The Center for Research on Families has more than forty years of history at the University of Massachusetts Amherst. Founded in the 1970s as the Center for the Family, a generous endowment by Dorothy Dunklee Gavin ('43) and Joseph Gavin in 1996 ensured a strong and sustainable future for the Center. In 2003, the original Center for the Family expanded into today’s Center for Research on Families (CRF).

CRF is a joint center of the College of Natural Sciences (CNS) and the College of Social and Behavioral Sciences (SBS). Its programs are supported by CNS, SBS, the Edna Skinner and Tay Gavin Erickson endowments, the Office of the Vice Chancellor for Research and Engagement, grants, and alumni and corporate gifts. CRF’s unique model of collaboration speaks to its primary mission of supporting interdisciplinary and translational research activities on campus.

The vision for the Center for Research on Families at the University of Massachusetts Amherst is to be a nationally-renowned research center addressing the challenges and resilience of families. CRF supports interdisciplinary scientific collaborations aimed at understanding the diversity, health, and well-being of families while discovering solutions to the challenges families face.

Innovative solutions to the central challenges facing families will come from advances in both the social and natural sciences. CRF is among only a handful of family research centers in the country aimed at bridging the social, behavioral, and natural sciences; thus, we are uniquely poised to initiate and support interdisciplinary collaborations aimed at addressing societal and familial challenges.

CRF serves as an intellectual hub for research that addresses family issues from multiple perspectives and epitomizes the land grant mission of UMass that is to provide and translate research to benefit the families of the Commonwealth and nation.
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*This report describes CRF activities undertaken from June 2015 through May 2016.*

**DESIGN:** Angela Russo, Center for Research on Families; Idea Collective  
**CONTENT COORDINATOR:** Michael Havlin, Center for Research on Families  
**PHOTOGRAPHY:** Rose Boyko, Boyko Photography; Pablo Robles, Media Compass Photography; Arthur Pollock, Boston Herald
Dear Colleagues and Friends,

I am writing this letter from sunny California! This past year I had the great honor to be able to spend my sabbatical year as a Fellow at the Center for Advanced Study in the Behavioral Sciences (CASBS) at Stanford University. CASBS is an extraordinary place with a mission of “advancing human welfare by generating knowledge for the maximum benefit of individuals and society.” In this interdisciplinary center situated in the hills overlooking Stanford, scholars from disciplines in the social sciences and the natural sciences spend time working on collaborative and individual projects aimed at enhancing the human condition. The formula is simple: through shared lunches, research presentations, and serendipitous conversations great ideas and new collaborations arise. This year has strengthened my commitment to interdisciplinary endeavors aimed at addressing some of the most pressing problems facing families. At the same time, my collaborations this year have challenged me to consider how we at CRF can better translate our research to shape policy, advocacy and community-level supports for families. This year has given me time to reflect, broaden my thinking and recharge so I will be ready to take on our mission and goals at CRF with renewed energy and creativity.

My sabbatical experience would not have been possible without the support and commitment from many members of the CRF team. I will be forever thankful to Lynette Leidy Seivert for her willingness to serve as interim director of CRF while I was on sabbatical. She kept CRF not only functioning but as vibrant and active as ever. Special thanks also to Lisa Harvey who ran the Scholars program this year, which by all accounts was exciting, engaging and productive. I also need to thank Aline Sayer, Wendy Varner, Dot Morua Fernandes and Stephanie Covelli for their willingness to keep CRF on track, for being flexible and for being willing to take on leadership roles at CRF over the past year. This year we welcomed a new Assistant Director for Communications and Events at CRF, Angela Russo. Angela brings a wealth of experience in marketing and event planning that will be crucial to CRF in getting our message out to broader communities.

As you will see in this report, CRF continues its impressive record of scholarship with new research projects being funded by our faculty scholars as well as continued support for undergraduate and graduate students who represent our future family research scholars. Next year will be one full of change and excitement. I look forward to developing our commitment to translational research by expanding our efforts to collaborations in the Greater Springfield area. Our commitment to supporting interdisciplinary research that serves the health and well-being of families will remain our core mission and we look forward to working with past, present and future family scholars to achieve our goals!

Sincerely,
CRF’S MISSION is to:

Promote, conduct, and translate high quality, substantive research on key issues affecting family life;

Teach, mentor, and support family researchers throughout their careers -- students to professors; and

Engage with the community to improve family functioning and inform social policy.
HIGHLIGHTS 2015-2016

Scenes from the 2015 CRF Family Research Forum & Awards Dinner

Top row: Manuel Matos; Dorothy Gavin & Sally Powers

Second row: Samantha Schenck; Lindiwe Sibeko

Third row: Alice Fiddian-Green, Louis Graham, Aline Gubrium; John Hird

Bottom row: Angela Essa, Lynnette Leidy Sievert; overview of dinner
CRF increases funding for research on campus by holding successful and highly popular faculty mentoring programs. This year fourteen faculty across disciplines received intensive mentoring and technical support to submit major grant proposals as current and past participants in the Family Research Scholars Program. Ten unique scholars submitted fifteen research grants to NSF, NIH, and Foundations totaling $18,225,115.

CRF has eight active grants from NSF, NIH, U.S. Army and Foundations from six scholars totaling $12,516,649. CRF fosters collaboration among multidisciplinary researchers who are studying issues of relevance to families:

- CRF partnered with the Rudd Adoption Research Program, the Treehouse Foundation, and the Boston College School of Social Work to hold the 2016 “New Worlds of Adoption and Foster Care Conference: Thriving on the Frontline.” Over 350 people attended this year’s conference.

- CRF sponsored a book salon to celebrate the publication of Professor Julie Hemment’s new book, Russia: Producing Patriots and Entrepreneurs.

- CRF and the Institute for Social Science Research (ISSR) offered a pre-Scholars workshop to advise new faculty in grant preparedness and the application process.

- The CRF Early Childhood working group met regularly to build research synergies.

- CRF collaborated with UMass centers, departments, and programs to address a broad range of family related issues including early education, diversity, and much more.

- For the ninth year in a row, an interdisciplinary group of faculty and researchers met regularly at CRF to discuss and examine the biological, behavioral and social indices and outcomes of stress. This year the group submitted a graduate student traineeship proposal to NSF for the study of stress research.

- CRF is working collaboratively with UMass Extension to better connect family researchers with engagement and outreach efforts.

CRF provides training and consultation in cutting-edge methodological and statistical techniques to scholars in family research;

- CRF’s methodological seminar series, advanced statistical and methodological consultation, and training workshops continued in full force this year with participation from UMass faculty and students and researchers from 49 other institutions, 21 states and five countries.

- CRF is a repository for the National Longitudinal Study of Adolescent and Adult Health (ADD Health) data set, allowing CRF scholars access to one the largest studies of adolescence ever undertaken.

CRF offers talented students teaching and mentoring opportunities, awards and assistantships;

- Now in its seventh year, CRF’s Student Research Grants and Awards Program awarded $34,400 to nine undergraduate and graduate students.

- CRF offered comprehensive mentoring experiences and credit internship opportunities in family research to six undergraduate and graduate students.

- Throughout the year, student-led research roundtables for graduate and undergraduate student researchers from across campus met to discuss their ongoing research projects.

CRF translates and disseminates valuable research findings widely;

- CRF worked collaboratively with campus media outlets (Research Next, Alumni Magazine, UMass webpage, News Office, etc.) to disseminate UMass family researchers’ findings to a broad audience.

- CRF continued to play a role in administering the Public Engagement Project (PEP), a faculty-driven collaborative initiative whose mission is to train faculty to effectively present their research outside of the academy.

CRF enhances the University’s national reputation by connecting faculty and students with internationally prominent family researchers;

- CRF hosted sixteen renowned experts to visit campus to consult with faculty and present their research through the Tay Gavin Erickson Lecture Series, the Rudd Adoption Conference, CRF Methodology workshops and seminars and other collaborative forums.

- CRF’s conference, trainings, and lectures attracted over 950 participants from UMass and other institutions.
Since 2003, CRF has provided selected faculty with time, expert consultation, technical expertise, and peer mentorship to prepare large grant proposals for intensive family research. The program has supported and facilitated interdisciplinary family research in a wide variety of disciplines like psychology, anthropology, nursing, economics, sociology, education, environmental health, political science, biology, and neuroscience. Despite federal funds becoming tighter nationally, the FRS program has significantly increased federal research support for family research at UMass. As funding for research becomes more difficult to attain, centers like CRF become increasingly valuable to family researchers.

Family Research Scholars participate in a year-long interdisciplinary seminar that includes:

- Presentations and discussions of the Scholars’ developing proposals
- Concrete instruction in grant writing and understanding of funding agencies
- Strategies for successful proposal submission
- Assistance accessing the resources of the University
- Individualized methodology consultation
- Facilitated peer review throughout the formulation and writing process
- Staff support at all stages of grant submission
- The time and accountability for reaching writing goals
- Consultation with nationally recognized experts

As part of our Tay Gavin Erickson Lecture Series, each year national experts are chosen and invited to campus to provide individual consultation to each of the scholars on their specific projects and to present a public research lecture that is widely attended by UMass students and faculty. The lecture series--named in memory of Tay Gavin Erickson, daughter of donors Dorothy Gavin and the late Joseph Gavin--is an opportunity for our scholars to engage the public with their research. This program model that we devised has been replicated both on campus and nationally.

Facilitators: CRF Director and Professor of Psychological and Brain Sciences, Maureen Perry-Jenkins; Interim Director Lisa Harvey; College of Natural Sciences Director of Faculty Development Wendy Varner; and Associate Professor of Psychological and Brain Sciences and Director of the CRF Methodology Program, Aline Sayer.
ON FAMILIES

2015-2016 FRS Scholars Laura Vandenberg and Richard Pilsner.
SOFIYA ALHASHAN (Kinesiology), LINDIWE SIBEKO (Nutrition, School of Public Health and Health Sciences), SYLVIA BRANDT (Resource Economics and Public Policy and Administration), EZEKIEL KIMBALL (Educational Policy, Research, and Administration), PAULA PIETROMONACO (Psychological and Brain Sciences, College of Natural Sciences), and BRIGITTE HOLT (Anthropology).
FAMILY RESEARCH SCHOLARS HIGHLIGHTS 2015-16

CRF alumni and affiliates continue to hold PEP Fellowships. After having three CRF alum in PEP’s inaugural Fellowship class last year, CRF has three affiliates in the newest PEP Fellowship cohort.

In addition to being accepted into the 2016-2017 FRS cohort, Professor Louis Graham was also selected for the new class of Public Engagement Project Fellows.

Milian Kang (FRS 09-10) was also inducted into the second cohort of Public Engagement Project Fellows for her advocacy and research surrounding the portrayal of Asian-American mothers in the media.

Former co-director of CRF’s Stress Research Group, Professor Jeffrey Blaustein joined the second cohort of PEP Fellows as he attempts to further connect his estrogen research with oncologists who are practicing in the field.

“I honestly can say, I would not have gotten this grant without the Scholars Program. I learned to persevere and hone my research approach for a much stronger and more successful proposal.”

- Assistant Professor, Public Health

Professor Lee Badgett (FRS 06-07 & 12-13) completed her book “The Public Professor,” which she wrote based on her experiences engaging with the public on LGBTQ polices from her position as a research economist.

Professor Gerald Downes (FRS 14-15) received a prestigious NSF grant to study locomotion.

Professor Lisa Troy (FRS 13-14) was selected to participate in the prestigious Butler-Williams Scholars Program for innovative research programs investigating cardiovascular disease in post-menopausal women.

Professor Joya Misra (FRS 04-05) and Professor Jennifer Lundquist (FRS 13-14) collaborated with trade journal Inside Higher Ed to publish a three-part series on career satisfaction for mid-career academic women and minorities in the STEM fields.

Anthropology professor and CRF Co-Interim Director Lynnette Leidy Sievert (FRS 04-05 and 08-09) was interviewed by HealthDay magazine on the health of post-menopausal women who remain sexually active.
Dr. Vandenberg’s pioneering work has contributed to the public discussion and policy responses to BPA, and is crucial to understanding and improving the well-being of families.
The introduction and proliferation of synthetic chemicals into our diets, houseware, clothing, and other aspects of our daily lives has sparked both academic research and public outcry. Endocrine Disrupting Chemicals (EDCs), including the well-known chemical Bisphenol-A (BPA), are often the most common target of protest due to their documented effects on hormone regulation and the endocrine system. EDCs have been researched most intensely with regard to their impacts on infants and young animals. Because young lifeforms have so many tissues and organs that are developing and growing, EDCs can have permanent effects on the health of those exposed at a young age. Research on the effects of EDCs on adults, and especially adult females, has been much more limited, generally presuming that the health effects of EDCs on adults are likely temporary and will subside when EDC exposure is removed.

Dr. Laura Vandenberg, CRF Family Research Scholar and lead researcher on EDCs whose pioneering work has contributed to much of the public discussion and policy responses to BPA, is currently conducting an experiment which could reveal whether EDCs can have permanent health effects on pregnant mothers, as opposed to only temporary effects. Dr. Vandenberg hypothesizes that because “pregnancy is such a critical period of life,” with many radical changes occurring in a mother’s body, that exposure to EDCs during this time period could have permanent biological and psychological effects on the health of the mother. It was previously assumed that EDCs’ effects on adult health were only activational, or temporary, while effects on children could be organizational, or permanent. Vandenberg’s research could challenge these assumptions.

Vandenberg is studying EDCs that can mimic estrogen, a key determinant of healthy maternal behavior. Blocking estrogen actions in mice can prevent the execution of maternal behaviors, like the construction of safe nests, feeding of offspring, and gathering of pups when they are dispersed from the mother. As many family researchers will attest to, the quality of maternal care in early childhood development is crucial for the trajectory of offspring health. Her work is also examining the effects of estrogenic EDCs on the mammary gland including how developed it becomes during lactation and whether it can produce sufficient quantities of milk. She also aims to understand whether the mammary gland is permanently altered by EDC exposures, making exposed mothers more susceptible to diseases like cancer. Although the effects of EDCs on the brain and mammary gland have been assumed to be only temporary in adults, Vandenberg’s research will further investigate potential permanent effects of these compounds.

In addition to challenging conventional assumptions with her research questions, Vandenberg is also challenging the use of conventional methods and measures that are typically used during chemical safety assessments. Traditionally, when trying to make decisions about whether an environmental chemical like BPA is safe, regulators examine descriptive measures like the weight of an animal’s organs, or other easily standardized measures; however, a growing body of literature, much of it developed in her field of study, endocrinology, shows that those traditional measures are insufficient indicators of diseases. For example, evidence accumulated largely from academic labs shows that there are behavioral effects from EDC exposures that cannot be captured using these methods.

During the beginning of her CRF fellowship, Vandenberg conducted a pilot experiment on pregnant mice and their offspring. This experiment had many phases, key portions of which included exposing pregnant mice to EDCs and observing how they interact with their offspring after birth. She paid particular attention to their maternal behaviors and especially nursing behaviors. With the help of her Ph.D. student and CRF student researcher Mary Catanese, the pilot study examined potential neurological changes to regions of the brain that are crucial in the execution of maternal behavior. Vandenberg also collected and analyzed mammary glands from the mothers, with assistance from her team of undergraduate researchers.

Dr. Vandenberg research has the potential to yield groundbreaking results that will build off of her already influential research on BPA and other EDCs. As EDCs are increasingly identified in our personal care, household, and dietary products, it is crucial that we fully understand their effects and the implications of such widespread exposures. As the chemical industry responds by trying to evade these research findings and the implementation of new regulations, cutting edge and innovative research like Vandenberg’s becomes increasingly important to document the full impact of EDCs.
Measuring the human and economic cost of environmental degradation is becoming increasingly important as policy makers and researchers attempt to account for the numerous, disparate, and pervasive impacts of industrialized economies. A prevalent byproduct of the American industrial system is concentrated levels of vehicular air pollution in metropolitan areas. Since excessive exposure to pollutants can lead to elevated levels of asthma and other respiratory diseases in young children as well as cardiovascular disease and death in the adult population, measuring the economic and human impact of this air pollution is a crucial topic for family researchers. The estimation of these costs is also important to federal agencies that are mandated to take costs into consideration when creating regulations or approving industrial development. In order to account for the full cost of the pollution, researchers must look at the direct health impacts on children, as well as costs imposed on the family as a whole.

Dr. Sylvia Brandt, an Associate Professor with a joint appointment in the School of Public Policy and the Department of Resource Economics, has been researching the effects of these pollutants, specifically the employment cost to mothers of children who develop diseases due to localized pollution. Young children with chronic diseases like asthma require special attention which requires a parent, often the mother, to take time off from work. This additional time off from work not only reduces income immediately, but also indirectly reduces the mother’s cumulative earning potential by limiting her ability to maintain jobs and advance her career. Dr. Brandt’s central research focus is estimating the value of a mother’s cumulative loss of income due to her child’s illness.

This reduction in earning potential and employability is like a “double motherhood penalty,” says Brandt. Mothers, especially single mothers, already face employment discrimination and limitations based on their gender and disproportionate family responsibilities. Mothers of children with health problems face more barriers to employment and career advancement because of the additional burdens. These costs are even larger for low-income families because the mother lacks the economic security and power to negotiate time off from work, and so risks losing her job when she elects to stay at home with her child.

“The research also raises environmental justice concerns because not only do low income families tend to live in polluted areas, they also don’t have the economic resources to off-set these burdens,” says Brandt. Traffic pollution, which occurs disproportionately in low-income and racial/ethnic minority areas, places a devastating burden on low-income mothers whose children have developed a chronic illness owing to the pollution. The employment impact attributable to this pollution represents an injustice at the intersection of family, the environment, and poverty.

According to Dr. Brandt, quantifying the impact of pollution on mothers’ employment is crucial because “currently the Environmental Protection Agency and other federal agencies don’t value this additional cost.” In cost-benefit-analysis guidelines “the EPA literally says ‘the value of a mother’s childcare labor is zero.’” Because the EPA is specifically undervaluing mothers’ labor in the household, and thereby underestimating the costs of pollution, Brandt says it’s “one of my career goals to change the EPA’s valuation of this cost.” If the EPA acknowledged a monetized valuation of this cost it could lead to stricter environmental regulations and protections for urban families.

To monetize and measure these individual, familial, and societal impacts, Brandt will be collaborating with a number of national experts to develop and administer a non-market valuation technique. Since pollution, and its costs, is not bought and sold in a marketplace, creative methods must be developed to estimate the “price” or “cost.” Typically, since mothers are taking time off from work to care for their children, an economist would simply treat their wage rate as the amount they value caring for their children since they are forgoing that wage payment; however, Brandt argues that the wage-transfer method underestimates the true cost, and instead the wage rate should be treated as the lower bound of the cost associated with caring for the ill child. To compute a higher, more central estimate Brandt will likely employ an economic survey technique called contingent valuation.

Ultimately, Brandt’s research sheds light on a serious environmental and economic cost to the family that has previously been neglected by the EPA, federal agencies, and many researchers. Dr. Brandt’s research has the potential to redefine the EPA’s treatment of household labor in its cost-benefit-analyses, which would lead to real, tangible policy decisions that affect low-income families and mothers around the nation.
2015-2016 Family Research Scholar Sylvia Brandt applied her expertise and passion as a resource economist to research the intersection of economics and the environment.
RESEARCH ACTIVITY 2015-2016

GRANT ACTIVITY

15 grants submitted, totaling $18,225,115
8 active grants, totaling $12,516,649

SUBMITTED RESEARCH GRANTS

Lynnette Leidy-Sievert (Anthropology)
Co-P.I. Jeffrey Blaustein (Psychological and Brain Sciences)
National Science Foundation - $2,925,342
Innovations in Stress Research: An Interdisciplinary Research Traineeship Program

Richard Pilsner (Environmental Health Sciences)
National Institutes of Health - $57,747
Environmental Endocrine Disruptors, Sperm Epigenetics and Reproductive Health

Katherine Reeves (Biostatistics and Epidemiology)
National Institutes of Health for University of Vermont - $34,820
Predicting Phthalate Exposure Through Medication Usage

Laura Vandenberg (Environmental Health Sciences)
National Institutes of Health - $170,010
Evaluating a Novel Marker in Adults of Developmental Endocrine Disruption

Elizabeth Harvey (Psychological and Brain Sciences)
Co-PI Jennifer McDermott (Psychological and Brain Sciences)
National Institutes of Health - $3,568,705
Longitudinal Study of Emotion Dysregulation in Children Diagnosed with ADHD

Jennifer McDermott (Psychological and Brain Sciences)
William T. Grant Foundation - $348,417
Promoting Resilience and Reducing Academic Inequality Among Children Experiencing Foster Care

Agnès Lacreuse (Psychological and Brain Sciences)
National Institutes of Health - $321,692
Sex Differences in Cognitive and Brain Aging: a Primate Model

Lisa Sanders (Psychological and Brain Sciences)
National Institutes of Health - $438,625
Neural Measures of Real World Speech-in-Noise Processing
Agnès Lacreuse (Psychological and Brain Sciences)
National Institutes of Health - $443,595
Sleep, Hot Flashes and Cognition: The Establishment of a Nonhuman Primate Model for Menopausal Symptoms

Richard Pilsner (Environmental Health Sciences)
National Institutes of Health for Université de Sherbrooke - $23,839
Characterization of One-Carbon Cycle Impairment in Families of Autistic Children Using Genetic Polymorphisms, Specific Biochemical Markers, and Subclinical Neural Tube Defects

Katherine Reeves (Biostatistics and Epidemiology)
National Institutes of Health - $2,708,290
Early Adult Life Cadmium Exposure and Breast Cancer Susceptibility

Richard Pilsner (Environmental Health Sciences)
National Institutes of Health - $3,464,179
Impact of Phthalates on Reproductive Health, Potential Mediation Through Sperm DNA Methylation and Seminal Plasma Exosomal RNA

Katherine Reeves (Biostatistics and Epidemiology)
U.S. Department of Defense - $2,500,010
Urinary Cadmium and Breast Cancer Susceptibility in Premenopausal Women

David Arnold (Psychological and Brain Sciences)
National Science Foundation - $519,844
Reducing Educational Opportunity Inequities in Low-SES Children Entering Kindergarten: Promoting Achievement with Educational Apps

Katherine Dixon-Gordon (Psychological and Brain Sciences)
National Institutes of Health - $700,000
Brain and Behavioral Measures of Learning in Borderline Personality Disorder and its Treatment

Heather Richardson (Psychological and Brain Sciences)
National Institutes of Health - $1,968,843
Adolescent Binge Drinking and Effects on Adult Brain and Behavior: the Importance of Sex Differences

Gerald Downes (Biology)
National Science Foundation - $757,746
Collaborative Research: GABA A Receptor Control of Hyperactivity in Developing Zebrafish

Nilanjana Dasgupta (Psychological and Brain Sciences)
National Science Foundation - $2,039,819
Peer Influences on Adolescents’ Self-concept, Achievement, and Future Aspirations

Agnès Lacreuse (Psychological and Brain Sciences)
National Institutes of Health - $1,545,557
Sex Differences in Cognitive and Brain Aging: a Primate Model

Nilanjana Dasgupta (Psychological and Brain Sciences)
National Science Foundation - $524,580
Peer Matters: When and How Do Peers Influence Young Women’s Participation in Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics

Rebecca Spencer (Psychological and Brain Sciences)
National Institute of Health - $2,017,722
The Benefit of Naps on Cognitive, Emotional and Motor Learning in Preschoolers

Rebecca Spencer (Psychological and Brain Sciences)
National Institutes of Health - $1,904,791
Sleep-Dependent Memory Processing in Older Adults

Jacquie Kurland (Communications Disorders)
National Institute on Deafness and Other Communication Disorders - $1,757,591
Supplemental Award for Year 4 and 5 Progress Report - $350,740
Overcoming Learned Non-Use in Chronic Aphasia: Behavioral, fMRI, and QoL Outcomes
SELECTED DIRECTORS’ CONSULTING AND RELATED PROFESSIONAL ACTIVITIES

Maureen Perry-Jenkins, CRF Faculty Director

- Fellowship at Center for Advanced Study in the Behavioral Sciences, Stanford University 2015-16
- Participated in policy workshop sponsored by the National Women’s Law Center on low-wage work and children’s school readiness
- Executive Board, Work and Family Research Network
- Executive Board, Contemporary Council on Families
- Incoming Program Chair, National Council on Family Relations
- Consultant for Urban Institute and Robert Wood Johnson Foundation to develop cross-cutting research agenda on stabilizing children’s lives to support healthy development

Aline Sayer, CRF Methodology Program Director

- Served as methodological consultant on ten research grants, across the following agencies: NIH, NSF, IES (Institute of Education Sciences) and CIHR (Canadian Institute for Health Research)
- Inter-University Consortium for Social and Political Research, Summer Program in Quantitative Methods Advisory Board
- Institute of Education Sciences, Scientific Review Panel, Early Intervention and Early Childhood Education
- Numerous national presentations on family research methodology
- Workshops on multilevel modeling and structural equation modeling at Yale’s Center for Inequality and the Life Course, the Health Foundation of Greater Cincinnati, and Interact for Health
SUPPORTING FAMILY RESEARCHERS

Teach, mentor and support family researchers throughout their careers!

EXTENDING THE FAMILY RESEARCH SCHOLARS PROGRAM

The Scholars Program has been incredibly successful in its goal of assisting faculty in obtaining external funding. In order to enhance this program further, two new meetings have been added. Two years ago, we began our “early prep” meetings to help Scholars form and share their ideas in the spring before the next scholar year begins. They were encouraged to start working on their project over the summer to then be ready to jump in at the first session in September. We will be continuing the summer meetings with a group of highly enthusiastic researchers. Additionally, CRF has been conducting reunion meetings of our FRS alumni that allow them to celebrate and share their successes.

PREPARING THE NEXT GENERATION OF FACULTY SCHOLARS

The Family Research Scholars program has become increasingly competitive over the years and many young scholars (usually new, assistant professors), are in need of guidance around applying for such programs. Thus, CRF collaborates with the Institute for Social Science Research (ISSR) to hold a workshop for new assistant professors which focuses on applying for initial start-up funds for fellowships that will prepare them for larger grants.

INDIVIDUAL RESEARCH PROPOSAL: CONSULTATION AND MENTORING

CRF provides ongoing individual grant development consultation to former Family Research Scholars as well as other faculty eager to tap CRF’s expertise. Faculty regularly request to consult about the proposal submission process, review a grant draft, assist in budget development, or discuss an emerging proposal idea. CRF also provides infrastructure and ongoing support to administer the large research grants of affiliated faculty. CRF faculty and staff provide proposal development services.

STUDENT AWARDS: FROM UNDERGRADUATE TO FACULTY

CRF supports and funds family research at all levels of scholastic development: undergraduate, graduate, and faculty. CRF’s three major student awards, the undergraduate assistantship, the pre-dissertation fellowship, and the dissertation fellowship funds students who could one day become the next leaders of family research. By providing funding, CRF allows these researchers to focus more time on their work.
Providing Methodology Training and Consultation

Clockwise from top: Tina Chen, Daniel Rovenpor, Lisa Fiorenzo and Methodology Program Director Aline Sayer.
Since 2005, CRF’s Methodology Program has been a resource for consultation and training in advanced statistical and methodological techniques that are relevant to family research. CRF’s Methodology Program has particular expertise in quantitative methods for analyzing non-experimental data that arise in studies of families and dyads, with an emphasis on multilevel modeling, structural equation modeling and analysis of nested and longitudinal data. CRF’s methodological training programs, workshops and consulting services focus on instruction in cutting-edge methods for the analysis of family data. This has translated into publications and grants on research relevant to improving the lives of families and children.

METHODOLOGY CONSULTATION
In 2015-2016 CRF’s Methodology Consultation Services provided individual research and data consultation on topics including but not limited to data visualization, hierarchical linear models for public health data, adjustment of children with lesbian parents, propensity score analysis of political science data, training in ANOVA models for food science projects, scale development for therapeutic measures, cognitive aging in primate models, the effects of exercise on aspects of working memory, adolescent individuation in adoptive families, psychosocial development of adopted young adults, psychological wellbeing of working low-wage women during the transition to parenthood, benefits of naps on cognitive development of preschool children, evaluation for two types of therapy for depression, effects of a school-based intervention to enhance the social and emotional development of elementary school children, and peer mentoring to foster participation of women in STEM fields.

MCS has also expanded to partner with other areas of the campus research community, providing services to departments such as Psychological & Brain Sciences, Kinesiology, Nursing, Nutrition, and School Psychology and Higher Education divisions within the School of Education. MCS has also engaged in consultation on several grants funded by the Institute of Education Sciences and the Canadian Institutes of Health Research.

CONSULTING EXPERTISE
Consulting services are provided by a team of faculty, led by our nationally recognized director, Dr. Aline Sayer, and include CRF staff and advanced graduate students. They offer consulting in all stages of research, including: issues in study design, measurement and sampling; power analysis; data analysis, training in the use of software packages; and writing and editing methodology sections of manuscripts and grant proposals. MCS has particular expertise in methods for analyzing non-experimental data that arise in studies of families and dyads, with an emphasis on multilevel modeling, structural equation modeling, and analysis of nested and longitudinal data.

CONSULTING STAFF AND STUDENTS
Tina Chen
Tina Chen is a Graduate Methodology Consultant and fifth year doctoral student in the cognitive division of the Department of Psychological and Brain Sciences at UMass. As a Graduate Methodology Consultant, Tina works one-on-one to guide and train graduate students and faculty from diverse departments in research design and statistical analysis such as ANOVA, regression, hierarchical linear modeling, structural equation modeling, and propensity score matching using a variety of statistical packages.
Lisa Fiorenzo
Lisa joined the Center for Research on Families in Fall 2014 as a staff methodology consultant and has worked on a number of projects for faculty members and graduate students from various campus departments. She has statistical training in ANOVA, regression, Bayesian methods, hierarchical linear (multilevel) modeling, structural equation modeling, and Cox hazard models (survival analysis). She also brings to CRF a good working knowledge of multiple statistical packages, such as R, SPSS, HLM, and LISREL. As a consultant, she helps clients elucidate their plans for analysis, provides data management expertise, assists in carrying out analyses, and helps translate findings into coherent products. She has taught seminars on the basics of ANOVA, R programming, and continuous-time survival analysis. Lisa is also a staff member in the Rudd Adoption Research Program.

Daniel Rovenpor
Daniel joined the Methodology Consultation Services program in Fall 2015. He is a Ph.D. candidate in social psychology. His research focuses on the role of motivational factors in emotion regulation, the role of emotion in intergroup conflict, and the relationship between social justice and causal attributions. He is trained in numerous statistical techniques, including ANOVA, regression, conditional process modeling (mediation and moderation), hierarchical linear modeling, and structural equation modeling.

METHODOLOGICAL WORKSHOPS & TRAININGS
For eleven years, CRF’s methodology trainings in advanced statistical and methodological techniques have attracted national and international family researchers to the summer methodology workshops held on campus. Researchers have come to depend on CRF’s consistent menu of relevant and intensive trainings. CRF is a satellite campus for the prestigious Summer Institute in Quantitative Methods organized by the University of Michigan’s Inter-university Consortium for Political and Social Research (ICPSR). CRF offers three weeks of intensive training on a variety of topics at the Amherst campus. These forums receive high praise from participants, ensuring the continued demand for these offerings.
The Methodology Program of the Center sponsored a seminar series on statistical topics relevant to family research. All seminars were intended to appeal to a broad audience and attracted researchers from many disciplines, including criminology, clinical psychology, medicine, economics, computer science, and public health. They provided an orientation to the topic and a hands-on component whereby participants used laptops to practice analyzing data. The seminars were presented by the CRF methodology consultants.

**Recidivism and Recovery: Analyzing Event History Data Using R**

The first seminar was held on October 30, 2015 and presented by Lisa Fiorenzo. She presented on event history analysis, a branch of statistics that focuses on the analysis of time duration until one or more events occur. It is a critical method for those who wish to ask questions about predictors of time to certain events when censoring is a concern. It addresses questions such as, “How long does it take to recover in psychotherapy, and what factors influence differences in time to recovery?”

**Mediation and Moderation Using Process in SPSS**

The second seminar was held on December 11, 2015 and presented by Tina Chen and Daniel Rovenpor. They presented on mediation and moderation, two powerful statistical techniques that focus on understanding the mechanisms of effects. Mediation focuses on modeling the process by which effects influence outcomes whereas moderation focuses on whether an effect is stronger under certain conditions. The seminars addressed questions such as, “Is the effect of students’ self-perception of ability on the level of engagement in school moderated by ethnic identity?” Mediation and moderation can be easily implemented in both SPSS and SAS via a macro called PROCESS.

**How to Talk Like a Pirate: Introduction to the R Programming Language**

The third seminar was held on April 22, 2016 and presented by Lisa Fiorenzo and Tina Chen. They presented on the R statistical programming language, which has become the de facto standard for the analysis of social science data. R is free, open-source, and available for the three main operating systems: Windows, Mac OS, and Linux. R’s flexibility makes routine data analysis easy and also supports innovative programming and graphics. The goal of this seminar was to introduce R and R programming using a combination of lecture-demonstration and hands-on exercises with real data.
The Center for Research on Families is excited to announce the recipients of this year’s student research grants and awards. This program provides support to undergraduate and graduate students in all disciplines of study and acknowledges outstanding student research on issues related to families. CRF received an unprecedented number of applications for this year’s competition. Seven talented students received awards in five categories to support family research for a total of over $30,000 awarded! Keeping in the tradition of CRF, our winners come from a broad range of disciplines and departments.
Family Research Graduate Student Fellowship

Mahala Dyer Stewart, Ph.D. candidate, Sociology
Choice: Racialized Social Reproduction, and Middle-Class Logics of Mothering through Schooling
Mentor: Professor Joya Misra (Sociology)

Rodrigo Dominguez Villegas, Ph.D. candidate, Sociology
Welcome Home?: Comparing the Impact of Varying Contexts of Reception on the Socioeconomic Incorporation of Return Migrant Families in Mexico
Mentor: Jennifer Lundquist (Sociology)

Yolanda Maria Wiggins, Ph.D. candidate, Sociology
The Balancing Act of Family and College: Reciprocity and its Consequences for Black Students
Mentor: Professor Naomi Gerstel (Sociology)

Gennarina D. Santorelli, Ph.D. candidate, Clinical Psychology
Emotion Reactivity in Older Adults with Mild Cognitive Impairment
Mentor: Professor Rebecca Ready (Psychological and Brain Sciences)

Family Research Undergraduate Assistantship

Alexandra Santiago (class of 2017), Psychological and Brain Sciences
Daytime Napping and Inhibitory Control in Preschool-Aged Children
Mentor: Professor Rebecca Spencer (Psychological and Brain Sciences)

Family Research Undergraduate Student Honors Thesis Award

Michael Lemieux (class of 2016), Biochemistry and Molecular Biology
Effects of Utero Exposure to BPS and EE2
Mentor: Professor Laura Vandenberg (Epidemiology)

Family Research Travel Grant

Sarah Reedy, Ph.D. candidate, Anthropology
The Effects of Environmental Conditions on the Development of Sexual Dimorphism: A Comparison of Boys and Girls from Three Industrial European Skeletal Samples
Society for the Study of Human Biology Symposium, Portugal
Mentor: Brigitte Holt (Anthropology)

Amy Newberg, Ph.D. candidate, Social Psychology
My Way or the Highway: Attachment as a Predictor of Relationship Influence Society for Personality and Social Psychology Conference, San Diego, CA
Mentor: Professor Paula Pietromonaco (Psychological and Brain Sciences)

Emily Harrington, Master’s candidate, Nutrition
Attitudes, Beliefs and Promotion of Fruits and Vegetables by Multicultural Students From An Urban Middle School
Experimental Biology Conference San Diego, CA
Mentor: Professor Lindiwe Sibeko (Nutrition)
CRF 2015 STUDENT AWARD RECIPIENTS SHARE THEIR RESEARCH

During the 2015-16 academic year, CRF student awardees met together at a roundtable meeting to discuss their research with their peers, faculty, and staff. Students talked about their research projects, faculty mentors' advice, and the importance of this experience at UMass. Awardees repeatedly stressed the important role CRF played in furthering their research.

Here are the research highlights of graduate student fellowship recipients Shayl Griffith and Mary Catanese, CRF undergraduate assistantship recipients Angela Essa and Emily Reilly, and travel award recipients Sarah Reedy and Amy Newberg:

Shayl Griffith is a Psychology doctoral student working with CRF affiliate and Psychological and Brain Sciences professor David Arnold. She presented on the research she is conducting on parents and their children's interactions with educational applications (“apps”) on smart phone and tablet devices. Shayl has been conducting experiments and observations with Dr. Arnold and is currently moving into the coding process to begin analyzing the data. At the CRF roundtable, Shayl was able to receive some feedback and advice on the coding process. An interesting concept that appears to be emerging is related to the frequency and manner of parents assisting their children with app use as they would assist with reading or writing. Shayl will be finishing her dissertation next year.

“I don’t know what I would have done without my CRF Fellowship. CRF has provided me the crucial time required to finish my research, allowing me to one day help families navigate a rapidly changing home.”

Mary Catanese is a PhD candidate in Neuroscience and Behavior working on her dissertation with current CRF Family Research Scholar and Environmental Health Scientist Dr. Laura Vandenberg. Mary’s work examines the effects of estrogens on maternal behavior and the maternal brain in mice exposed to exogenous estrogenic compounds during pregnancy and lactation. She also examines long-term effects on exposed offspring when they reach adulthood. In Mary’s work, measures of maternal behaviors include nursing, pup grooming, pup retrieval, and nest building. She has also been examining regions of the brain important for maternal behavior. Mary has progressed on her research and has analyzed data from the dams exposed to exogenous estrogens during pregnancy and lactation. Mary anticipates completing her dissertation work in the next year.

“Thank you so much for this award, which has enabled me the time to focus entirely on my research this year.”

Angela Essa, an undergraduate in the Honors College majoring in Biology, received an award from CRF to work closely with Professor Kathleen Arcaro of the Veterinary and Animal Sciences department. Angela and Professor Arcaro designed an experiment that involves providing a dietary regimen to recent mothers in an attempt to assess the effects of the dietary intervention on breast health and breast cancer risk in women. They are conducting this study by analyzing breast milk samples obtained from breastfeeding women. Additionally, they hope to further assess any effects that this altered maternal diet may have on the breastfeeding infant’s microbiome. Angela and Professor Arcaro have been working to find participants, and so have been attempting to develop new recruitment networks. CRF’s faculty leadership was able to provide some suggestions on recruitment strategies.

“CRF allowed me to do actual family research, something very few undergraduates ever have the opportunity to do.”
Emily Reilly, an undergraduate student double majoring in Nutrition and Psychology, is continuing a research study with a sample of working mothers that was started by the Working Families in Transition Project (WFTP). Emily worked with the WFTP and the Learning Lab to implement a survey with a sample of mothers that the WFTP began following ten years ago. Emily is exploring the relationship between maternal distress and depression, and childhood adaptive outcomes. Emily’s preliminary results indicate that maternal distress is inversely correlated with a mother’s perceived social support from her family.

“To have the opportunity to conduct longitudinal surveying as an undergraduate is amazing; this has been an irreplaceable experience.”

Amy Newberg is a second year Ph.D. student in Social Psychology, working with Dr. Paula Pietromonaco. With the assistance of the CRF travel award, Amy presented her work entitled, “My Way or the Highway: Attachment as a Predictor of Relationship Influence,” at the 17th annual Society for Personality and Social Psychology conference in San Diego, California. Amy’s poster documents and analyzes the responses of 179 individuals surveyed on their use of power in their intimate relationships. At the presentation Amy was able to receive feedback from dozens of nationally recognized researchers.

“During the conference, I was able to hear about recent research in the field and meet other researchers conducting research on relationships and in social psychology. It was so rewarding!”

Sarah Reedy is a Ph.D. candidate in the Department of Anthropology. Sarah was awarded travel funding from CRF to present her dissertation research at the Society for the Study of Human Biology Symposium, “Human Biology of Poverty,” in Portugal. At the Symposium, Sarah was given the “Best Student Presentation” award. She presented her dissertation research, “The Effects of Environmental Conditions on the Development of Sexual Dimorphism: A Comparison of Boys and Girls from Three Industrial European Skeletal Samples,” which aims to better understand the differences in growth between boys and girls when conditions are stressed.

“I am so thankful to CRF.... I received a lot of great feedback from other researchers and got some great advice to make my project stronger!”
Although to most American families a world without a television in the home seems like a distant fiction, it was only sixty years ago that the television first hit retail shelves. In reaction to television’s rapid dissemination throughout homes in the U.S., psychologists were driven to ask a progression of questions, including how frequently was TV being watched, how did TV affect family dynamics, how did children learn from TV, how did parents guide viewing, and what co-viewing activities were most beneficial. The progression of questions provided nuanced answers that showed that the important information is how children use TV with parents, not whether or not they watch TV. A similar trend in technology is currently unfolding in the American family today.

Despite trickling into homes only ten years ago, smartphones and smart devices have quickly become a nearly ubiquitous part of the American home. Much like television and other technologies, the smart device was once thought of as a luxury but is now owned by 85% of parent-aged adults. Even among lower income groups, over half of parent-aged adults own a smart device. Similarly, and astoundingly, between 2011 and 2013, the proportion of children with access to a smart device at home increased from 50% to 75%. Analogous to today’s adults who grew accustomed to televisions, America’s future adolescents will not remember a time when smart devices did not exist.

In part due to their rapid proliferation, there has been, unfortunately, no research on how smart phones are being used by children or their parents. Although there is a great deal of data on how prevalent smart devices are in the home, there has been no systematic investigation into
2015-2016 CRF DISSERTATION FELLOW SHAYL GRIFFITH USED HER CRF AWARD TO STUDY CHILDREN’S USE OF SMART TECHNOLOGY INSIDE THE HOME.

how smart devices are being used. Similar to the television, which was also adopted by households before researchers could study its effects, smart phones could have significant impacts on family dynamics and on how children learn.

For her dissertation and CRF Family Research Fellowship, Shayl Griffith is working with Professor David Arnold to analyze the use of smart devices in the home. Using video recordings of parent and child interactions with smart devices Shayl has been coding the data to look for patterns and interactions that exemplify features crucial for learning. The data, which was previously collected for other research conducted by Griffith and Arnold, consist of interactions from families at a wide range of socioeconomic levels. Broadly speaking, Shayl has been looking for the levels of engagement between children, the devices, and their parents.

“There is a reasonable analogy between degrees of engagement in smart devices and co-viewing in television,” remarks Shayl. An important factor in the use of televisions is the degree to which parents move from not viewing with children, to co-viewing, to then actually co-viewing and engaging with the programs on television. Ideally, parents actively interact with the children and the smart device. The idea is to keep children in the “zone of proximal development,” where they are being challenged but encouraged with feasible tasks.

One specific thing Shayl is looking for, for example, is scaffolding, a crucial learning concept. “One thing we know is that educational apps are being downloaded frequently,” says Shayl, “however, we don’t know if these apps are being used effectively.” Shayl has looked for scaffolding to see if parents are providing a proper balance between guidance and autonomy for their children as they use smart devices and gradually increasing the difficulty of apps as children’s skills improve.

Because of the widespread availability of smart devices, “the potential to impact children, positively or negatively, is immense.” Smart devices, and their associated software apps, have the ability to hold a tremendous amount of knowledge that was, previously, inaccessible to low-income parents and children.

Studying the ways in which parents across the socioeconomic spectrum effectively or ineffectively use the apps will potentially allow interventions and programs to be designed that are meant to improve use. “That would be my dream--- to one day design an intervention for smart devices based on my research,” says Shayl.

To Shayl, the CRF fellowship award was crucial to the completion of her research, as it allowed her more time to dedicate towards her work, “I don’t know what I would have done without the CRF fellowship.” Without the fellowship, Shayl says she “would be working round the clock with teaching assistantships.” Shayl hopes to one day use this fellowship to advance our understanding of smart devices in the home.

The Center for Research on Families Student Awards program recognizes outstanding student family researchers like Shayl Griffith. Shayl’s interdisciplinary research is highly relevant to families and has the potential to shape technology’s role in the household.
CRF has not only supported hundreds of students since its inception by providing funding for research but has also supported students through professional opportunities. CRF has consistently sought to hire the University’s talented undergraduate and graduate students for part-time professional positions with us. CRF often hires from the Isenberg School of Management and the Center for Public Policy and Administration to help organize events and oversee programs. CRF’s student employees use the professional experience they gain to help them find employment after graduation. One former student employee, Sophia Love, who graduated in 2015, has used her CRF experience to become the lead coordinator for the Re-Envisioning Foster Care in America and Rudd Adoption Conference at UMass.

Sophia, a Hospitality and Tourism Management student who joined CRF in 2013, was initially brought on to the team to help organize the Tay Gavin Erickson Lecture Series. Eventually, as CRF began collaborating with the Rudd Adoption Research Program, Sophia was able to apply her talents to assist in organizing one of the biggest annual conferences centered on adoption issues. The Rudd conference, which has a new theme every year, is an annual celebration of research on adoption and adoption-related issues that ultimately looks to improve the lives of adoptees and children in the child welfare system through the implementation of recommendations made by researchers and other professionals; it is also a wonderful networking opportunity for the members of this passionate field.

The Rudd Adoption Research Program, said that she “would not know what to do without Sophia,” and that the 2016 Rudd-REFCA conference collaboration with the Treehouse Foundation and the Boston College School of Social Work is a new and complicated frontier for Rudd. “[Coordinating] this year’s conference with so many new stakeholders has been a complex challenge, but it’s really developing wonderfully with the coordination of Sophia,” said Dolan.

Sophia says she is “honored and excited to lead the coordination of the adoption conference,” because it is both an opportunity to use the skills she developed at UMass and CRF and because of her own personal connection with foster children. “It’s so rewarding,” says Sophia, “to contribute in a way that utilizes my skills and allows me to help such a worthy cause.” Sophia’s family was a foster home, and so, by having foster siblings when she was growing up, Sophia says she “knows how important adoption research is for foster youth.”

CRF is proud that one of our former student employees has gone on to coordinate such a family-related event. CRF continues to employ students to help organize and oversee crucial aspects of our programs.
CRF continued its long-standing commitment to interdisciplinary and translational research with its Second Annual Salon and Book Reading.

CRF’s Salon was held in November to showcase the new book *Youth Politics in Putin’s Russia: Producing Patriots and Entrepreneurs*, authored by CRF Scholar and Professor of Anthropology Julie Hemment. During the Salon, Julie read excerpts from the book and answered questions raised by attendees about her experience, her methods, and her conclusions. The Salon and Book Reading was widely attended by UMass faculty, graduate students, undergraduates, staff, and residents of the Amherst region, and it led to a dynamic discussion.

*In Youth Politics in Putin’s Russia: Producing Patriots and Entrepreneurs,* Julie Hemment provides a fresh perspective on the controversial nationalist youth projects that have proliferated in Russia in the Putin era, examining them from the point of view of their participants and offering provocative insights into their origins and significance. The pro-Kremlin organization Nashi (“Ours”) and other state-run initiatives to mobilize Russian youth have been widely reviled in the West, seen as Soviet throwbacks and evidence of Russia’s authoritarian turn. By contrast, Hemment’s detailed ethnographic analysis - based on a collaborative research project with Russian feminist scholars and their students - finds an astute global awareness and a paradoxical kinship with the international democracy-promoting interventions of the 1990s. Drawing on Soviet political forms but responding to 21st-century disenchantments with the neoliberal state, these projects seek to produce not only patriots, but also volunteers, entrepreneurs, and activists.

The event was a great success and a timely and joyful celebration of Julie Hemment’s research and ethnographic experience. The annual Salons have become a popular way to engage the community with family research and so we plan to continue.
Julie Hemment discusses her book, *Youth Politics in Putin’s Russia: Producing Patriots and Entrepreneurs*, at the CRF Second Annual Salon and Book Reading.
The Tay Gavin Erickson Lecture Series brings nationally recognized speakers with expertise in family research to campus each year. The scholars are invited to both consult with our faculty and engage with the community through widely attended public lectures. The lectures are centered on translating their research to the public, emphasizing its implications in relation to public policy and family behavior.

The following experts visited CRF in 2015-2016:

**Sandra Gordon-Salant, Ph.D.**
Professor and Director of the Doctoral Program in Clinical Audiology, Department of Hearing and Speech Sciences at the University of Maryland
Lecture: *Effects of Age and Hearing Ability on Perception of Spanish-Accented English*
Date: November 9, 2015
Consulted with CRF Scholar Professor Lisa Sanders

**C. Arden Pope III, Ph.D.**
Mary Lou Fulton Professor of Economics at Brigham Young University
Lecture: *Effects of Air Pollution on Human Health: Science, Public Policy, and Controversy*
Date: January 28, 2016
Consulted with CRF Scholar Professor Sylvia Brandt
Rafael Perez-Escamilla, Ph.D.
Professor of Epidemiology & Public Health and Director of Global Health Concentration and Office of Public Health Practice at the Yale School of Public Health.
Lecture: Equity in Breastfeeding: Where we Have Been? Where Should We Be Heading?
Date: February 10, 2016
Consulted with CRF Scholar Professor Lindiwe Sibeko

Stephen Hinshaw, Ph.D.
Professor of Psychology at UC Berkeley and Vice Chair for Psychology at UC San Francisco
Lecture: Psychopathology and Stigma, Empirical Science and Narrative: The Need for Integration
Date: March 24, 2016
Consulted with CRF Scholar Professor Linda Isbell

Steven Cole, Ph.D.
Professor of Medicine in the Hematology-Oncology Division at the David Geffen School of Medicine at UCLA
Lecture: Social Regulation of Human Gene Expression
Date: May 12, 2016
Consulted with CRF Scholar Professor Paula Pietromonaco
For Dr. Lee Badgett, knowledge is more than an academic pursuit. It’s a call to arms, and a mandate to make a positive contribution to the world in which we live.

Badgett, a CRF Family Research Scholar alumna (2004-05), recently celebrated the publication of her new book, *The Public Professor: How to Use Your Research to Change the World*. Aimed specifically at fellow professors and academics, the book is a powerful reminder that much of the research conducted in America’s universities does not reach a public audience.

Many faculty are consumed with the rigorous process of peer review for journal articles, applying for grant funding and worrying about tenure and promotion. But considering the amount of time academics dedicate to “publish or perish,” these concerns ultimately do little to advance public policy.

Her book is an effort to change the focus of academic scholarship, shifting toward goals that serve the greater public good: social justice, political and economic equality, environmental sustainability, scientific inquiry, and other movements that affect the global population.

According to the wisdom Dr. Badgett shares in *The Public Professor*, it is essential that academics consider “how to use research to change minds.” She suggests that they learn how to leverage their ideas across the full spectrum of public engagement: “online, in print, at council hearings, even national legislation.”

The book offers practical guidance and strategies for success. This advice is crafted from Professor Badgett’s own experience over twenty-five years as a policy analyst and internationally-renowned expert on same-sex marriage.

Her wisdom comes in the form of a toolkit for faculty members who are seeking opportunities to discuss their research findings with a broader audience. Inside the
book, one finds chapters dedicated to understanding different sides of a current debate, building an effective network, and using both traditional and social media to establish one's brand.

“Everyone has a message,” says Professor Badgett. The problem is that so little of the message has a chance to resonate, nor does it have much influence on the world outside of the academy. Therefore, communication with non-academics is a virtue that faculty should cultivate—especially when it comes to lawmakers, who rarely read beyond the executive summary. “[Academics] don’t talk the way that other people do,” Badgett says. “And that’s a big problem if we want to be relevant and engaged” with public officials and their constituents.

Professor Badgett is currently a Professor of Economics at UMass Amherst. She is also the Williams Distinguished Scholar at UCLA’s Williams Institute and has been director of the Center for Public Policy and Administration at UMass Amherst since 2013.

Badgett is also an important figure in the Public Engagement Project (PEP) at UMass Amherst, one of CRF’s partner organizations and a valuable center of excellence on campus. PEP’s mission is to “support and train faculty members to use their research to contribute to social change, inform public policy, and enrich public debate.”

As a long-standing participant in PEP activities and a current steering committee member, Badgett is frequently called upon to share her experiences with junior faculty at seminars and conferences. In January 2016, she spoke about *The Public Professor* at a lecture co-sponsored by CRF and PEP.

“In my own career, the connections between engagement, research and teaching have been so closely intertwined,” she says. “Each part of that professional triangle presents opportunities for us to learn and create valuable knowledge and materials for conveying that knowledge.

According to Badgett, “Somewhere, somebody needs what you know, and they need you to be the conduit for that knowledge.”

Her parting advice to faculty colleagues? “Jump in!”


Lee Badgett is working to help fellow faculty frame their research in a way that helps to engage the public and advance public policy.
CRF is committed to creating opportunities for research collaboration and the formation of intellectual communities that bring students and researchers together across traditional boundaries. CRF collaborates with other centers, departments, schools and colleges within UMass Amherst to develop multidisciplinary projects. Faculty from the Five Colleges and other UMass campuses also engage in joint ventures with CRF, which has led to innovative projects and an extended network of research opportunities. Some of the activities include:

**SUPPORTING FACULTY “THINK TANKS”**
Bringing together interdisciplinary teams of faculty with shared interests in issues and topics of importance to families such as stress, work and family, early child development and adolescence.

**PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT PROJECT (PEP)**
The Public Engagement Project supports and trains faculty members from all disciplines to use their research to contribute to social change, inform public policy, and enrich public debate. CRF, in collaboration with ISSR, CPPA, and the Psychology of Peace and Violence Program, spearheaded this program which has resulted in national exposure for faculty in public media outlets such as PBS, the New York Times, the Boston Globe, and the Huffington Post, to name a few. This year CRF helped to celebrate Professor Lee Badgett’s new book, *The Public Professor: How to Use Your Research to Change the World.*

**INTERDISCIPLINARY COLLABORATIONS**

CRF is collaborating with UMass Extension to spearhead research and outreach activities in Springfield related to maternal health and well-being, child and youth development, and family well-being.

**CRF IN SPRINGFIELD**

**FAMILY RESEARCH METHODS**
Scholars from business, sciences and the social sciences have all been actively involved in CRF workshops and consultation programs which brings expertise to the challenges and unique aspects of family research.

**CO-SPONSORING PUBLIC EVENTS AND LECTURES ON KEY FAMILY ISSUES**
CRF has collaborated with departments across campus to highlight interdisciplinary efforts to examine important family-related topics. This year CRF co-sponsored a Social Work and Social Justice Education Symposium with the UMass College of Education, the Center for Latin American, Caribbean, and Latino Studies, and the Smith College School of Social Work.

Another CRF-co-sponsored event, organized by the Psychological and Brain Sciences Diversity Committee, discussed how community-engaged scholarship can promote health in an emerging Latino community.

CRF also provided support for a Sociology colloquium series on Family, Tradition, and Financial Citizenship.
The Rudd Adoption Research Program and the Center for Research on Families are closely linked through their synergistic missions and strategies. CRF provides administrative support to the Rudd program, and their close proximity and shared research strengths benefit both programs. This partnership was further strengthened this year when CRF’s former student intern, Sophia Love, formally joined the Rudd Adoption Research Program as lead conference coordinator.

The Rudd Adoption Research Program is a leader in producing and disseminating state-of-the-art research on the psychology of adoption through conferences, workshops, graduate and postdoctoral training opportunities, and stimulation of research activities. Dr. Harold Grotevant is the Rudd Family Foundation Endowed Chair in the Department of Psychological & Brain Sciences and leads the Rudd Adoption Research Program.

This year, the Rudd Adoption Research Program has expanded its collaboration to include the Treehouse Foundation and the Boston College Graduate School of Social Work. CRF staff and Rudd have worked to create an even larger, more synergistic conference than in the past. This year’s collaborative conference, titled *Thriving on the Frontline*, is yet another exciting celebration of adoption research.
Stress is an increasingly pervasive theme in the modern family. Stress symptoms in one individual affect the entire family unit, making it an important issue to address.

The goal of the interdisciplinary Stress Research Group is to better understand both the causes and effects of stress, along with methods of stress measurement. They work to integrate techniques, tools, and perspectives to examine how and why stress manifests in the body, how it influences relationships and mental health, and how to address its negative effects to improve health.

Family relationships, animal bonding, developmental phases, and neuroscience are important aspects of this cluster’s research. Group members have co-authored articles, submitted grant proposals together, and supported each other in productivity and creativity of thought.

Grant Submitted for New Stress Program at UMass

Under the leadership of CRF Interim Director Lynnette Leidy Sievert, the Stress Research Group is endeavoring to create a comprehensive interdisciplinary program to train graduate students in ways to study and understand stress across disciplines. The program would build on the strong foundation of the existing faculty-based Stress Research Group.

Through regular meetings and collaborations, the group realized that what they gain from the interdisciplinary stress work could also be useful to graduate students who study stress. The group aims to develop a curriculum and research framework through which students could become interdisciplinary experts in stress research.

As a result, the Stress Group has submitted an NSF NRT grant requesting $3 million to develop the program.

STRESS RESEARCH GROUP FACULTY MEMBERS

Heather Richardson, Co-director of Stress Research Group, Assistant Professor, Psychological and Brain Sciences

Lynnette Leidy Sievert, Co-director of Stress Research Group, Professor, Anthropology

Annaliese Beery, Assistant Professor, Psychology, Smith College

Joseph Bergan, Assistant Professor, Psychological and Brain Sciences

Jeffrey Blaustein, Associate Professor, Psychological and Brain Sciences

Elizabeth Bertone-Johnson, Associate Professor, Epidemiology

Matt Davidson, Lecturer, Psychological and Brain Sciences

Kirby Deater-Deckard, Professor, Psychological and Brain Sciences

Kristina Deligiannidis, MD, Assistant Professor, Psychiatry and Obstetrics and Gynecology; Director, Depression Specialty Clinic at UMass Memorial Medical Center

Andrew Farrar, Research Fellow, Psychological and Brain Sciences

Susan Hankinson, Professor and Chair, Biostatistics and Epidemiology

Mary Harrington, Tippet Professor in Life Sciences, Psychology, Smith College

KC Haydon, Assistant Professor, Psychology and Education, Mount Holyoke College

Karen Kalmakis, Associate Professor, Nursing

Agnès Lacreuse, Associate Professor, Psychological and Brain Sciences

Jerrold Meyer, Professor Emeritus of Psychological and Brain Sciences

Jennifer Martin McDermott, Assistant Professor, Psychological and Brain Sciences

David Moorman, Assistant Professor, Psychological and Brain Sciences

Melinda Novak, Professor, Psychological and Brain Sciences

Mariana Pereira, Assistant Professor, Psychological and Brain Sciences

Maureen Perry-Jenkins, Professor of Psychological and Brain Sciences and CRF Director

Paula Pietromonaco, Professor of Psychological and Brain Sciences

Sally Powers, Professor of Psychological and Brain Sciences; Associate Dean, College of Natural Sciences

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Lisa Troy, Assistant Professor, Nutrition and Commonwealth Honors College Professor

Brian Whitcomb, Associate Professor, Public Health
The Early Childhood Research Group is an interdisciplinary working group that consists of faculty from a variety of disciplines who share a mutual interest in early childhood education and care. The faculty members meet regularly with the goal of supporting each other’s research and developing collaborations. The faculty’s discussion and meetings inspires childhood research that is more than simply the sum of each faculty’s own research.

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HAROLD GROTEVANT, Psychological and Brain Sciences
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