

Early Childhood Friendship Project –Phase 2 Newsletter

Spring 2014

UB Social Development Laboratory

Letter from the Director

Hello from the UB Social Development Lab in the Department of Psychology.

We are excited to present you with the final findings from the Early Childhood Friendship Project-Phase 2. My team and I are so grateful to you and your children for your past participation and support of our efforts to improve the lives of young children. As you will see our expanded program worked well!

We are working on preparing manuscripts to publish our findings in top peer-reviewed scientific journals in the coming year. We will post these publications on our laboratory website for your future use. I hope you enjoy this newsletter and this update from our laboratory. Please keep in touch in order to receive future laboratory updates and opportunities to partner with us in future research projects. We look forward to working with you again soon!



Best wishes!

-Dr. Jamie M. Ostrov
 Director, Social Development Project
 Associate Professor of Psychology

Our Final Results—A Few Reminders

As a reminder classrooms were randomly assigned to receive the intervention early or to receive the intervention late. The group that received the intervention late served as our control group when analyzing our data. We collected data from observations and obtained teacher reports for participating children. Our study included 141 children and their teachers in several early childhood classrooms in the area. We collected data before and after our 8 week program. Our program included the use of puppet shows, stories, arts and crafts projects, group games, and behavioral reinforcement periods. We focused on a new social skill lesson each week (e.g., friendship formation skills, difference between tattling and reporting, strategies to deal with aggression). Children received a certificate at the end of the program.

Teachers were supportive of our program and indicated at very high levels that they would recommend the program to other staff in their schools. They believed that our program was developmentally appropriate and that our staff implemented our program successfully.

Our methods appeared to be consistent and measuring what they were designed to measure and our program was implemented in a consistent manner, which was in keeping with the intervention program manual.



Special points of interest:

- Thank you for your participation!
- See page 2 for more results!
- Ask the developmental psychologist see page 3
- Make a fun craft and game see page 5

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Our Final Results—The Program worked well!

According to teachers and observers (whom were unaware of the condition of the children in the classrooms), children that were in the early intervention group tended to be engaged in less social exclusion at the end of the 8 week Friendship Project program compared to those children that received the intervention late.

We also found that children that received the intervention early showed significantly lower levels of physical aggression (e.g., hitting, kicking, pushing) at the end of the 2 month intervention compared to those children in the control classrooms.

We documented that children that received the intervention early received significantly lower amounts of peer harassment from other children in their classrooms com-



pared to children who did not receive the intervention early. Specifically, they were less likely to be excluded by peers and less likely to be told that they “can’t play” with someone.

Our initial results indicated that there were no differences in levels of sharing and helping behavior across the children who received and did not receive the program. This may be because these behaviors were very common and were being taught by teachers in all centers during the year. We will be conducting additional analyses to examine this question more carefully and future professional and peer reviewed scientific journal articles will be posted on the UB Social Development Laboratory website for your future use.

Recent Presentations

Our staff has recently made scholarly presentations at several professional meetings including the Association for Psychological Science and Society for Research on Child Development.

Dr. Ostrov has also conducted a number of local presentations including a recent talk entitled “Before you ‘kick that child out’ of your program” on behalf of the Early Childhood Inclusion Committee of WNY. If you would like Dr. Ostrov to conduct an in-service or training at your center or for your organization please contact him directly at jostrov@buffalo.edu.

Our recent publications from past studies (most available on our website)...

Ostrov, J.M., & Godleski, S.A. (2013). Relational aggression, victimization, and adjustment during middle childhood. *Development and Psychopathology*, 25, 801-815.

Ostrov, J. M., Murray-Close, D., Godleski, S. A., & Hart, E. J. (2013). Prospective associations between forms and functions of aggression and social and affective processes in early childhood. *Journal of Experimental Child Psychology*, 116, 19-36. doi: 10.1016/j.jecp.2012.12.009

Kamper, K. E., & Ostrov, J. M. (2013). Relational aggression in middle childhood predicting adolescent adjustment outcomes: The role of friendship quality. *Journal of Clinical Child and Adolescent Psychology*, 42, 855-862.

Hart, E. J., & Ostrov, J. M. (2013). Functions of aggressive behavior and future functional impairment. *Early Childhood Research Quarterly*, 28, 683-691.

Ostrov, J. M., Kamper, K. E., Hart, E. J., Godleski, S. A., & Blakely-McClure, S. J. (in press). A gender-balanced approach to the study of peer victimization and aggression subtypes in early childhood. *Development and Psychopathology*

Ask the Developmental Psychologist

My child really enjoys watching television, but I am worried about what programs are best for my child to watch. What television shows should I allow my child to watch?

First, it is important to restrict how much young children view media and in keeping with the American Academy of Pediatrics we recommend restricted daily screen time. Second, two recent studies in our laboratory have demonstrated that preschoolers learn and model what they watch on TV so the content of the show does matter.

In particular, we have demonstrated that young children that watch "educational" programming that models social exclusion and other forms of

what we call relational aggression (e.g., "you can't be my friend anymore") increase in their use of these behaviors over time. We even demonstrated these effects over a two year period (from age 5-7!). We believe that



young children are not connecting the moral at the end of the program with the aggressive behavior and are instead copying what they see.

We specifically developed our early childhood friendship project with this point in mind. Our puppet shows and stories were all very brief and we worked hard to connect

the aggressive behavior with the social skill or lesson of the week. We asked clarification questions to make sure that the children understood the connection and how the behavior made the victim feel. We praised the children for following the social skill or new behavior and worked with them to identify the problems with the aggressive behavior.

We suggest that parents do this when they are co-viewing TV with their preschooler. The co-viewing process should be an active one with questions and comments by the parent to help the child connect the content with the moral lesson. Please see our website for popular press articles and scientific journal articles on this topic.



Staff Updates

Emily Hart, M.A. will be defending her dissertation in the spring and moving on to her Clinical Internship at the University of Rochester Medical Center (Child and Adolescent Track). We are thrilled for Emily and wish her the best of luck as she finishes her doctoral training!

Lauren Faracca, MEd is now working at Fisher Price conducting exciting work that is sure to benefit young children and the early childhood field for years to come. We wish Lauren all the best in her new position.

Sarah McClure is now a Ph.D. student in Clinical Psychology here at UB and in the Social Development Lab.

Kimberly Kamper, M.A. is beginning to work on her dissertation in our Clinical Psychology program.

Brittany Sternberg and **Ashley Wander** will be attending Columbia University for an MSW and **Sarah Reynolds** will be enrolling in the MSW program here at UB. Congrats to all three of the honors students!

Recent Press

Dr. Ostrov's recent paper on the role of educational media and aggression was highlighted in a *NY Times* article and in an American Psychological Association *Science Brief* article. Links to both of these articles may be found on the lab website under "links".

Dr. Ostrov assisted with the CDC and US Dept. of Education efforts to create a uniform definition of bullying and that was released. You may read more about this at the CDC website: <http://www.cdc.gov>

Dr. Ostrov has also been consulting with the federal [stopbullying.gov](http://www.stopbullying.gov) website on their early childhood initiative. You may find resources and webisodes here: <http://www.stopbullying.gov/>

UB Social Development Laboratory

476-479 Park Hall
Department of Psychology
Buffalo, NY14260-4110

Phone: 716-645-3680 (Dr. Ostrov)
Lab Phone: 716-645-0257
E-mail: devlab@buffalo.edu (lab) or jostrov@buffalo.edu (Dr. Ostrov)

Staff Members:

Director:

- Dr. Jamie Ostrov

Clinical Supervisor/co-Investigator:

- Dr. Stephanie Godleski

Graduate students on the project:

- Lauren Faracca, M.Ed.
- Emily Hart, M.A.
- Kim Kamper, M.A. (Project Director)
- Sarah McClure, B.A.

Current Honors Students/Research Assistants:

- Sarah Reynolds
- Brittany Sternberg
- Ashley Wander



We are on the web:

<http://wings.buffalo.edu/psychology/labs/SocialDevLab/home>

Welcoming Spring! Create your own bird feeders!

As winter fades away and spring approaches we are starting to see more and more birds returning back home.

To make a pinecone bird feeder all you have to do is find some pinecones, stick the seeds on and find a special place to hang your bird feeder.

With this fun and simple craft you and your family can create your own bird feeders. You never know who might show up to sample from your bird feeder. Set up some binoculars by the window near the feeder so you can catch a glimpse of your backyard visitors. Create a "science journal" and take observations of the creatures that come to visit.

For more details visit the website link below!

Quick Instructions

1. Find the pinecone
2. Tie yarn around your pinecone
3. Cover pinecone in peanut butter
4. Roll pinecone on paper plate with bird seed on it
5. Find a perfect hanging spot and watch as you bring visitors into your backyard

For more details visit the website link below!



Materials

- A pinecone (try to find the biggest one you can)
- Peanut Butter
- Tool to spread the peanut butter with
- Bird seed or sunflower seeds
- Yarn
- Scissors
- Paper Plate



Website Link: <http://www.busybeekidscrafts.com/Pinecone-Birdfeeder.html>