Rudd Family Foundation Chair in Psychology

ANNUAL REPORT 2011
Rudd Family Foundation Chair in Psychology

The Rudd Family Foundation Chair is located within the University of Massachusetts Amherst Psychology Department and is affiliated with the interdisciplinary Center for Research on Families. The program conducts state-of-the-art research on the psychology of adoption that will impact policy at agency, state, federal, and international levels. It also trains postdoctoral scholars, graduate students, and undergraduate students in theories and methods needed for the study of adoption. Conferences, workshops, and publications disseminate research-based information needed by practitioners, policy makers, and the public. And through key community partnerships, the Rudd Adoption Research Program demonstrates how adoption research can transform policy and practice for the benefit of all whose lives are touched by adoption.
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From the Chair

I invite you to explore this 2011 Annual Report of the Rudd Family Foundation Chair in Psychology at the University of Massachusetts Amherst. This year brought new research advances, deepening community collaborations, and building capacity in the field for excellence in adoption research.

In preparing this report, it struck me that 2011 should really be called “the year of mentoring.” The innovative Adoption Mentoring Partnership, linking adopted college students with adopted children in the local community, continued for its second exciting year. A group of colleagues from UMass and Mt. Holyoke College obtained a grant for mutual mentoring around the topics of adoption and foster care. I had the privilege of mentoring dedicated and enthusiastic faculty, postdoctoral, and staff colleagues as well as bright, energetic graduate and undergraduate students. When I ponder the ripple effect that their work will produce, I am convinced that there is a bright future ahead for adoption research, and in turn, for children, families, and others whose lives are touched by adoption. We are mentoring the next generation of researchers and clinicians whose efforts will change the world.

Since the beginning, research has been a central aspect of our mission. This report highlights work of Rudd program affiliates who addressed complex, important research questions such as the following:
“There is a bright future ahead for adoption research, and in turn, for children, families and others whose lives are touched by adoption”

When adopted children grow up, leave home, and begin to form their own families, what happens to earlier relationships that may have been forged between their adoptive family and birth relatives?

How do childhood experiences of contact with birth relatives predict identity formation and adjustment among young adult adoptees?

How are young children raised by gay, lesbian, and heterosexual couples faring in terms of mental health and adjustment?

How does a history of institutionalization prior to adoption affect children’s ability to process social cues?

How do White adoptive parents talk with their Asian-born children about racism, and to whom do the parents turn when they need help with this difficult topic?

In what ways can a strong mentoring relationship promote identity and self-esteem of adopted children and the college-age adoptees who mentor them?

None of us would have had these opportunities had it not been for Andrew and Virginia Rudd, whose breadth of vision has been matched by their generosity in making it possible for all involved in our program to work together on these important issues. I invite you to review this report of our activities for 2011 and see for yourself the exciting ways in which the programs developed through the auspices of the Rudd Family Foundation Chair in Psychology have developed since its inception. As always, thank you for your interest and your support.

With best wishes,

Harold D. Grotevant, Ph.D.
Rudd Family Foundation Chair in Psychology
The Rudd Adoption Research Program is one vehicle through which the activities of the Rudd Chair are carried out. The program is located within the University of Massachusetts Amherst Psychology Department and is closely affiliated with the interdisciplinary Center for Research on Families.

The mission of the Rudd Adoption Research Program is to link adoption research with policy and practice. Toward that end, the program has four goals:

• to advance knowledge about the psychology of adoption
• to provide evidence-based knowledge to inform adoption policy and practice
• to build capacity for excellence in adoption research
• to promote adoption research initiatives of emerging scholars

The program seeks to develop synergy among scientists, practitioners, and policymakers from varied disciplines who share interests in the many topics relevant to adoption. The ultimate goal of these activities is to contribute to evidence-informed practice in adoption and to provide research-based information that will influence policy at agency, state, federal, and international levels.

The Rudd Program continues to be involved with two exciting university – community collaborations that cut across all four program goals: the Adoption Mentoring Partnership and Re-Envisioning Foster Care in America. In addition, the Rudd Program is a key partner in a new initiative aimed at stimulating interaction among adoption professionals at all levels: the Mellon Mutual Mentoring Team. The work of these three community partnerships cuts across all program goals, as you will see in their descriptions that follow.
Rudd Adoption Research Program
Community Partnerships
This year marked the completion of the first full year of the Adoption Mentoring Partnership (AMP) and the expansion of the program to a new cohort of mentor / mentee pairs. AMP involves collaboration between the Rudd Adoption Research Program, Big Brothers Big Sisters of Hampshire County, Adoption Journeys (a state-funded post-adoption service provider), and the Amherst Regional School District. Seeds for this unique program were cultivated into a successful mentoring program in which adopted college students at UMass are matched in one-on-one mentoring relationships with adopted, school-age children in the surrounding communities.

In the first year of the mentoring program, six mentor / mentee matches were formed, based in part, on shared aspects of the participants’ adoption stories (i.e., domestic, international, trans-racial adoption), gender, mentor / mentee ethnicity, and their shared interests. These matches developed into strong friendships, in which both the mentees and the mentors reported forming strong connections and relationships. As the mentor / mentee pairs participated in activities around the community and on campus, the mentors became a friend who occupied a unique space in the lives of the mentees. Older than themselves, but younger than their parents, the mentors became a strong point of socialization and support for the mentees. In this way, the primary goals of providing adopted children in the community with a friend, a resource, and role model were largely met.

In addition to participating in their match activities, the mentors also continue to participate in bi-weekly mentor group meetings, in which they expand their understandings of the nuances of mentoring, and of the many facets of adoption, through readings and engaging discussions. Through these meetings, the mentors are able to engage in a level of discourse about adoption, identity, culture, and social attitudes toward adoption previously unavailable to them; many noting that the mentor

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Mentor

“Just knowing that there are other people my age going through similar learning processes was so helpful to me. It made me feel less alone and confused about what I am going through.”

-- Mentor
group meetings were the first time they engaged in any level of introspection about how their own adoption fit in with their larger sense of self, and how their adoption plays a role in their larger family dynamics. Moreover, many mentors have stated that the mentor group meetings continue to remain the only place they feel comfortable talking about their challenges with adoption, allowing AMP to support and enrich the lives of the mentors as well as the mentees. Another measure of the success of the initial matching process, match maintenance and supervision, and of the overall strength of AMP, all six matched pairs overwhelmingly re-committed to participating in another year of the mentoring program.

On the strong foundation of a successful first year, five new mentors were recruited in the fall of 2011, nearly doubling the size of the existing program. While the newest mentor / mentee pairs have had less time together in comparison to the original matched pairs, it appears that the topic of adoption is more prominent for the newest members of AMP. Mentors have reported that even within the first few match meetings, mentees have engaged them in discussions related to adoption, even showing their mentors adoption scrapbooks and lifebooks.

A strong research component has been built into AMP since its beginning. Mentors are being interviewed and completing questionnaires about their experiences and attitudes several times a year; a comparison group of adopted college students who are not mentors is also completing those measures. Mentees’ parents are being interviewed about their expectations and experiences, and a detailed evaluation of the mentees’ experiences is being planned. In light of the continued community interest and success of the Adoption Mentoring Partnership, efforts are being undertaken to fully document and research aspects of program development. With solid evaluation research undergirding the program, next steps will involve program replication at other sites across the U.S.

AMP benefits from its connection to the world of academics and adoption research through the involvement of the Rudd Adoption Research Program, and has been showcased at national conferences on adoption, where it has garnered great interest and support. Further, AMP is strengthened by the time-tested mentoring model developed by Big Brothers Big Sisters; this nationally recognized program can only further community support and interest as well. As a direct result of these strengths of the collaborative partners, AMP is uniquely positioned to expand as an effective intervention in the lives of adopted children and adopted emerging adults.

Funding for AMP has come from the Community Foundation of Western Massachusetts, the Beveridge Family Foundation, the Rudd Family Foundation Chair in Psychology at UMass, Big Brothers Big Sisters of Hampshire County, and private donors.

“I feel prouder to say I am adopted because I feel like any stigma that I have acquired over the years has gone away. I feel like this program is what I needed to really conquer my history and myself; it is what I needed to learn and grow as an adopted person.”

-- Mentor

“I did not anticipate how meaningful this relationship would become to my daughter. It gives me peace of mind to know that my daughter will have a positive role-model in her life who is also adopted.”

-- Parent
Re-Envisioning Foster Care in America

"Re-Envisioning Foster Care in America is creating collaborative social change on behalf of our nation's children and youth who have been removed from their homes and placed in foster care. Our goal is to ensure that every child is rooted in family and community. Jen Dolan and Hal Grotevant have been active partners in moving this process forward and making sure that our programs are grounded in research." -- Judy Cockerton, Founder and CEO, Treehouse Foundation

Re-Envisioning Foster Care in America (REFC) seeks to change the culture and practice of how we perceive and support children and youth in the public foster care system. The Rudd Adoption Research Program (Hal Grotevant & Jen Dolan) was one of the original conveners of this initiative, along with the Treehouse Foundation (Judy Cockerton, Kerry Homstead), and Friends of Children (Jane Lyons). The initiative has now expanded considerably to include other community stakeholders, including the Commonwealth of Massachusetts Department of Children and Families.

The work is initially being conducted in the Hampden, Hampshire and Franklin County region of Western Massachusetts, an incubator for a nation-wide model. REFC envisions a collaborative, multi-sector and active "lab" that engages individuals and organizations in a vital process of dialogue, engagement, reflection and action over time to support change and positive outcomes for youth in care.

The Rudd Program was a major partner in the second Re-Envisioning Foster Care conference, which attracted over 100 leaders to Holyoke Community College on May 6, 2011. The group heard from leaders and innovators across the United States. Some of the ideas and approaches presented at the conference are already being incorporated into programs in western Massachusetts.
Three key issues facing those concerned with children in care are organizing the work of the Initiative. Here are just a few examples of the work in progress:

"Aging out" of Foster Care without a Permanent Family
Major issues being considered by this group include transitional housing for youth and engagement of the youth themselves in the re-envisioning process through the development of a Speak-Out Team known as HEROES (Helping Everyone Receive Our Everyday Stories).

Educational Continuity for Children Whose Lives are Disrupted by Foster Care
At the second REFC conference (May 2011), Jodi Rosenbaum, director of More Than Words Café / Bookstore in Waltham, MA so inspired the audience that working group members are hoping to bring the model to western Massachusetts. Another initiative promotes reading by Grade 4, so that children experiencing foster care do not experience the cumulative educational disadvantages associated with late reading.

Permanent Family for Every Child
With leadership from DCF, one initiative of this group makes training for prospective foster parents more readily and flexibly available. Another group is examining alternative models for visitation of children with their biological parents, while the child is in the foster care system. Their work was inspired by a model developed at the Providence Children’s Museum and presented at the May 2011 REFC conference.

Research is an important part of Rudd Program REFC engagement as well. We are conducting an evaluation of the first five years’ work of the Treehouse Community at Easthampton Meadows, documenting the unique history of this innovative community from the perspectives of its founder, staff, community volunteers, adoptive parents, teens (adopted from foster care), and elders who reside at the Treehouse Community. The experiences of those involved with this unique intergenerational intentional community have much to teach us about novel approaches to meeting the needs of youth in care.

As the Re-Envisioning Foster Care Initiative continues to mature, its leaders and stakeholders are working with the Interactive Institute for Social Change in Boston to plan for the initiative's success and expansion. For further information about the REFC initiative, visit:

www.facebook.com/groups/14836668613115/

Funding for Re-Envisioning Foster Care has come from the project conveners: Treehouse Foundation, Friends of Children, Rudd Family Foundation Chair in Psychology at UMass Amherst, and private donors.
A group of adoption scholars affiliated with the Rudd Program, led by Dr. Jennifer McDermott, Assistant Professor of Psychology at UMass, received support to form a mutual mentoring team focused on adoption. The purpose of the project is to bolster the research programs related to adoption and foster care of faculty and trainees across the Five College Consortium (UMass, Mt. Holyoke, Smith, Hampshire, and Amherst Colleges). Principal Investigator Jennifer McDermott (pictured above right) is joined by co-investigators Patricia Ramsey (pictured above left) (Professor and Chair, Department of Psychology, Mt. Holyoke College), and Hal Grotevant, Jen Dolan, and Rachel Farr from the Rudd Program.

The first project aim is to design and conduct a needs-based survey of adoption-related issues across the region (Massachusetts Survey of Kinship, Foster and Adoption Placements; MSKFAP). Results of this assessment will be shared with the Massachusetts Department of Children and Families and colleagues involved with the Re-envisioning Foster Care initiative. This survey also forms the basis for the creation of a database of families in Western Massachusetts willing to participate in research studies assessing family dynamics and developmental processes directly influenced by adoption and foster care.

The second project aim is to cultivate the capacity for high quality adoption and foster care science in junior faculty and trainees by working with leaders in the field conducting integrated and translational research. This mentoring will provide junior faculty with guidance in establishing
viable programs of research through which to secure external funding. Outside funding will bring new scientists on campus in the form of graduate and post-doctoral students. Accomplishment of these aims will enhance superior adoption and fostering research within our community that in turn will have the capacity to inform policy and practice at the local, state and national levels.

The MSKFAP survey has been designed and will be disseminated in spring, 2012. This project has involved faculty, post-doc, graduate and undergraduate student participation and collaboration with local child and family welfare agencies. The Mellon grant has also supported campus visits by two research faculty, Dr. Philip Fisher of the University of Oregon and Dr. Stacy Drury of Tulane University, as well as Dr. Joyce Maguire Pavao, a clinician, trainer, and lecturer in the field of adoption from Cambridge, Mass. After the Mellon grant has ended, its work of engaging adoption scholars at all levels and linking with community needs will be continued by the Rudd Adoption Research Program.

Funding for the Mellon Mutual Mentoring Team Project is from the UMass Amherst Center for Teaching and Faculty Development Mutual Mentoring Initiative, funded by the Andrew W. Mellon Foundation.
Rudd Adoption Research Program Goals
Dr. Grotevant continued to serve as the Principal Investigator on the Minnesota / Texas Adoption Research Project (MTARP), a longitudinal research study that focuses on the consequences of variations in openness in adoption arrangements for all members of the adoptive kinship network: birthmothers, adoptive parents, and adopted children, and for the relationships within these family systems. The project was begun in the mid-1980s in collaboration with Dr. Ruth G. McRoy, Ruby Lee Piester Centennial Professor Emerita at the University of Texas at Austin School of Social Work and the Donahue and DiFelice Endowed Professor in the Boston College Graduate School of Social Work.

With primary support from the National Institute of Child Health and Human Development, the National Science Foundation, and the William T. Grant Foundation, Dr. Grotevant and colleagues have completed three waves of this longitudinal study. In two prior waves of research, 190 adoptive families were studied when the target children were in middle childhood and adolescence. The third wave followed the study’s participants across the transition into young adulthood (age 20-28) and asked how the quality of children’s relationships while growing up predict the quality of their close relationships outside their families, their social adjustment, and their sense of adoptive identity as young adults.

We examined the connection between how adopted youth related to their adoptive families growing up and the relationships the youth form as they begin leaving home and forming new families. In-depth
interviews were conducted with the youth, their adoptive parents, and the person identified as having the closest relationship with the adoptee. Findings indicate that strong attachment to adoptive parents was related to a less avoidant attachment style in the social relationships of emerging adults. Young adults who continued to have strong attachments to their adoptive parents and positive attitudes about their adoption also felt less unstable and uncertain in general about their lives as young adults. Positive adoptive identities in emerging adults stem from adoptive parents who encouraged open conversations about adoption, as well as emotional expression and contact with birth relatives. Regardless of whether the adoptees had contact with birth relatives, the majority of them showed increased interest in information about their birth relatives as they transitioned from adolescence into emerging adulthood. They especially wanted more information about their birth relatives' medical histories. Adoptive mothers' openness in communication during adolescence predicted increased information seeking during emerging adulthood. Whether the adoptee had contact with birth relatives was not associated with psychological adjustment (externalizing); however, adoptive families most satisfied with their contact arrangements reported relative declines in adoptee externalizing behavior during adolescence, and this trend continued into emerging adulthood.

The fourth wave is launching in early 2012. The children who entered the study during elementary school are now in their late 20s to early 30s, entering committed relationships and having children. MTARP is unique in following such a large group over such a long period of time, with a focus on contact with birth relatives.
Publications 2011


Research Presentations 2011


The Rudd Adoption Research Program, in collaboration with the Center for Research on Families, sponsored the third annual Rudd Adoption Conference, “New Worlds of Adoption: Research Based Interventions Promoting Attachment,” on April 8, 2011. Conference attendance of 173 exceeded that of the two prior conferences.

Dr. Mary Dozier, Amy E. DuPont Chair of Development and Professor of Psychology at the University of Delaware, gave a well received keynote entitled, “Attachment and Biobehavioral Catch-up: An Intervention for Parents of Young Children Who have Experienced Adversity.” The intervention consists of 10 in-home sessions with both foster parent and child. The 10 sessions are manualized, so that the program can be readily disseminated. The goal is to change foster parent behavior, which in turn brings about changes in child behavior. Experienced social workers provided families with “in-the-moment” feedback, and responded immediately to problematic behavior during the sessions. The conference also featured 17 posters on a wide range of topics including, international, private and foster care adoption, program overviews, transracial adoption and adoption by lesbian and gay parents.

A panel of researchers and clinicians, including UnJa Hayes, Jennifer McDermott, Christopher Overtree, Joyce Maguire Pavao, and Sally Powers, responded to Dozier’s presentation and lead off lively discussion with the audience.

Afternoon sessions included the following:

How Many Families Does It Take To Make An Adoption? with Joyce Maguire Pavao, Founder & CEO of Center for Family Connections.

Reactive Attachment Disorder with Anna Smyke, Associate Professor of Clinical Psychiatry, Tulane University.
Plans are well underway for the fourth Rudd conference, "New Worlds of Adoption: Navigating the Teen Years," to be held on March 30, 2012 in the UMass Amherst Student Center. Information about upcoming and past conferences may be found at: psych.umass.edu/ruddchair/annualconference/

The Rudd Adoption Research Program now has its own YouTube Channel, where the presentations from the 2011 conference are available for viewing at any time, by anyone, anywhere, at no cost. Visit us at: youtube.com/user/RuddAdoption/videos
Building Capacity for Excellence in Adoption Research

Adoption Research Lab Graduate Students

Quade French

Quade French (BS, Psychology, Univ of California San Diego; MA, Clinical Psychology, California State University Northridge) is a third-year doctoral student in clinical psychology and is the Project Coordinator for the Adoption Mentoring Partnership. In addition to ensuring the continued success of the program through recruitment, matching, research, and in working directly with the mentors, he is also documenting the formation and development of this initiative for publication and future program replication. Quade continues to strengthen his own body of work in both adoption theory and research, and is particularly interested in the powerful influence of social attitudes toward adoption on the formation of self-esteem and identity in adopted persons. A recently-submitted manuscript discusses social attitudes toward adoption as having profound effects on whether an adopted person may be motivated to view his or her adoptive status as a valuable and positive aspect of self and identity. His dissertation will involve a detailed evaluation of the Adoption Mentoring Partnership, with special focus on outcomes for the mentors and mentees. These combined efforts will provide Quade with a solid foundation from which to pursue both academic and clinical careers in the pursuit of a higher quality of life for all those whose lives are touched by adoption.

Karin Garber

Karin Garber (BA, Scripps College; Ed.M., MA, Psychological Counseling, Teachers College, Columbia University) is a first year doctoral student in Clinical Psychology at UMass. She serves as Project Coordinator for the fourth wave of the Minnesota-Texas Adoption Research Project, developing electronic surveys and organizing participant recruitment. She is also becoming involved in the Adoption Mentoring Project by helping to lead class discussions and forming matches with adoptive mentors and mentees. Her main area of research for her Master’s thesis is discerning themes of microaggressions towards adoptees and analyzing the ways in which they respond to microaggressions internally and externally. More generally, she is interested in multicultural psychology, social justice counseling, and identity development in adoptees.
**Holly Grant-Marsney**

Holly A. Grant-Marsney (BA, Psychology and Neuroscience, Mt. Holyoke College; MS, Clinical Psychology, UMass Amherst) is a fourth year doctoral student in Clinical Psychology at UMass. Her research interests involve adoptive families, close relationships, and adoptive identity development, particularly in adolescence and emerging adulthood. In a recent paper entitled, “Adolescents’ Attachment to Adoptive Parents: Predicting Attachment Styles in Emerging Adulthood,” she examined adopted adolescents’ attachment to their adoptive parents as a predictor of attachment experiences in close relationships outside their family during emerging adulthood. Attachment style in emerging adulthood was evaluated in terms of the level of avoidance and anxiety in close relationships. This work demonstrated the important contribution of adoptive parent-child relationships to later adult relationships. Stronger attachment to parents during adolescence predicted less avoidant attachment in close relationships during emerging adulthood. Ms. Grant-Marsney plans to integrate her research with both teaching and clinical work in an academic position in clinical psychology.

**Danila Musante**

**Danila Musante** (BA, Psychology, Harvard University; MS, Clinical Psychology, UMass Amherst) is currently pursuing her Ph.D. in the Child, Adolescent, and Family concentration in clinical psychology at UMass. She studies the family as a context of individual development, particularly during adolescence and emerging adulthood. She has specifically examined attachment in adoptive families during adolescence and emerging adulthood and its association with feelings of negative instability during emerging adulthood. She is also broadly interested in factors related to adjustment during emerging adulthood and is currently conducting a research project examining career achievement status in adopted emerging adults. Additionally, Danila is interested in the adolescent individuation process in adoptive families and intends to examine long term effects of this relational process.

**Yesel Yoon**

**Yesel Yoon** (BA, Psychology, University of Maryland) is a second year student in the Clinical Psychology doctoral program at UMass Amherst with a special focus on children, adolescents, and families. Her current academic and research career built upon previous research experiences in various settings geared around developing a rigorous research program within the field of family research. She is now studying families from a family system perspective through her master’s thesis project, which will examine the extent to which routines and rituals in the family of origin during adolescence will contribute to longer term, post-adolescent positive psychological outcomes in emerging adults. Yoon stated, “Examining family routines and rituals is simply one of the ways I can get a closer look at a family’s capacity to create stability during a particularly important transition period. The overriding theme of my research interests is the process of emotion regulation in families. From a developmental perspective, both individuals and families experience many changes through the life span and there is an interaction between person-level variables and family-level variables. The future direction of my research will be to examine this interaction in other contexts beyond family routines and rituals.”
Promoting Adoption Research Initiatives of Emerging Scholars

The exciting work of three emerging scholars showcases opportunities for important advances in three areas of research endeavor within the field of adoption. Meet Drs. Jennifer McDermott, Rachel Farr, and Jen Dolan.

Jennifer McDermott, Ph.D.
Assistant Professor of Developmental Psychology, UMass Amherst

The mentoring grant (discussed earlier in this report) has been particularly helpful in setting the foundation of my adoption and foster care research at UMass Amherst. The MSKFAP survey will provide the initial infrastructure for working with local families to expand my work on how children’s early experience can moderate the associations between cognition, socio-emotional processes and developmental trajectories. Several on-going collaborations serve as the basis for my future studies with regional families. In particular, two collaborations on the Bucharest Early Intervention Project (BEIP) have resulted in recent publications highlighting lasting effects of early psychosocial deprivation. This work underscores the importance of examining subtle variations in the impact of early adversity on neurological processing that can contribute to vast differences in children’s functional outcomes. Specifically, the findings indicate that institutional rearing early in life contributes to behavioral and neural deficits in processing emotional cues and executive function skills in later childhood. However, the data also reveal the potential for plasticity in these systems with a high quality foster care intervention partially ameliorating these deficits.

I am also currently working on two additional data projects with the BEIP sample to further examine processing of emotion cues and cognitive control. The first study explores differences in vigilance toward positive or negative affective cues that are associated with different patterns of emotion regulation. The second project investigates the interactive effects of early adversity and genetic vulnerability on children’s selective attention skills that contribute to the development of cognitive control. In a separate collaboration with researchers at the University of Wisconsin-Madison I am investigating the impact of early-institutionalized care on developmental outcomes among children adopted into the United States. This work explores social cue processing (i.e. eye gaze) and reward sensitivity in post-institutionalized children, two factors that thought to be strongly influential in social dynamics and later risk taking behavior.
Combined, these collaborations cover a range of socio-emotional, behavioral and biological consequences of early adversity that I strive to further study among children experiencing early adversity here in Massachusetts. A current submission to the UMass Faculty Research and Healy Endowment Grant aims to understand the links between children’s cognitive control, behavioral regulation and genetic, as well as potential epigenetic, function among children at risk for exposure to prenatal stress. This initial proposal serves as a feasibility study for submission of a larger research grant to NIH. A similar approach will be applied to exploring long-term developmental outcomes among adopted and foster care children who struggle with continued behavioral regulation. The implementation of the MSKFAP and the subsequent establishment of a regional research database is central to this endeavor and will allow for the design of studies that integrate neuroscience, prevention science, and family dynamic perspectives in adoptive and foster care research here in Massachusetts.


Rachel H. Farr, Ph.D.
Rudd Program Postdoctoral Scholar, UMass Amherst

Rachel H. Farr, PhD, joined the Rudd Program in February 2011 as a postdoctoral research scholar. With her colleagues in the program, Rachel is working with the MTARP data set on several research projects related to openness arrangements among birth and adoptive families, particularly as adoptees enter adulthood. A central question in this work regards how adoptees conceptualize “family” in adulthood and how primary tasks of adulthood (e.g., entering long-term romantic relationships, marriage, establishing a career, having children) are influenced by adoptees’ ongoing relationships with adoptive and birth family members.

Prior to her postdoc, Rachel’s graduate work at the University of Virginia (UVA) included a large study of adoptive families from across the United States, headed by lesbian, gay, and heterosexual parenting couples, all of whom had completed domestic infant adoptions. The study examined the ways in which parental sexual orientation impacts child outcomes, parenting, and family dynamics in adoptive families with young children. In 2011, she won the Dissertation Award of the Society for the Psychological Study of Social Issues based on her research regarding coparenting and child adjustment in these families. During her time as a postdoc, Rachel plans to follow up with participating families now that children are school-age. She is currently applying for grants to fund a second wave of data collection for this study.
Rachel began several additional adoption research collaborations this last year, including a project through AdoptUSKids about youth adopted from foster care by lesbian and gay parents, working with Ruth McRoy and Susan Ayers Lopez at the Boston College of Social Work and the University of Texas Austin, respectively. Rachel is also participating in the Re-Envisioning Foster Care Initiative sponsored in part by the Rudd Program, and helping to develop a survey about post-adoption services among families who have adopted, fostered, or provided kinship care for children in Massachusetts.

PUBLICATIONS (2011)


CONFERENCES (2011)


Jen H. Dolan, Ed.D.
Rudd Adoption Research Program, Program Manager, UMass Amherst.

Jen Dolan continues to serve as the Program Manager for the Rudd Adoption Research Program at UMass Amherst. She completed her doctoral degree from the School of Education at the University of Massachusetts in the fall of 2011. Her undergraduate degree is in social work from the University of Delaware and her master’s degree is in public health from the University of Massachusetts at Amherst. Ms. Dolan served as a Program Manager for the Health Education, Off-Campus Federal Work Study and Service Learning program at Holyoke Community College for fifteen years prior to her employment at UMass in 2009. Her research focuses on identifying issues and finding solutions for White parents who are raising Asian born adopted children. The youngest of her three children is an adopted boy of Filipino descent.

Her 2011 dissertation was entitled, “The Intersectionality of race, adoption and parenting: How White adoptive parents of Asian born children talk about race within the family.” Here is a brief summary:

Recognizing that large numbers of children are adopted from Asia, racism is still an issue for people of color and not all White people are aware of the extent that racism exists in our society, I set out to learn if and how White adoptive parents of Asian born children talk about race related issues within the context of the family. This dissertation shares the insights and experiences of White parents from nine families who adopted children from Korea and the Philippines. The goal of the study was to learn if and how White parents talk to their Asian born children about racism, how comfortable and confident they feel having those conversations and who they turn to when they need help in supporting their children around race related issues. Parents reported that before children reached adolescence, they were much more open and willing to share upsetting events with their parents. Pre-adolescent youth turned to their parents for comfort, support and guidance. During the teen years, communication between parents and children decreased, thus limiting the parent’s opportunity to impart wisdom about how to navigate race related situations. The results suggest that if parents hope to support their children of color about race related issues, they need to engage in proactive conversations before their children reach adolescence.

CONFERENCES (2011)


Communication and Dissemination

The Rudd Chair has a strong presence on the internet, using the latest technology to inform and network with others. Here are just a few examples of current tech projects:

**YouTube Channel: The Rudd Adoption Research Program**
We have created a YouTube Channel for dissemination of videos from our conferences. This fulfills an important part of the Rudd Program mission, of connecting adoption research with practitioners, policy makers, and the public.
[www.youtube.com/user/RuddAdoption/videos](http://www.youtube.com/user/RuddAdoption/videos)

**Facebook: Rudd Adoption Research Program**
The Rudd Program Facebook page includes current news about the program as well as links to internet news about adoption research, practice, and policy.
[www.facebook.com/RuddAdoptionResearchProgram](http://www.facebook.com/RuddAdoptionResearchProgram)

**Home Page: Rudd Chair**
The Rudd Chair home page in the Department of Psychology contains up-to-date information about the activities of the Chair, including news about current and past conferences.
[psych.umass.edu/ruddchair/](http://psych.umass.edu/ruddchair/)
[www.psych.umass.edu/ruddchair/annualconference/](http://www.psych.umass.edu/ruddchair/annualconference/)

**ScholarWorks**
ScholarWorks@UMass Amherst is a digital repository for the research and scholarly output of members of the University of Massachusetts Amherst community, administered by the UMass Amherst Libraries. The Rudd Adoption Research Program has its own page, hosting information about its annual conference, doctoral dissertations, masters theses, presentations, and publications.
[scholarworks.umass.edu/rudd](http://scholarworks.umass.edu/rudd)
Rudd Chair Teaching, Mentoring and Service
During spring and fall semesters, 2011, Dr. Grotevant continued to offer the advanced undergraduate seminar he created for UMass, *The Psychology of Adoption* (Psy 391AD). In addition to UMass students, the seminar attracted students from Amherst College and Smith College and guest speakers from the community. Further information about the course, including a copy of the syllabus, may be found at: psych.umass.edu/ruddchair/teaching/

Research mentoring of undergraduate psychology majors and supervision of projects by students in the Commonwealth Honors College comprised a significant part of Dr. Grotevant’s teaching activity. In May 2011, three psychology seniors advised by Dr. Grotevant graduated with honors through Commonwealth Honors College.

**Morgana Flaherty**  
Thesis title: “Adolescent and Adult Birthmothers’ Reasons for Placing a Child for Adoption”

**Matthew Lyle**  
Thesis title: “Emotion and Adjustment Outcomes in Domestic Infant Adoptees”

**Christina Roth**  
Thesis title: “Strengths and Competencies in Adopted Adolescents: Links with Attachment to Parents and Problem Behavior.”

Ms. Roth received a number of university-wide recognitions. She was named one of the 12 graduating seniors to receive the university’s coveted 21st Century Leadership Award. In addition, each of the 29 public colleges and university campuses in the state recognizes one student who has shown significant leadership, and Tina was named to represent UMass Amherst as one of the 29 Who Shine. This accomplishment was recognized in a festive ceremony at the State House in Boston. Here she is being congratulated by Massachusetts Governor Deval Patrick.

*One of the best professors and classes I have ever taken at UMass. Very informative and insightful. I now have a personal interest in adoption and am inspired to learn more and get involved in helping children experiencing foster care*  
— Student, Spring 2011
Service to the Profession and the University

During 2011, Dr. Grotevant provided service to a number of professional, community, and university organizations.

North American Council on Adoptable Children, Board of Directors

Treehouse Foundation, Strategic Planning Committee

Editorial Boards / Consulting Editor Positions:
- Adoption and Fostering
- Adoption Quarterly
- Family Process
- Identity: International Journal of Theory and Research
- Journal of Early Adolescence
- Journal of Family Psychology
- Journal of Research on Adolescence

University Service:
- Advisory Committee, Center for Research on Families, UMass Amherst
- Distinguished and Chaired Professors Committee, College of Natural Sciences
- Faculty and Staff Awards Committee, College of Natural Sciences
- Personnel Committee, Department of Psychology (chair 2010 – 2011)
- Executive Committee, Department of Psychology
- Research Committee, Department of Psychology
- Clinical Psychology Program Review Committee (co-chair)
Rudd Program Personnel

Faculty

Harold D. Grotevant, Rudd Family Foundation Chair in Psychology

Faculty Affiliates

Jennifer McDermott, Assistant Professor of Developmental Psychology, UMass Amherst
Patricia Ramsey, Professor and Chair, Department of Psychology, Mt Holyoke College

Staff

Jen H. Dolan, Program Manager, Rudd Adoption Research Program
Beckett Dunning, Intern
Laura Oestreicher, Intern
Carla Williamson, Events Coordinator (with the Center for Research on Families)

Postdoctoral Scholar

Rachel H. Farr

Graduate Students

Quade French, Clinical Psychology; Adoption Mentoring Partnership Research Coordinator
Karin Garber, Clinical Psychology, Research Assistant
Holly Grant-Marsney, Clinical Psychology, Research Assistant
Danila Musante, Clinical Psychology, Research Assistant
Yesel Yoon, Clinical Psychology, Research Assistant

Undergraduate Students

Tobias Bennett
Ally Budnick
Lisa Cappellucci
In-Jun Chon
Tim Dillon (honors)
Yasenia Dudley
Meg Fallon
Morgana Flaherty (honors)
Joanna Hong
Deanna Julian (honors)
Matthew Lyle (honors)
Andrea Norton (honors)
Christina Roth (honors)
Sofia Shaikh
Brittney Smith

NOTE: The “honors” designation indicates that the student was completing an honors thesis or project relating to adoption under the direction of Dr. Grotevant and Rudd staff. Tobias Bennett and Joanna Hong were also pursuing honors projects in other psychology labs while working with Rudd programs.

Adoption Mentoring Partnership

Michael Abbate
Gabriela Bishop
Samantha Calabrese
Tim Dillon
Elena Faltas
Rebecca Felcon
Maria LaPierre
Lila Nair
Rebekah Robillard

Visiting Students

Danielle Godon, Mt. Holyoke College
Sarah St. Onge, Adelphi University
Sophie Strassberg, Mt. Holyoke College

Rudd Family Foundation Chair in Psychology
Rudd Program
Partners and Collaborators

University of Massachusetts Amherst

- Department of Psychology
- Center for Research on Families
- College of Natural Sciences
- College of Social and Behavioral Sciences
- Office of Family Resources
- Psychological Services Center
- Commonwealth Honors College

Community Associates

- Adoption Journeys
- Amherst Regional Public Schools
- Big Brothers Big Sisters of Hampshire County
- Boston College Graduate School of Social Work
- Clark University Department of Psychology
- Evan B. Donaldson Adoption Institute
- Friends of Children
- Mt. Holyoke College
- Treehouse Community at Easthampton Meadow
- Treehouse Foundation
Andrew and Virginia Rudd established the Rudd Family Foundation Chair in Psychology with a generous gift in 2005. They are so enthusiastic about the progress that has been made to date that they want to inspire others to join them in raising the program to a new level of excellence. To that end, the Rudds have pledged another $250,000 with the promise to match every contribution, dollar for dollar, to increase the endowment.

Gifts made to the Rudd Family Foundation Chair in Psychology support the priorities of the Rudd Adoption Research Program. Donations will build the endowment, increasing the annual income over time in support of programs such as the annual conference, the Adoption Mentoring Partnership, Re-Envisioning Foster Care, adoption research training, graduate student and post-doctoral scholar stipends, and visiting scholars.

For further information about this unique opportunity, please contact Laurie Benoit, Director of Principal Relationships, in the office of the Vice Chancellor for Development and Alumni Relations. She may be contacted at: (413) 577-4712 or lbenoit@admin.umass.edu
Announcing a New Partnership

The Andrew and Virginia Rudd Centre for Adoption Research and Practice
University of Sussex, United Kingdom

Excited by the success of the Rudd Chair in Psychology at UMass Amherst, Andrew and Virginia Rudd have created a second Rudd Chair in Psychology at Andrew’s undergraduate alma mater, the University of Sussex in the United Kingdom. The Chair will serve as director of the new Andrew and Virginia Rudd Centre for Adoption Research and Practice at Sussex.

Psychologists, social workers and education specialists at the University will be looking at the many and profound ways through which early separation or trauma followed by adoption shapes the lives of all those involved. Specific areas of interest will include:

- How separation, institutionalisation, maltreatment and other trauma influence child development and family life in adoption
- How new research insights in fields ranging from neuroscience to social policy can be used to inform practice
- International adoption and cross-cultural placement

A press release about the new center may be found here: [www.sussex.ac.uk/newsandevents/?id=10363](http://www.sussex.ac.uk/newsandevents/?id=10363)

and information about the search for the Sussex Rudd Chair in Psychology may be found here: [www.sussex.ac.uk/aboutus/jobs/551](http://www.sussex.ac.uk/aboutus/jobs/551)

“Presence of Rudd adoption programs in the U.S. and U.K. will give us unprecedented opportunities for collaboration as well as fascinating opportunities to explore the ways in which national and cultural perspectives shape adoption policy and practice,” stated Dr. Grotevant.

University of Sussex
Contact Information

Rudd Adoption Research Program
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University of Massachusetts Amherst
135 Hicks Way
Amherst, MA 01003

adoption@psych.umass.edu
(413) 545-0547
www.psych.umass.edu/ruddchair/

For information about supporting the Rudd Adoption Research Program, please contact Laurie Benoit, Director of Principal Relationships, in the office of the Vice Chancellor for Development and Alumni Relations. She may be contacted at (413) 577-4712 or lbenoit@admin.umass.edu