

In the early nineties, Jonathan Tudge, PhD, HDF Associate Professor, grew curious about the young and their everyday activities. He had an idea: what if we could better understand how children developed by examining preschooler's daily routines? On the surface, his idea was deceptively simple. But as the idea matured into a longitudinal study, it expanded across continents and cultures.

Overall, Tudge found he was "dissatisfied with much of the literature on how kids are raised," he explains from his office in the Stone Building. His office shelves and surfaces are jam-packed with journals, notebooks, maps, and folders. Students knock on his office door frequently, and politely query the Oxford- and Cornell-educated scholar as he explains the international turns and twists of his research.

Tudge first began collecting data in 1991, initially targeting 130 children (age 28-45 months) from medium sized cities in the U.S., Russia and Estonia. Tudge chose 38 children in Greensboro for the project's initial phase. Later, Tudge selected 22 children from Obninsk, Russia, and 20 from Tartu, Estonia.

There were unexplored aspects of early development Tudge wished to analyze. The way in which preschool aged children living in industrialized societies spent their time was basically undocumented. Even less attention, Tudge noted, was paid to the long-term effects of the children's activities across different contexts, whether cultural, social class, or ethnic.

Both good fortune and existing relationships furthered Tudge's work across geographic boundaries. UNCG's Associate Provost for International Programs, Dr. Charles Lyons, suggested that Tudge expand to Oulu, Finland where there were strong academic relationships with UNCG.

Other academic contacts made it feasible to take his project to Korea. Tudge expanded the



Swing constructed, by parents, in apartment to deal with difficulties of living in large apartment blocks.

Jonathan Tudge: Examining the Implications of Everyday Life in the Young from Greensboro to Patagonia

study to include 12 children in Suwon, Korea, and 18 children in Oulu, Finland. Another 20 children were added to Tudge's study from Kisumu, Kenya, where a former graduate student (and native Kenyan) presented herself to assist in the study.

Colleagues and students were integral to his work's progression, Tudge explains. In each country targeted for research, Tudge assembled and trained a group of participants to

obtain the necessary data. Through contact with the Institute for Ethnology and Anthropology in Moscow, Irina Snezhkova and Natasha Kulakova were recruited to collect the data in Obninsk, a medium-sized town south of Moscow. Colleagues at the University of Tartu, in Estonia, helped recruit Marika Meltsas and Peeter Tammeveski. Thanks to funding from the International Research and Exchanges Board (IREX), Tudge was able to train the two Russians and two Estonians in their respective countries and in Greensboro. With support from the International Program Center, Marikaisa Kontio was able to spend a year in Greensboro, working with Tudge, and was trained to collect the equivalent data in Oulu, Finland. Graduate students from Korea and Kenya who completed their PhDs with Tudge, gathered the data in those two countries.

“There were pretty good data from cultural anthropologists on how children in the nonindustrialized world spent their time,” Tudge explains, “but very little data about the everyday lives of children in industrialized societies.”

Kids with differing backgrounds would be encouraged by virtue of their socialization to excel in differing skills and abilities. Longitudinal study meant Tudge could examine the long-term consequences of those differences.

Tudge was also intrigued by parental behaviors as an indicator of their children’s social aspiration and educational achievements. Social class was of singular importance as a predictor of their offspring’s accomplishments.

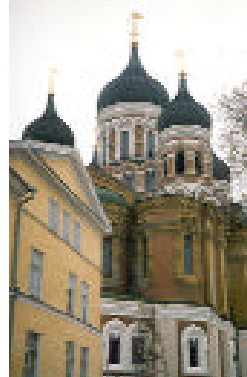
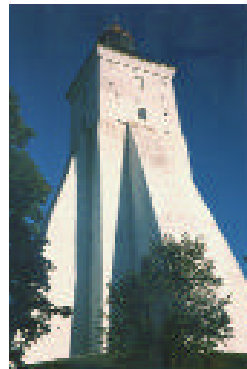
In the United States, for example, Tudge observed that contrary to popular notion, America was not “a very socially mobile culture”. Children tended to stay within the same social class and milieu as their parents. Tudge’s study centered upon the children of two specific social groups: the middle class and working class.

“Middle-class parents seem more interested in encouraging self-direction and their children seem more likely to initiate activities.” In contrast, Tudge adds, working-class parents tend to place greater value upon behaviors such as listening well, following rules, and doing as one is told.

In researching these issues, Tudge’s teams observed children during 20 hours within a week. The children were observed at play, while being instructed, while engaged in interpersonal relations, and a variety of other social scenarios related to chil-



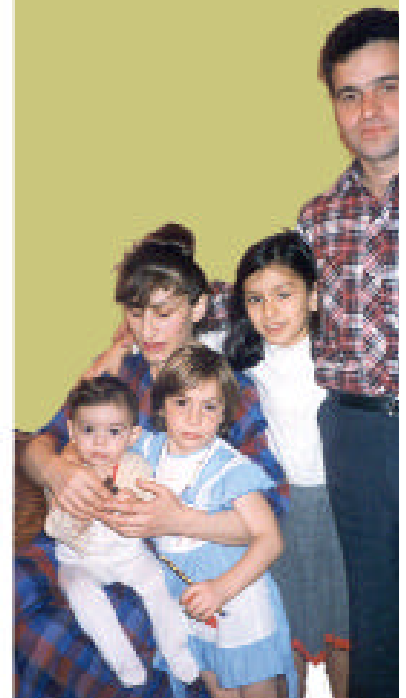
Families participating in Tudge’s study.



Top: Family in Tartu, Estonia.

Center: Children observed during play in Obninsk.

Below: Family originally from Caucasus region now living in Obninsk.



dren's everyday activities. Tudge's team of observers interviewed parents about their own work experiences and goals for their offspring, completing questionnaires and talking about their approach to raising children. The questions were designed to get at issues of self-direction and freedom of decision making, among other issues. Researchers taped observations and accumulated data in written and oral forms as well.

Because he has spent a good deal of time in Brazil, he has most recently begun to work with a group of Brazilian psychologists who are interested in very early development. They started collecting data on parents' beliefs about their children before the birth of their first child, and collected data on parent-child interactions during the first two years. These children are now three years old and, with funding provided by the Spencer Foundation, their everyday activities are currently being observed. This part of the study is taking place in Porto Alegre, the largest city in the very south of Brazil. Tudge has spent many months there, most recently in March 2003, working with his Brazilian colleagues, Tania Sperb, Cesar Piccinini, and Rita Sobreira. The Brazilian study ends in three years, Tudge projects, and notes that this research will likely have the greatest impact of all in Brazil. He says the participants there are highly motivated and engaged by the research. Tudge is frequently invited to speak and present his findings to scholars in Brazil.

The data gatherers for Tudge's study were native to each of the respective countries involved, but received training in Greensboro where the research initiated. In each instance, the cities chosen for inclusion in the study were not randomly selected but were decided upon as approximate matches for Greensboro.

"Each city," Tudge and his colleagues wrote in a paper presented in April 2001, "in which we have so far collected data is thus of medium size (100,000 – 700,000



Tudge relaxes between observations in Tallinn, Estonia.

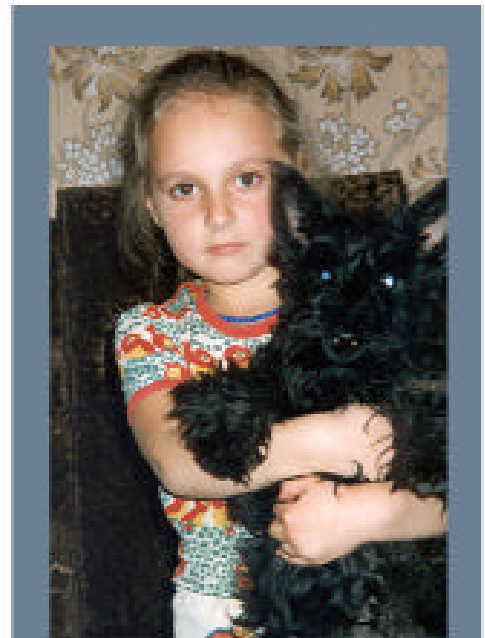
inhabitants), has at least one institution of higher education, and has a similar range of occupational and cultural opportunities. Families were recruited equally from middle class and working class backgrounds, with social class determined by education and occupation criteria."

Meanwhile, Tudge has written different portions of his research and has been presenting papers at various professional conferences, such as the Society for Research on Child Development in Minneapolis. He views the work as "glimpses into different cultural worlds."

Tudge has contracted with Cambridge University Press to write about the first half of his project, and plans to complete the manuscript this summer. The book is entitled, *The Everyday Lives of Young Children: Culture, Class and Childrearing in Diverse Societies*.

As a footnote, Tudge explains that, ironically, he never intended for the study to be as large as it has become. This, he admits, happened because of his graduate students' interest in the project and their various requests to extend the work in new directions and into new cultures.

"I could not have done this work without the International Program Center," Tudge insists. Everyone has been very supportive."



Obninsk child enjoys her puppy.