



# The Rudd Family Foundation Chair in Psychology

Annual Report 2008 - 2009

**UMASS**  
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Psychology

## Message From Harold D. Grotevant

Dear Friends,

I am very pleased to share with you the first annual report for the Rudd Family Foundation Chair in Psychology at the University of Massachusetts Amherst.

As you will see, the mission of the Rudd Chair is to link adoption research with policy and practice. The ultimate goal of all our activities is to contribute to evidence-based practice in adoption and to provide research-based information that will influence policy at agency, state, federal, and international levels.



Hal Grotevant with Andrew and Virginia Rudd

A gift from Andrew and Virginia Rudd, combined with matching funds, provided the resources for this endowed chair. The Rudds' gift reflects their personal commitment to stimulate the development of new knowledge about adoption in order to benefit adoption practice (placements, education, post-adoption services, clinical work) and policy (at agency, state, federal, and international levels).

I invite you to review this report and see the exciting ways in which the Rudd programs have developed since the program's inception. Thank you for your interest and your support.

With best wishes,

Harold D. Grotevant, Ph.D.  
Rudd Family Foundation Chair in Psychology

## **Rudd Family Foundation Chair in Psychology**

Annual Report, 2008 – 2009

The Rudd Family Foundation Chair in Psychology is an endowed faculty position within the clinical division of the Department of Psychology at the University of Massachusetts Amherst. The activities of the Chair include the Rudd Adoption Research Program as well as the Chair's teaching and research portfolios. This report focuses on the activities of the Chair since the position's inception (June, 2008) through December, 2009.

### **Rudd Adoption Research Program**

The Rudd Adoption Research Program is one of the key activities of the Rudd Chair. The program is located within the University of Massachusetts Amherst Psychology Department and is affiliated with the multidisciplinary 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-based practice in adoption and to provide research-based information that will influence policy at agency, state, federal, and international levels.

Significant progress was made in this period toward achieving program goals; highlights follow.

### **Advancing Knowledge about the Psychology of Adoption**

Dr. Grotevant continued as Principal Investigator on the Minnesota / Texas Adoption Research Project (MTARP), a 20-year 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 MTARP lab was home to three undergraduate and three graduate students. Long-distance collaborations continued with colleagues in California, Minnesota, and Texas. For further details, see "Research Portfolio" section below.

Dr. Grotevant developed and taught the first adoption seminar in the Psychology Department: The Psychology of Adoption (Psy 391AD). For further details, see "Teaching Portfolio" section below.

The Program is a lead partner in the Adoption Mentoring Partnership, an innovative program targeted at 4<sup>th</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup> grade adopted children in Amherst and their families. Children will be matched with UMass undergraduate students who are also adopted and of the same racial / ethnic background as the children. Big Brothers / Big Sisters of Hampshire County (MA) will provide oversight of the activities of the mentors and mentees. Parent involvement is also being planned. The Rudd Program will provide a strong research and evaluation component. Other partners include the Psychological Services Center at UMass Amherst and Adoption Journeys, an agency serving western Massachusetts.

### **Providing Evidence-based Knowledge to Inform Adoption Policy and Practice**

The Rudd Adoption Research Program, in collaboration with the Center for Research on Families, sponsored its first annual Rudd Adoption Conference, “New Worlds of Adoption: Growing Up in Complex Families,” on February 20, 2009. The keynote speaker was Dr. Femmie Juffer, Chair for Adoption Studies, Centre for Child and Family Studies, Leiden University, Leiden, the Netherlands. Her address, “Family Matters: Supporting Adoptive Families with an Attachment-Based Intervention,” highlighted a successful intervention program developed in the Netherlands for adoptive families.



Other invited speakers included Drs. Amanda Baden, Barbara Fiese, Abbie Goldberg, Martha Henry, Ruth G. McRoy, Elsbeth Neil, Christopher Overtree, Lynn Von Korff, and Gretchen Miller Wrobel. In addition, nine faculty and graduate students presented posters displaying their adoption research. Approximately 100 professionals attended the conference: therapists, professionals offering adoption placement or post-adoption services, researchers, teachers, and interested community members.

Plans are underway for the second Rudd Adoption Conference, “New Worlds of Adoption: Linking Research and Practice,” to be held on April 7, 2010.

“It was wonderful to circulate among colleagues who are exploring these complex issues.”



Dr. Grotevant made a number of presentations to academic and community audiences:

Date	Forum	Type of Audience
July 2008	International Society for the Study of Behavioral Development, Würzburg, Germany	academic researchers
September 2008	Spence-Chapin Adoption Agency, New York, NY	adoption agency staff: placement and post-adoption services
October 2008	Fifth Biennial Adoption Conference – “Identity and the Adopted Teen: Surviving the Crucible of Adolescence.” St. John's University, New York, NY	academic researchers, adoption therapists and service providers
November 2008	International Congress on Adoption, Lisbon, Portugal	academic researchers, policymakers, judges
February 2009	Fourth International Conference on Post-Adoption Services (ACTION 2009), Center for Family Connections, Cambridge, MA	adoption therapists and service providers, academic researchers
March, 2009	Society for Research in Child Development, Denver, CO	academic researchers
March 2009	Grand Rounds, Bradley Hospital, Providence, RI	inpatient and outpatient staff in psychiatry, psychology, and social work
March 2009	36 <sup>th</sup> New England Adoption Conference, Adoption Community of New England, Bellingham, MA	current and prospective adoptive parents; adoption agency staff (placement and post-adoption services)
July 2009	2 <sup>nd</sup> National Research Conference on Child and Family Programs and Policy, Bridgewater, MA	academic researchers, policymakers
October 2009	Adoption Conference, Kent State University, Kent, OH	academic researchers; graduate and undergraduate students in psychology
October 2009	Wide Horizons Adoption Agency, Waltham, MA	adoption agency staff: placement and post-adoption services
October 2009	Boston College, Graduate School of Social Work, Boston, MA	academic researchers and graduate students
October 2009	Applewood Community, Amherst, MA	community members interested in adoption
November 2009	National Council on Family Relations, San Francisco	academic researchers

In addition, several colloquia and guest lectures were presented in the Department of Psychology, University of Massachusetts Amherst.

## **Building Capacity for Excellence in Adoption Research**

The Rudd Adoption Research Program hosted eight visiting scholars interested in adoption research:

Susan Ayers-Lopez, University of Texas at Austin  
Joana Baptista, University of Porto, Portugal  
Deborah Lewis Fravel, Northwest Missouri State University  
Bethany Willis Hepp, University of Delaware  
Ruth G. McRoy, University of Texas at Austin and Boston College  
Manfred van Dulmen, Kent State University  
Lynn Von Korff, University of Minnesota  
Gretchen Miller Wrobel, Bethel University

Jen Dolan, MPH, was appointed the first Rudd Adoption Program Manager. She is working closely with the Rudd Chair and the Center for Research on Families to carry out the goals of the Rudd Adoption Research Program. Prior to joining the Rudd program, 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. Her undergraduate degree is in social work and her master's degree is in public health. Currently she is pursuing her doctoral degree from the School of Education at the University of Massachusetts. Her research is focused on identifying issues and finding solutions for white parents who are raising adopted children of color. The youngest of her three children is an adopted boy of Filipino descent.



Lynn Von Korff, Ph.D., was appointed the first Rudd Adoption Research Program Postdoctoral Fellow. Her research focuses on interactions in adoptive families, narrative identity formation, and adolescent and young adult development. She received her Ph.D. in 2008 from the University of Minnesota where she worked on the Minnesota Texas Adoption Research Project. Lynn also teaches Quantitative Family Research Methods at Minnesota.

Ms. Dolan and Dr. Grotevant made connections with numerous faculty and graduate students in other departments at UMass, in other colleges in the Five College Consortium, and with adoption professionals in the western Massachusetts adoption community. They have also worked closely with the Office of Development at UMass Amherst as they seek private and foundation funds in support of the program.

## Promoting Adoption Research Initiatives of Emerging Scholars

A significant effort of the Rudd Program is to provide mentoring for graduate students, undergraduate students, and emerging scholars. During this period, Dr. Grotevant supervised three graduate students and three undergraduate students (two in Commonwealth Honors College). In addition, he supervised two students' internships at a local adoption agency. Establishment of the first Rudd Adoption Research Program Postdoctoral Fellow provided new opportunities for training emerging scholars in the interdisciplinary theories and methods underpinning the study of adoption. The Adoption Mentoring Partnership is being planned to provide several graduate student positions that may lead to dissertation research focusing on adoption.

## Teaching Portfolio

Dr. Grotevant created and offered a senior seminar, taught at UMass Amherst for the first time: *The Psychology of Adoption* (PSY 391AD)

Course objectives were that students should be able to:

- think critically about the knowledge base upon which our understanding of adoption rests
- identify strengths and limitations of different kinds of evidence that provide insight about adoption (e.g., personal experience, case studies, quantitative research, qualitative research, meta-analyses)
- understand adoption from the perspective of its multiple participants: adopted persons, birth parents, adoptive parents, and adoption intermediaries
- argue and evaluate different points of view with respect to controversial adoption issues
- listen to and respect diverse points of view which may not coincide with their own
- understand the psychology of adoption within the cultural, historical, geopolitical, and economic contexts in which it is embedded
- understand ways in which multiple disciplines contribute to the understanding of adoption

"I liked how Professor Grotevant stimulated class discussion, and always seemed to take a personal interest in making sure every view was taken into consideration."

Further information about the course, including a copy of the syllabus, may be found at <http://www.psych.umass.edu/ruddchair/teaching/>

Dr. Grotevant also developed and offered a new graduate seminar, *Family Processes across the Life Span: Theory, Measurement, and Diversity* (PSY 891LC). The premise of the seminar was that processes relating to closeness and distance in family relationships play key roles in individual and relational outcomes. The course focused on the interplay between closeness and distance across the life course.

## Research Portfolio

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 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 recently completed the third wave 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 current 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.

Further information about the project may be found at <http://www.psych.umass.edu/adoption/>

### Selected Publications

Grotevant, H.D. (2008). Open adoption: What is it and how is it working? *NCFR Report: Family Focus on Adoption*, September, F1-F19.

Ayers-Lopez, S., Henney, S., McRoy, R.G., Hanna, M., & Grotevant, H.D. (2008). Openness in adoption and the impact on birthmother plans for search and reunion. *Families in Society*, 89(4), 551-561..

Hellerstedt, W.L., Madsen, N.J., Gunnar, M.R., Grotevant, H.D., Lee, R.M., & Johnson, D.E. (2008). The International Adoption Project: Population-based surveillance of Minnesota parents who adopted children internationally. *Maternal and Child Health Journal*, 12(2), 162-171.

Grotevant, H.D. & McRoy, R.G. (2009). Growing up adopted: Birth parent contact and developmental outcomes. In K. McCartney & R. A. Weinberg (Eds.), *Experience and development: A Festschrift in Honor of Sandra Wood Scarr*. (pp. 203 – 230). New York: Psychology Press.

Berge, J.M., Green, K.M., Grotevant, H.D., & McRoy, R.G. (2009). Sibling issues in open adoption arrangements: Non-biologically related adopted siblings' experiences with birth-family contact. In D.N. Silverstein & S.L. Smith (Eds.), *Siblings in adoption and foster care: Traumatic separations and honored connections*. (pp. 69-81). Westport, CT: Praeger.

Grotevant, H.D. (2009). Emotional distance regulation over the life course in adoptive kinship networks. In G. Wrobel & E. Neil (Eds.), *International advances in adoption research for practice*. (pp. 295 – 316). Chichester, UK: Wiley.

Grotevant, H.D. (2009). Building an adoptive identity that works: It's not just about adolescence anymore. *PACT Point of View*, Fall issue.

## **Recognitions**

Dr. Grotevant received the 2008 Courage and Curiosity Award from the Center for Family Connections in Cambridge, MA for his research and education on open adoption. He also received the Outstanding Service and Outreach Award from the College of Natural Sciences, UMass Amherst (2009) for his work connecting adoption research with the world beyond the university. In addition, he was named a Fellow of the Association for Psychological Science, in recognition of his research contributions.

## **Rudd Program Partners and Collaborators**

University of Massachusetts Amherst

- Department of Psychology
- Center for Research on Families
- College of Natural Sciences
- Psychological Services Center
- Commonwealth Honors College

Adoption Journeys

Amherst Regional Public Schools

Big Brothers Big Sisters of Hampshire County

Boston College Graduate School of Social Work

Evan B. Donaldson Adoption Institute

Treehouse Community at Easthampton Meadow

University of Maryland School of Social Work

## **Contact Information**

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For information about supporting the Rudd Adoption Research Program, please contact Laurie Benoit in the development office of the College of Natural Sciences.

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