

We'd Love to Hear from You!

We are always delighted to hear from families. We want this newsletter to be meaningful to you, our readers. If you have ideas about things we could include in our newsletter or ways to improve it, please contact us:

email: ChildEmotion@waisman.wisc.edu **phone:** 608-262-5148 **fax:** 608-263-0529

mail: 1500 Highland Avenue, Room 527
Madison, WI 53705

Please visit our website at: <http://psych.wisc.edu/ChildEmotion>

Child Emotion Research Laboratory Fund

The Child Emotion Research Lab, which houses the Wisconsin International Adoption Project, has established a fund for tax deductible contributions. All contributions received by the fund will be used for our research to promote optimal development in children with diverse early life experiences. We welcome contributions from individuals, families, small businesses, and corporations. All of the money we receive goes to support research on child development and international adoption.

Contributions may be sent to:

Child Emotion Research Laboratory Fund
University of Wisconsin Foundation
1848 University Avenue
P.O. Box 8860
Madison, WI 53708-8860

WIAP
University of Wisconsin - Madison
Waisman Center
1500 Highland Avenue, Room 527
Madison, WI 53705

Nonprofit Org.
U.S. Postage
PAID
Permit No. 658
Madison, WI



Inside the Wisconsin International Adoption Project



Winter 2006

Inside this issue:

Become Involved	2
Let Us Know	2
Staff Changes	3
Parent Advisory Board	3
Laboratory Fund	4
We'd Love to Hear from You!	4

Greetings from Dr. Pollak

Dear Parents,

I am delighted to introduce our first WIAP newsletter to you. This effort was brought about by requests from our participating families to find a way that you can all stay up-to-date on the progress and latest findings from our research program. Our goal is to make these newsletters a brief and timely way for you to stay informed.

We do have a lot of exciting news to share. Our grant from the National Institutes of Health is set up and our collaboration with the Institute of Child Development at the University of Minnesota is underway. (Please thank your congressional representatives for ensuring the government helps support research on the needs of internationally adopted children!). We have an ever-growing community of talented graduate students who are learning to specialize on the needs and progress of your children. And we have a dynamic and talented staff with a wealth of experience in child development now on board. In future issues of this newsletter, we plan to introduce you to all of these energetic people!

As always, please contact us with ideas, suggestions, and feedback. And our sincere thanks to all of those families who are going out of their way to help increase our knowledge by participating in these studies. We truly cannot do a thing without all of you! Best wishes to your family for the new year!

Dr. Seth Pollak

Emotion Understanding in Post-Institutionalized Children

By: Alison Wismer-Fries, PhD Candidate in Clinical Psychology



The goal of this research project was to understand some of the specific ways in which orphanage rearing early in life influences social and emotional development, as well as the extent to which adoption into a family setting improves developmental outcomes. I had the pleasure of working with about fifty 4 - 5 ½ year old children and their families throughout the course of the study.

Using a computer game, children heard stories that would likely lead to a particular emotion (for example, getting a wonderful gift) and also saw photographs of people

(Continued on page 2)

Emotion Understanding in Post-Institutionalized Children

Continued from page 1

posing different emotions. We found that post-institutionalized children had difficulty understanding the causes of different emotions and also had difficulty identifying facial expressions of emotion. Interestingly, children whose parents reported that they had experienced more severe social neglect while in the orphanage had a harder time with these tasks than children whose parents reported that they experienced only mild or no social neglect. **Importantly**, children's performance improved the longer they had been in their adoptive homes. We believe that difficulty with perceiving and understanding emotional expressions may be one factor contributing to social and emotional difficulties seen in some post-institutionalized children.

The results from this study have been published and are available on our web site. This winter, I plan to start recruiting families to take part in a follow-up research project, which will continue to explore the specific ways in which institutionalization may influence social relationships. The ultimate goal of my research projects is to better inform the development of treatments for attachment and related emotional and social difficulties in post-institutionalized children.

Let Us Know

If you would be willing to read future newsletters on our web site, please let us know. The money we save on printing and mailing costs would be used for research. Also let us know if you have name or address corrections or changes, or if you received multiple copies of this newsletter. Our contact information is on the back of this newsletter.

Ways You Can Become Involved in New Research Projects

The Wisconsin International Adoption Project (WIAP) is looking for families created through international adoption who would be interested in participating in research studies as their children are growing up. Our research is aimed at developing a clear picture of the successes, challenges, and needs of children who spent some early part of their lives in institutional, orphanage, or foster care settings. We will use the results from our studies to better inform our communities, and to aid families, agencies, schools, and health care providers who support these children. When you join our WIAP participant registry, we will send you a survey questionnaire to complete regarding your child's developmental history. WIAP staff will then contact you when we have studies that might be appropriate and interesting for your family. **We are currently seeking families created through international adoption with children infants through 14 years of age to join our research participant registry.**

There are a number of exciting ways you can become involved in our research at the Child Emotion Lab.

✿ At this time, we have four research studies in progress. We are seeking children between the ages of 5 and 15 years who joined their families either through international adoption or birth to participate in these studies.

✿ If you are interested in joining our research participation registry or would like to learn more about our current research opportunities, please contact us by email at ChildEmotion@waisman.wisc.edu or by phone at 608-262-5148. We would love to hear from you!

Staff Changes in 2004-2005



Mary Schlaak



Barb Roeber

The Wisconsin International Adoption Project bid a very fond farewell to our research co-coordinator, Erin Henigan, in July 2005. Erin did a terrific job getting our study off the ground last year. To those of you who met Erin when you visited our lab or talked with her on the phone, you know what a warm, dedicated staff member we have lost. Erin moved to Minnesota, was married in October, and is now using her expertise as a speech pathologist in the public schools there. Our very best wishes to Erin!

Barb Roeber joined the staff of the Wisconsin International Adoption Project in September 2004. She came to us with over 20 years of experience with children and families in a variety of capacities, including special education instruction, mental health counseling, and Birth to 3 Program service coordination. Barb is delighted to be part of our endeavors, and especially enjoys working with the children and families in the lab and coordinating with Wisconsin's adoption agencies. She is our Community Outreach Coordinator. You can contact Barb to join our research participation registry, to get answers to your questions about any of our studies, and to talk about resources for your family.

The Child Emotion Lab welcomed a new lab manager in July 2005. Mary Schlaak oversees the running of the lab which includes the Wisconsin International Adoption Project. She handles the lab administration and also works with the children and families who visit the lab to participate in the Wisconsin International Adoption research. Mary has a social work background and has worked in many capacities with children and families in Wisconsin. We are delighted to have her with us!

Thanks to Our Parent Advisory Board Members

The Wisconsin International Adoption Project (WIAP) would like to introduce our Parent Advisory Board Members. Members of our advisory board provide us with feedback to ensure that our studies are addressing the needs of children. They also ensure that information about our research is accurately conveyed to families created through international adoption and to the community.

Darlene Calhoun is a clinical director of rehabilitation services, orthopedics, and occupational health services in Brookfield, WI whose daughter joined her family from Russia.

Laura Gorecki is a domestic engineer in the Milwaukee area, whose two children joined her family from Russia.

Dr. Paul Grossberg is a physician of Pediatrics in Madison, WI whose son joined his family from Russia.

Deb Sumiec is an adoption social worker in Wauwatosa, WI whose daughters joined her family from Russia and China.

Cathleen Dornon is a social worker in Madison, WI whose four daughters joined her family from China.

Kim Albrecht is a busy mom raising her two children in Hubertus, WI whose two children joined her family from Russia.

WIAP would like to thank all the board members for volunteering their valuable time to our project. Each member generously offered to be a board member for a three year term. All of their feedback will be essential to current and future studies for families created through adoption.