

# Early Childhood Play Project



## Winter 2006 Research Update

Winter Update

2/27/06

### Successful Fall 2005 Data Collection!!

This semester we had our most successful and complete data collection wave ever! Not only were we able to expand the sample of kids we observe to 74 children, but we also expanded to a new observation site at Buffalo State's Child Care Center. Of course, we couldn't have had such a great semester without all the recruiting help from site directors, the generous parents who agreed to have

their children participate, and the wonderful teachers who let us into their rooms and filled out questionnaire packets for us. Even though it was the first semester we asked parents to fill out packets, we got a resounding reply with lots of great information from over 50 parents! This new component to our study will help us to better understand children in light of the many important

contexts that play such a pivotal role in their developing social behaviors. We thank all the parents, teachers, site directors, and administrative staff at the centers for all their help on the project. My staff have really enjoyed being in your classrooms and getting to know your kids.

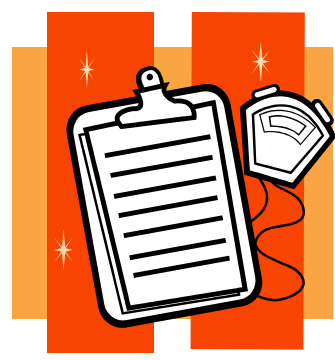
Thank you!  
-Dr. Jamie Ostrov  
Director, Play Project

Fall Observation Results	2
New Website Info	2
Observation Results for across the 3 semesters	3
Ask Dr. Ostrov	3
Staff Listing	4
Staff Photos	4

### Observations to Start Up Again...

Just as the lion of March is rushing in, our team will once again be roaring into participating schools to begin observations. Most of our staff has once again returned

for another great semester. We have also added a new observer, Stacey Lampell, who will be joining the observation team at ECRC. We can't wait to get started again!



#### Special points of interest:

- The week of 2/27/06 our staff will be returning to the schools to begin observations.
- We are beginning to be able to examine how the children's behaviors have changed over time
- We are very excited about our new website.

## And the Observation Data Is In...

We have officially completed data entry for all of the observations we made last semester. We have begun data entry for the parent and teacher packets, and we hope to be able to have results from that data available for upcoming newsletters.



In over 80 minutes of observation per child we found that:

- On average, children engaged in 2-3 acts of prosocial behavior during those 80 minutes, which includes behaviors such as sharing, inviting others into play, expressing concern and/or affection, and offering help to others.
- Children were much more likely to engage in prosocial behavior towards a female partner than towards a male play partner.
- On average children only engage in 1 act of physical aggression every 40 minutes, which includes behaviors such as hitting, grabbing toys away, pushing, biting, etc.
- Children were equally likely to be aggressive towards a male as they were towards a female play partner.
- Children seem to spend the most amount of their time engaged in play next to, in tandem, or with other children.

## Our New Website

We've entered 2006 with a bang here in the social development lab. We've created a website to better communicate with members of the community, participants in our studies, and other researchers and potential collaborators. Our

new website contains information about our mission, our ongoing research projects, some of our future research plans, many links, research articles, recent press releases, and even bios and pictures of some of the

key project staff. We look forward to continuing to augment the site and are open to suggestions for links or information it should contain.

Now we're on the Web!  
<http://wings.buffalo.edu/psychology/labs/socialdevlab/home.htm>

## As the Children Age...

Some of the children in our study have now participated through 3 semesters of data collection! For these children, we are starting to be able to examine changes in their behavior over time. So far our analyses suggest:

- Children have been spending more and more time engaged in collaborative and parallel playing styles as they have aged
- Similarly, they have been spending less time engaged in solitary and onlooker play styles
- There has been a trend for proso-

cial behavior suggesting that the children are engaging in more and more prosocial as the study has continued

- There was also a trend for relational aggression, suggesting that children's use of relational aggression increased from observations 1 and 2, but has stayed the same since
- Children's rates of physical aggression have stayed about the same across the time of the study
- These findings suggest that chil-

dren's play is becoming increasingly intimate and close as they age. The children also appear to be more able to take other's perspectives and to engage in higher order styles of play.



## Ask the Developmental Psychologist...

"The children in my class spend so much time just playing . Is this okay for them to do?"

Good question. Actually its better than okay for them, its actually really *good* for them. Children need to spend time in play. Children learn through play with others. They gain skills in reciprocity, turn taking, social rules, and even some early academic skills like counting, and letters and numbers. Research suggests that the most effective way to learn isn't through direct instruction or even through reading, its through teaching and being taught by one's peers. Children also often resolve stress and conflict from other environments through their play. Finally, play can help children develop self-control, which will further help them to build strong interpersonal relationships and succeed in school. So encourage them to play, they will learn well from it.

With future questions please contact us at:

Social Development Lab  
214 Park Hall  
Department of Psychology  
University at Buffalo, SUNY  
Buffalo, NY 14260-4110

Phone: 716-645-3650-214 (Dr. Ostrov)  
Phone: 716-829-2446 (Main Lab)  
fax: 716-645-3801  
email: [jostrov@buffalo.edu](mailto:jostrov@buffalo.edu) (Dr. Ostrov)

## Early Childhood Play Project

Psychology Department  
215 Park Hall  
University at Buffalo  
Buffalo, NY 14260

- ▶ Jamie M. Ostrov, Ph.D.  
Lab Director and Assistant professor in Clinical Psychology
- ▶ Emily Ries  
Head Research Assistant
- ▶ Kirstin Stauffacher Gros, M. A.  
Graduate Student Clinical Psychology
- ▶ Stephanie Godleski, B. A.  
Graduate Student Clinical Psychology
- ▶ Jamie Guzzo, B. A.  
Graduate Student Clinical Psychology
- ▶ Rebecca Vujnovic, B. A.  
Graduate Student School Psychology

### Project Staff

- ▶ Stacey Lampell  
ECRC
- ▶ Christa Bishop  
ECRC/Honors
- ▶ Audra Foote  
South
- ▶ Kristen Muth  
ECRC
- ▶ Maureen Ballin  
North
- ▶ Alyssa Tevens  
North
- ▶ Yaschia Kinsey  
Buffalo State
- ▶ Becca Trager  
Buffalo State
- ▶ Chris Bailey  
Honors Project



And out like a lamb...

### South Campus Observers:

Jamie Guzzo, Audra Foote, & Rebecca Vujnovic



### Buffalo State Observers:

Kirstin Gros, Becca Trager, & Yaschia Kinsey

### North Campus Observers:

Emily Ries, Alyssa Tevens, & Maureen Ballin



### ECRC Observers:

Stephanie Godleski, Stacey Lampell, Kristen Muth, & Christa Bishop