

# **Project Good Buddies: Parent-Assisted Social Skills Training for Children with Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorders**



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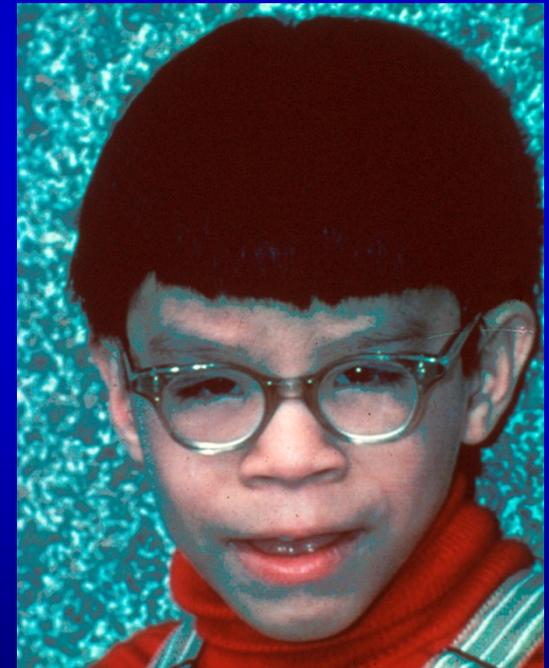
**CDC Grant No. U84CCU920158**

**CDC Grant No. UDD000041**

**Scimetrika Grant No. 200-2008-23703**

# Overview of Presentation

- Social deficits in children with FASD
- Importance of teaching social skills
- Project Bruin Buddies
  - Study design and overview
  - Research findings
- Project Best Buddies
  - Study design and overview
  - Research findings
- Project Good Buddies



# Social Skills Deficits in Children with FASD

- Poor understanding of social cues
- Socially indiscriminant
- Poor body boundaries
- Poor social judgment
- Poor social communication
- Difficulty understanding consequences of behavior
- Difficulty learning from experience
- Susceptible to victimization



(Carmichael et al., 1998; Streissguth, 1997; Brown et al., 1991; Kupersmidt et al., 1990; Paetsch & Bertrand, 1997; Patterson, et al., 1998)

# Importance of Friendship Skills

- Having one or two close friends is predictive of later adjustment:
  - Can buffer the impact of stressful life events
  - Correlates positively with self-esteem
  - Correlates negatively with depression and anxiety



(Buhrmeister, 1990; Matson, Smiroldo, & Bamburg, 1998; Miller & Ingham, 1976)

# Importance of Social Skills

- Peer rejection is one of the strongest predictors of:
  - Mental health problems
  - Juvenile delinquency
  - Early withdrawal from school



(Buhrmeister, 1990; Matson, Smirolodo, & Bamburg, 1998; Miller & Ingham, 1976)

# **Project Bruin Buddies**

**Fetal Alcohol Syndrome  
Neurodevelopmental Disorders with  
Children and/or Adolescents**

**CDC Grant No. U84CCU920158**

**Mary J. O'Connor, PI**

# Project Bruin Buddies Team

## Research Investigators

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## Research Assistants

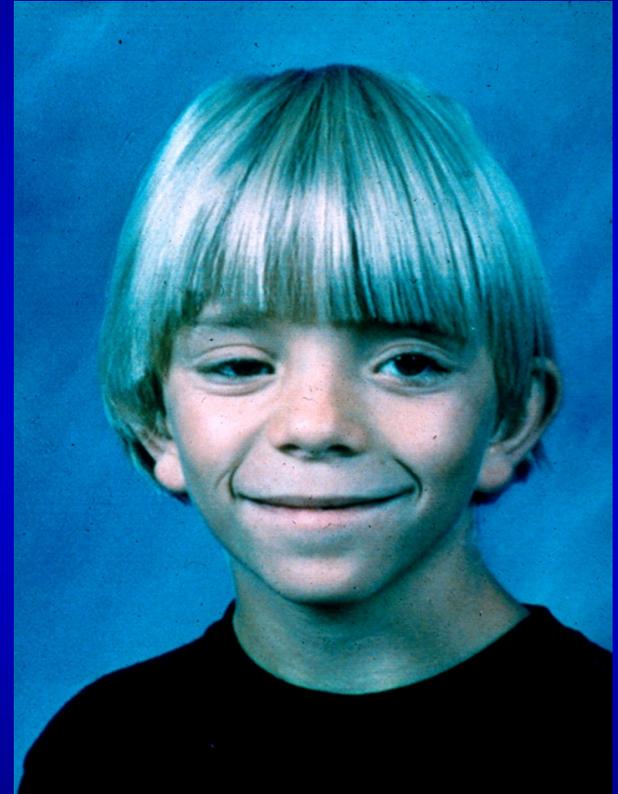
Clare Gorospe, B.A.  
Joe Muto, B.A.  
Paul Ramirez, B.S.  
Jaclyn Sagun, B.A.



# Project Bruin Buddies

## Participants

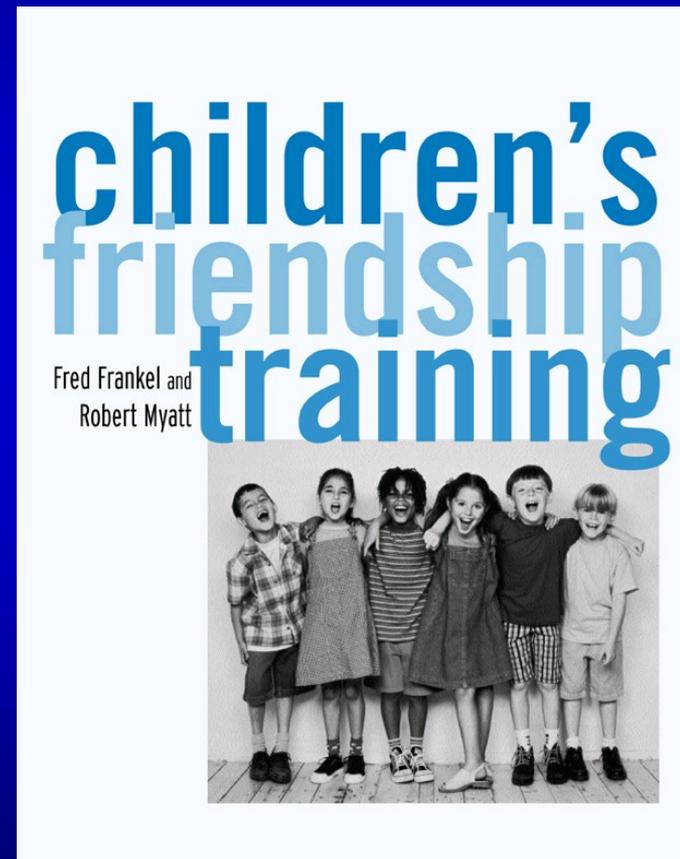
- History of prenatal alcohol exposure
- Children 6 - 12 years
- Measurable social skills deficits
- Verbal IQ  $\geq 70$
- Child and parent fluent in English
- No major medical conditions
- No pervasive developmental disorders
- Parent not currently abusing alcohol



# Children's Friendship Training

*(Frankel & Myatt, 2003)*

- Evidence-based treatment
- Manualized
- Parent-assisted
- Concurrent parent and child sessions
- 12 weeks
- 90 minute sessions
- Children 6-12 years of age
- Targets friendship skills



# Evidence-Based Methods of Social Skills Instruction

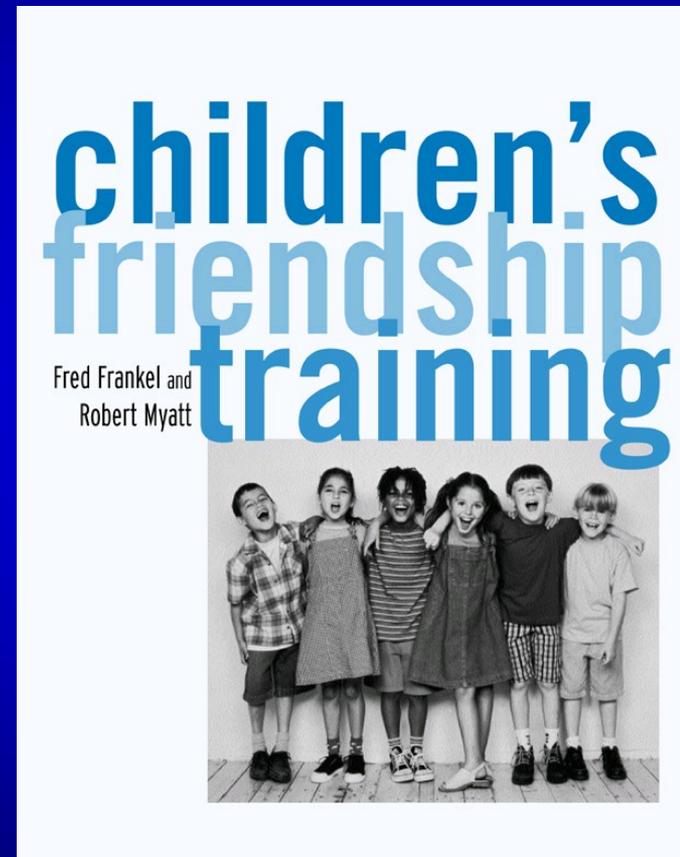
- Small group format
- Didactic instruction
- Role-playing demonstrations
- Behavioral rehearsal exercises
- Performance feedback with in-session coaching
- Socialization homework assignments
- Parent assistance



(Matson, 1984; Davies & Rogers, 1985;  
Fleming & Fleming, 1982)

# Overview of Treatment Sessions

- Conversational skills
- Entering play
- Being a good sport
- Being a good host on play dates
- Handling teasing
- Avoiding physical fights

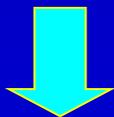


(Frankel & Myatt, 2003)

# Randomized Controlled Design

Children's Friendship  
Training Group  
( $n = 51$ )

Pre-Treatment Assessment



12 Week Treatment



Post-Treatment Assessment



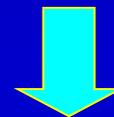
12 Week Follow-Up Period



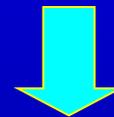
Follow-Up Assessment

Delayed Treatment  
Control Group  
( $n = 49$ )

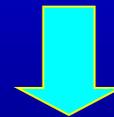
Pre-Wait Assessment



12 Week Wait



Post-Wait Assessment



12 Week Treatment



Post-Treatment Assessment

## A Controlled Social Skills Training for Children With Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorders

Mary J. O'Connor, Fred Frankel, Blair Paley, Amy M. Schonfeld, Erika Carpenter, Elizabeth A. Laugeson,  
and Renee Marquardt  
University of California, Los Angeles

- **Child self-report:**
  - Significant improvement in social skills knowledge (TSSK)
  - Decrease in hostile attributions (HAT)
- **Parent report:**
  - Significant improvement in social skills (SSRS)
  - Significant decrease in problem behaviors (SSRS)
- **Follow-up assessment:**
  - Social skills gains were maintained 3 months post-treatment

# **Project Best Buddies:** **Bridging the Gap Between** **Research and Practice**

**Translational Research in a**  
**Community Mental Health Setting**  
**Effectiveness Study**

**CDC Grant No. UDD000041**  
**Mary J. O'Connor, PI**

# Project Best Buddies Team

## UCLA Research Team

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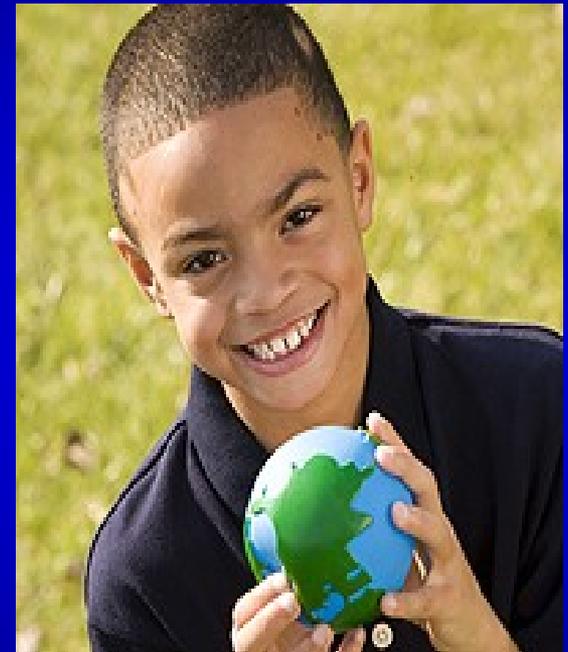
Charlie Padow, MSW

Pamela Deans, M.S.

Hilit Kletter, M.S.

# Participants

- Varying degrees of prenatal alcohol exposure
- Children 6-12 years
- Identified social skills deficits
- Children did not have major medical or physical conditions, or severe mental illness
- Children were English speaking
- Parents either English- or Spanish-speaking
- Parents not currently abusing alcohol



# Randomized Controlled Design

Children's Friendship  
Training ( $N=41$ )

**Pre-Treatment  
Assessment**



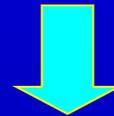
**12-Week CFT**



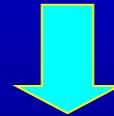
**Post-Treatment  
Assessment**

Standard of Care  
( $N=44$ )

**Pre-Treatment  
Assessment**



**12-Week SOC**



**Post-Treatment  
Assessment**

# Overview of Standard of Care

- Process-oriented and behavior-based intervention involving group discussion and cooperative projects
- Twelve 75 minute weekly sessions
- Topics included:
  - Characteristics of good friends
  - Communication skills
  - Conflict resolution
- No parent component



# Translation of an Evidence-Based Social Skills Intervention for Children with Prenatal Alcohol Exposure in a Community Mental Health Setting

Mary J. O'Connor, Elizabeth A. Laugeson, Catherine Mogil, Evy Lowe,  
Kathleen Welch-Torres, Vivien Keil, and Blair Paley

*Alcoholism: Clinical and Experimental Research*

- **Child self-report:**
  - Significant improvement in social skills knowledge (TSSK)
  - Significant improvement in self-esteem (PHS)
    - Behavioral adjustment
    - Intellectual school status
    - Decrease in anxiety
- **Parent report:**
  - Significant improvement in overall social skills (SSRS)
    - Assertion
    - Responsibility

**Project Good Buddies**  
**Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorders:**  
**Intervening with Children**

**Dissemination Grant**

**CDC Grant No. 200-2008-23703**

**Elizabeth A. Laugeson, PI**

# Project Good Buddies Team

## UCLA Investigators

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## Scimetrika

Charles Williams



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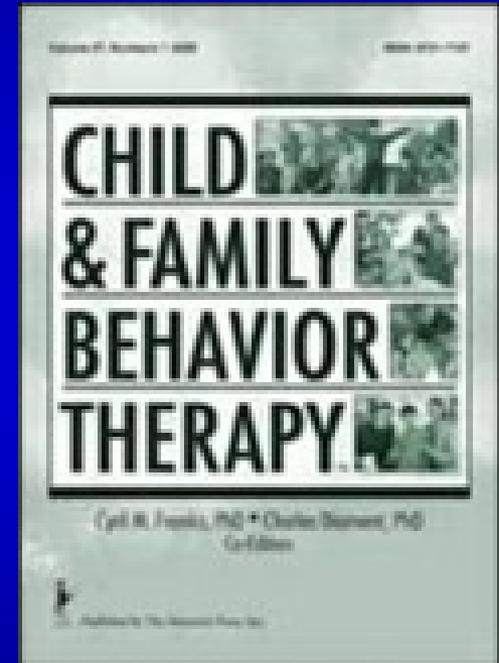
# Purpose of the Grant

- Focus on dissemination of adapted treatment for children with FASD
- Format a train-the-trainer manual
- Refine training videos for the 12 parent and child sessions
- Format a therapist workbook to accompany the CFT Manual



# Treatment Adaptations for Children with FASD

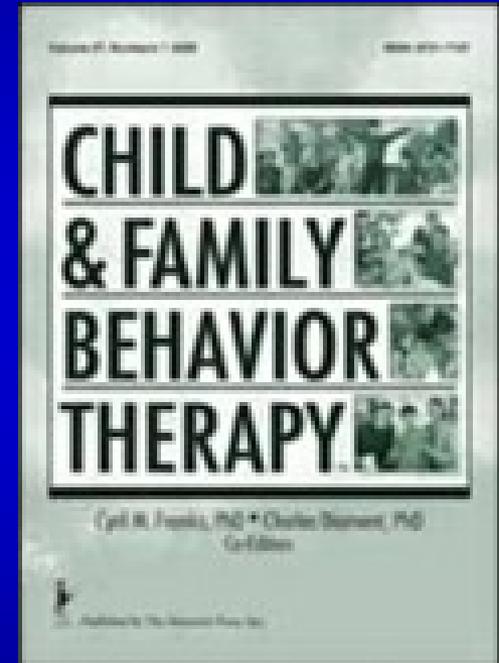
- Memory problems
  - Consistent routines
  - Repetition of material
  - Use of “buzz” words
- Cognitive inflexibility
  - Highlight contextual cues
  - Practice of alternative responses
- Difficulty anticipating consequences of behavior
  - Teachable moments
  - Contingencies made explicit



(Laugeson et al., 2007)

# Treatment Adaptations for Children with FASD

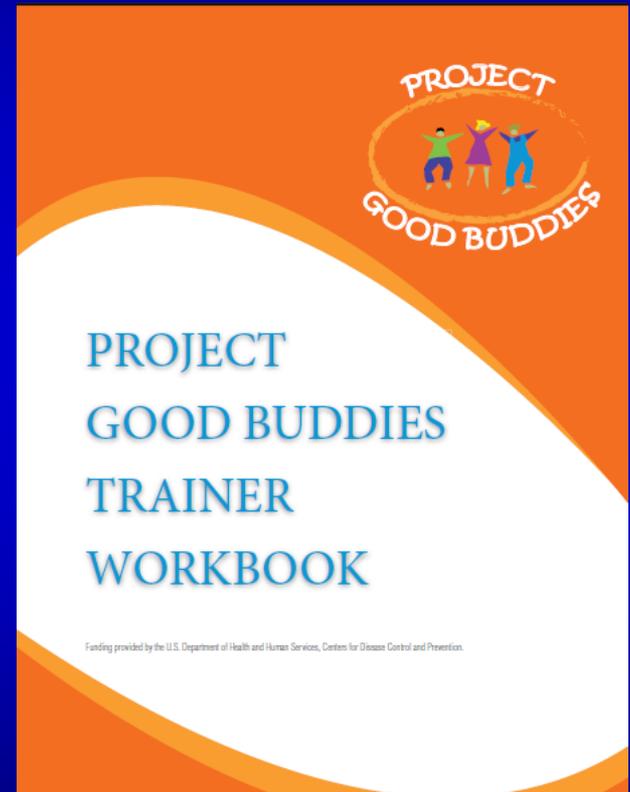
- Difficulty learning from experience
  - Frequent review of previously learned material
  - Numerous opportunities for behavioral rehearsal and practice
- Language problems
  - Material presented in multiple formats
  - Verbal instructions broken down into small steps
  - Concrete examples for abstract language



(Laugeson et al., 2007)

# Clinical Example: Handling Teasing

- Do not walk away, ignore the person, or tell an adult
- Act like what the person said did not bother you
- Provide a BRIEF comeback that suggests what the person said was lame:
  - Whatever!
  - So what?
  - Big deal!
  - Who cares?
  - Yeah and?
  - Am I supposed to care?
  - Is that supposed to be funny?
  - Tell me when you get to the funny part.



For a copy of the  
*Good Buddies*  
*Trainer Workbook*  
please contact:

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