Scholarship Award for Racial/Ethnic Minority Doctoral Candidates in Clinical/Counseling Psychology.
  - **Katy Gardner** presented a poster at The International Society for Research on Aggression World Meeting (Munich, Germany), and has passed her 2nd year project proposal.
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- **Olivia Bell** will be pursuing her Ph.D. in Developmental Psychology at Penn State University.
  - **Sarah Lucas** will be pursuing her Ph.D. in Education with a specialization in Applied Developmental Science at The University of North Carolina – Chapel Hill.
  - **Emily Hong** will be joining us as a Ph.D. student in Clinical Psychology this fall and most recently worked at the Yale Child Study Center.
  - We also welcome 2 new staff members to the lab: **Hannah Dickinson** (Buffalo State University) and **Ella Rivet** (Western University)



## Lab Graduates

**Lexi Holzman, Amy Maslin, Jenny McCarthy, and Zoey Morrisey** graduated from UB this spring. Amy is now working on the ABCD Study at The Medical University of South Carolina (MUSC). Jenny will be continuing her education at UB to receive her master's in social work. Zoey will be working at the Summit Center as a teacher assistant while she applies to graduate school.

## Lab Publications & Presentations

Azu, M. A., Ostrov, J. M., Murray-Close, D. (2024, July). *The role of basal cortisol and parental warmth in associations between peer victimization and later aggression in early childhood.* Poster presented at the International Society for Research on Aggression 2024 World Meeting, Munich, Germany.

Gardner, K. M., Ostrov, J. M. (2024, July). Household chaos and peer victimization in early childhood: The mediating role of emotion dysregulation. Poster presented at the International Society for Research on Aggression 2024 World Meeting, Munich, Germany.

Ostrov, J. M., Murray-Close, D., Perhamus, G. R., et al. (2024, July). *COVID-19 and impact on aggression and peer victimization during early childhood.* Paper presented at the International Society for Research on Aggression 2024 World Meeting, Munich, Germany.

Ostrov, J. M., Murray-Close, D., Gardner, K. M., et al. (2024, July). *New techniques for examining physiological responses to peer treatment and aggression among young children.* Paper presented at the International Society for Research on Aggression 2024 World Meeting, Munich, Germany.

### Principle Investigators

Dr. Jamie Ostrov  
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Dr. Dianna Murray-Close  
(MPI)  
Professor, University of  
Vermont

### Lab Volunteers

Hayley Feibel  
Vanessa Uhteg

### Research Staff

Kristin Tymchak Carrol  
Jules Zajdel  
Hannah Dickinson  
Ella Rivet

### Undergraduate Research

#### Assistants

Amy Maslin, Gabby Markham,  
Jassani Ruiz, Jenny McCarthy,  
Katherine Kremer, Lauren Montagne,  
Lexi Holzman, Riley Godwin, Rowan  
Radel, Zoey Morrisey

### Graduate Students

Katy Gardner (PEERS2K  
and FRIENDS Project  
Director)

Maggie Azu (ECFP-3  
Project Director)

