



## Infant Learning Project

The University of Texas at Dallas  
School of Behavioral & Brain Sciences  
Callier Center for Communication Disorders



Phone: 972-883-3649

Fax: 972-883-3622

E-mail:

[infantlearningproject@yahoo.com](mailto:infantlearningproject@yahoo.com)

Faculty Lab Director:

**Melanie Spence, Ph.D.**

**We are on the web:  
[bbs.utdallas.edu/ilp](http://bbs.utdallas.edu/ilp)**

### Thank You

We thank our families for your participation. Without your support, our research would not be possible!

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## The Relationship World of Infant Friends and Caregivers

**By: Fariba Davoodi**

Nowadays as more infants and young children are placed in group care, it is vital to think through the effect of early experiences with peers as well as group care on young children's learning and development. A recent study looked at the way infants' friend and caregiver relationships help shape infant social and emotional development. According to Shin (2010), it is essential to understand early friendship experiences among early peer interactions.

The study focused on infant friendships and their caregiver's role in infants' relationship involvements. This research was conducted by Shin (2010) in the infant room of a university-based childcare center in New York City. It was completed by observing infants in their classrooms with other babies and their caregivers to explore how infants experience friendship in their own terms and how caregivers interact with infants and influence their social and friendship experiences.

The investigation of dyads of infant friends and caregivers revealed information on the quality of how infant friendship would be unlike any other peer interactions, and how infant caregivers play a significant role in nurturing and supporting social relationships amongst infants. "Early friendships contribute uniquely to the social development of young children (Dunn, 2004; Hartup, 1996)." Moreover, infants who were friends demonstrated strong fondness for each other as well as reciprocal friendliness and a high level of enjoyment. Infants even mutually express their joy and affection toward each other through their actions, gestures and localization. For example, one infant leaned forward, hugged and patted another infant.

Remarkably, the infant friends will respond to each others' feelings and needs in time of necessity and they try to help each other to the best of their capabilities. For instance, when one infant started to be distressed another infant reached into the backpack, took out a tissue and tried to help her friend wipe her running nose.

The outcomes of this unique study revealed a critical role of caregivers in the development of infant early peer relationships. When the infant caregivers are caring, in tune with infants, and supportive in a loving way, then there will be a great social and emotional effect and positive friendships are experienced among infants. Furthermore, the findings about infants' friends and the effect of caregivers' behavior on infants' relationships have important implications for parents. These results suggest that behavior of the parent, the primary caregiver, toward their infant and the infant's friends impacts the development of the infants' social relationships.

Go to the source:

Shin M. (2010) Peeking at the relationship world of infant friends and caregivers, *Journal of Early Childhood Research*, 8(3) pages. 294–302

## **Time Mothers and Children Spend Together May Relate to Children's Emotional Intelligence**

**By Ashley DiFabio-Borthick**

Parent-child interactions through joint activities have been found to be important in many aspects of a child's development. A study by Albert Alegre looked the relationship between how much time parents spent in joint activities with their child and the child's emotional intelligence.

- Emotional intelligence was defined as the ability to use thought and understanding of emotions to help regulate behavior and thinking. This form of thinking is involved in a person's ability to perceive and manage emotions and creates an understanding of how emotions are related to others and their own feelings.

Alegre looked at 155 mothers and their 159 children, who were between 7-12 years old. Parents completed a questionnaire about the time spent with their children doing activities such as playing games, watching TV, reading, singing songs, doing chores, etc. Parents also responded to a scale that looked at their parenting style. All children responded to two different emotional intelligence scales: The Emotional Quotient Inventory: Youth Version and The Trait Meta-Mood Scale. Results showed that there was a correlation between the amount of time that mothers spent with their child and different aspect of emotional intelligence, such as shared attention, social cooperation, stress management, emotional regulation and intra/interpersonal intelligence.

The study looked to see if there was a positive, neutral or negative effect on emotional intelligence in relation to time spent together and the quality of activities. The study looked at possible effects on the child's emotional intelligence; the effects of the time spent and the quality of the interactions could have a positive, neutral or negative effect. Educational activities, such as homework assistance or reading and other joint activities, may have a positive or neutral impact on the child's emotional intelligence, while passive activities, such as watching TV, may have a negative effect. These findings show that a child's development is not only affected by the quantity of parent-child interactions, but also by the quality of these activities (Alegre, 2012). The researcher states that these findings are the first step in continuing the larger study to assess the "impact of the mother-child joint activity in the development of children's emotional intelligence" (Alegre, 2012).

When choosing to spend time with your child, it may be more beneficial for your child's emotional development to engage in educational activities versus passive TV viewing.

Go to the Source:

Alegre, A. (2012). The relation between the time mothers and children spent together and the children's trait emotional intelligence. *Child Youth Care Forum*, (41), 493-508.

## **New Students**

We would like to welcome one new student to the Infant Learning Project team. We appreciate her hard work and enthusiasm in the lab!

Fall 2012 Student

**Fariba Davoodi**

Natasha Ghosh, B.A.

Ashley DiFabio-Borthick, B.S.

Kate Shepard, M.S., CCC-SLP

## Warning Signs in the Development of Communication & When to Contact an SLP

By Natasha Ghosh

Speech and language delays are a concern among parents today, yet many do not know what signs to look for in their infant for these delays. However, it is imperative that parents learn some of the red flags so they can learn when to refer their child to a speech-language pathologist (SLP) for help. As research has indicated numerous times, early intervention for any problems in development is more effective than intervention given later on in life.

So exactly what does an SLP do and how can they help your child? Today, speech-language pathologists evaluate and treat 5 areas of language. These five areas are: 1) the meaning of words or semantics, 2) pragmatics, which is communication used correctly according to social rules (e.g. talking to a teacher in a formal tone vs. using slang terms with friends), 3) articulation, 4) voice, 5) fluency, and 6) form. Form encompasses syntax (rules of sentence formation), the use of morphemes (such as “s” making a word plural), the use of phonemes (the smallest speech sound unit in a language that can show a difference in meaning, as the *t* of *tack* and the *b* of *back*), intonation (changing pitch to distinguish kinds of sentences), volume, and juncture (joining words) (Wankoff, 2011). Another area that SLPs will evaluate and treat is delays in oromotor functioning, which can lead to trouble in eating (Wankoff, 2011).

The warning signs for speech-language delays for infants below 8 months of age are children with little exploratory play, difficulties with feeding, and movement and sensory issues. Sensory issues occur when children become overwhelmed because they have trouble processing all of the information that is coming in through their five senses. The key thing to pay attention to at this age is the infant’s affect, or essentially the mood/feelings they are appearing to have. If they are showing no responses with eye contact, body language or nonverbal vocalizations, this might be a sign to contact an SLP.

For children ranging 8-12 months, a child should be showing more nonverbal communication through skills like gestures and joint attention. Joint attention is when two individuals look at the same object. For example, if a child is playing with a toy, they will often look at their caregiver to see if they are paying attention to the toy. If the caregiver is looking away, the child may call attention to the toy by gesturing towards it. Children this age use expressions and gestures to communicate their needs. Also if the child is not using more than one syllable or babbling, an SLP evaluation might be needed.

For infants 12-18 months, parents should pay attention to whether their child is able to respond to gestures and turn-taking, understand one-step directions, and if simple words are comprehended. Other warning signs to keep in mind are children who cannot understand how words show range such as “less water” to “more water” (Wankoff, 2011). These children do not know object function or to look for objects when they are missing, such as when a spoon falls from a table and they do not look to see where it fell. Finally pragmatics (greetings, commands, etc.) and the number of communicative acts per minute (should be two or more) are also things parents should keep in mind when considering the use of an SLP.

An SLP can detect these issues and help children fix these areas. The effects of this intervention could help in areas of self-esteem, behavioral, peer relationships, academia, and social-emotional issues. The most important thing to remember is that problems in speech and language delay may potentially affect a child in many more areas than just communicating such as learning, regulating emotions and behavioral problems. For more information on signs of speech delays for children who are older than 18 months, some great resources can be found at: [http://www.babycenter.com/0\\_warning-signs-of-a-toddlers-language-delay\\_12293.bc](http://www.babycenter.com/0_warning-signs-of-a-toddlers-language-delay_12293.bc) & [http://kidshealth.org/parent/emotions/behavior/not\\_talk.html](http://kidshealth.org/parent/emotions/behavior/not_talk.html).

Go to the source:

Wankoff, L.S. (2011). Warning Signs in the Development of Speech, Language, and Communication: When to Refer to a Speech-Language Pathologist. *Journal of Child and Adolescent Psychiatric Nursing*, 24(3), 175-184.