ADOPTIVE AND BIRTH FAMILIES: What Works?

THE RUDD ADOPTION RESEARCH PROGRAM AT THE UNIVERSITY OF MASSACHUSETTS AMHERST PRESENTS

NEW WORLDS OF ADOPTION CONFERENCE:

CONTACT BETWEEN ADOPTIVE AND BIRTH FAMILIES: What Works?

5TH ANNUAL

APRIL 11th & 12th 2013
DAY 1

PROGRAM

8:00  REGISTRATION & COFFEE  
STUDENT UNION, BALLROOM

9:00  WELCOME & INTRODUCTIONS

9:15  PLENARY
Contact between Adoptive and Birth Families: Diverse Experiences, Multiple Perspectives  
Presenters: Hal Grotevant, Elsbeth Neil & Amanda Baden
The opening plenary panel sets the stage for two days of discussions about contact between adoptive and birth family members, highlighting what is known and gaps in our knowledge about infant adoptions, adoptions from the public child welfare system, and international adoptions.

10:45  BREAK

11:00  PANEL DISCUSSION
Navigating Birth and Adoptive Family Connections: First-Hand Accounts  
Chair: Chris Langelier  
Panelists: Sarah D’Amato, Justin Pasquariello, Justice Stevens & Jessica Terkelsen
Young adults talk about their personal experiences, successes, and challenges with contact in adoption and/or foster care.

12:00  LUNCH & CELEBRATION OF OUR 5TH ANNIVERSARY

1:00  POSTER SESSION, BOOK SALE & NETWORKING

2:15  BREAKOUT SESSION 1  (4 OPTIONS)

1.  STUDENT UNION, BALLROOM
   Where the Rubber Hits the Road: Clinical Practice Basics, Challenges Old and New, and a Tiny History Lesson that can inform the Future  
   Presenter: Janie Cravens
   This workshop will feature Janie Cravens, one of the pioneers of open adoption. She will address the foundational pieces of a properly managed open adoption program (changing agency systems from top to ground; how openness options are applicable to EVERY type of placement, including international and CPS; clinical skills needed to address fears and myths that stand in the way; entitlement for adopters; group process that promotes attitudinal change; ethical issues; and how grief appears and reappears). Cravens will address the common challenges we see today, 33 years after she facilitated the first open adoption in Texas agency practice.

2.  STUDENT UNION, CAPE COD LOUNGE
   Does Biological Family Involvement Impact or Destabilize Adoptive Placements from Foster Care?  
   Presenters: Dawn Post & Brian Zimmerman
   In the field of child welfare, development in policy and practice towards permanency for children in foster care has resulted in increases in adoptions. The Children’s Law Center New York (CLCNY) conducted a six month ground breaking case study to evaluate the courts’ processes and broken adoptions. The findings of this study will be presented in the workshop and participants will be able to learn about the different ways that children return to the system after achieving so called permanency and discuss methods for finding solutions to modify or eliminate the conditions which led to the broken adoptions.

3.  CAMPUS CENTER, ROOM 917
   Openness in Adoptions from Foster Care: Implications for Children and Families  
   Presenters: Ruth McRoy & Susan Ayers-Lopez
   The practice of openness in adoptions has significantly increased over the last three decades. While most empirical research on openness has focused on infant adoptions, there remains a lack of research in this area on families adopting older children from foster care. This session will provide an overview of the research literature on openness and present findings from a recent nationwide AdoptUSKids study of 161 families who adopted older children from the child welfare system, many of which have post finalization contact with their children’s birth families.

4.  CAMPUS CENTER, ROOM 908
   The Importance of Maintaining Sibling Connections  
   Presenter: Judy Cockerton
   Judy Cockerton is the founder of Sibling Connections, a Massachusetts based non-profit organization that provides year-round programming for sisters and brothers who have been separated in foster care. Sibling Connections has two signature programs: Camp To Belong Massachusetts (CTB MA) and Sibling Sundays. Cockerton will share the signature components of this year-round sibling connection initiative that is designed to provide siblings with ongoing opportunities to develop healthy long term relationships. Find out how the amazing SC Team has made it possible for siblings to create joyous shared memories over the past eight years. CTB MA videos will be shown during this session.
3:30 BREAK

3:45 BREAKOUT SESSION 2 (4 OPTIONS)

1. **STUDENT UNION, BALLROOM**
   
   **Legal and Clinical Aspects of Communication Agreements between Adoptive and Birth Parents**
   
   Presenter: Marla Allisan
   
   This workshop will cover the process of drafting, implementation, problem-solving, and negotiations with regard to post-adoption agreements for both private and public adoptions. Primary topics covered will be the variations on the themes of openness, confidentiality and safety, avoiding dynamics of split loyalties for children, naming of children, and diplomatic handling of communication complexities that can arise.

2. **STUDENT UNION, CAPE COD LOUNGE**
   
   **Post-Adoption Contact from the Birthmother’s Perspective: What Can We Learn from the Involvement of Important Figures in the Birthmothers’ Lives?**  
   
   Presenter: Susan Henney
   
   The purpose of this talk is to explore themes related to how birth mothers perceive, manage, and feel about the post-adoption contact of three important figures in their lives: their romantic partners, their parented children, and the birth father of the adopted person. This research is part of the Minnesota-Texas Adoption Research Project (MTARP), which offers a unique opportunity to look inside the family life of birth mothers who placed their children for adoption 12-20 years ago. This research has important implications for pre- and post-adoption education and counseling efforts.

   and **Growing Up in Open Adoption: Adoptive Families Look Back**  
   
   Presenter: Deborah Siegel

   This presentation highlights the major findings from a twenty-two year longitudinal study of adoptive families living in open adoptions. The exploratory, qualitative descriptive research design and analysis identified themes that emerged from infancy through childhood, adolescence and into young adulthood, providing an in-depth picture of the open adoption experience through the eyes of adoptive family members. The study’s limitations and guidelines for adoption policy and practice derived from the findings are presented.

3. **CAMPUS CENTER, ROOM 917**
   
   **Nationally Representative Data on Openness in Adoption: 2007 National Survey of Adoptive Parents**
   
   Presenters: Sharon Vandivere & Rachel Farr
   
   This workshop will highlight findings from the 2007 National Survey of Adoptive Parents in regards to openness in adoption. She will also present new descriptive analyses examining the different types of contact that children and/or adoptive parents have with birth family members, as well as analyses examining how openness is associated with child well-being and adoption satisfaction and how this may vary by child age and by type of adoption (foster care or non-foster care). Analyses will also explore whether, among children adopted privately, the parents’ desire for a closed adoption is associated with child well-being and adoption satisfaction. Rachel Farr will provide commentary on the NSAP project and discuss opportunities and issues associated with the use of secondary data in adoption research.

4. **CAMPUS CENTER, ROOM 908**
   
   **Post-Adoption Reunification: A Living Example**  
   
   Presenters: Rebecca Hawkes & Erica Asselin
   
   Erica Asselin and Rebecca Hawkes met when Rebecca adopted Erica’s elementary-aged biological daughter by way of foster care. Erica’s journey has included trauma, addiction, and recovery, and she now works with other women in recovery helping them find their own paths to healing and stability. Rebecca is also an adult adoptee in reunion -- a perspective that has significantly influenced her position on open adoption. Rebecca and Erica have developed a strong, relationship-based open adoption and plan to highlight the factors that contribute to their current success.

   and **Addiction, Reunion, and Open Adoption**  
   
   Presenter: E. Kay Trimberger

   Kay Trimberger adopted her son at five days and kept it closed until she helped facilitate a reunion when he was twenty-six. Independently of her son, she established a relationship with both birth parents and members of their extended families. Although all were welcoming, she discovered that the birth parents, like her son, were addicts. She believes that opening up the adoption much earlier would have helped her be a better parent when her son was young enough for her to educate herself and him about the dangers of substance abuse.

5:00 END

6:30-8:30 **MEXICAN FEISTA** (PRE-REGISTRATION REQUIRED)

**STUDENT UNION, CAPE COD LOUNGE**

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View the PRESENTERS’ BIOS AT: umass.edu/adoptionconference
8:00  REGISTRATION & COFFEE
STUDENT UNION, BALLROOM

8:45  WELCOME & INTRODUCTIONS

9:00  PANEL DISCUSSION
Evolving Relationships and Contact in Adoptions
Chair: Ruth G. McRoy  Panelists: Erin Bigelow, Marvin Drake, Elizabeth Drake, Kathleen Cooley & Phyllis Shepard
This panel, consisting of two birth mothers, a birth father, his wife and his son’s adoptive mother, will explore and share their personal experiences with contact in adoption.

10:15  PLENARY
Untangling the Web: The Internet’s Transformative Impact on Adoption  | Presenter: Adam Pertman
The Internet (and social media in particular) is instigating historic changes in adoption practices, challenging current laws and policies, offering unprecedented opportunities and resources, and raising critical ethical, legal and procedural issues. It is likely bringing an end to “closed” adoptions and accelerating the formation of extended families that include birth and adoptive relatives. This presentation draws from the Donaldson Adoption Institute’s recent report, “Untangling the Web,” the first in-depth examination of the issues involved and their impact on millions of children and families, including recommendations for future law, policy and practice.

11:15  PLENARY
Practical Applications of Birth Family Engagement in Public Agency Adoptions  | Presenters: Virginia Peel & Leo Farley
Leo Farley, Director of Adoption Support Services and Virginia Peel Esq. General Counsel for the Massachusetts Department of Child and Family Services will provide a brief overview of the structure and foundations of public agency adoption. Public agency adoption presents unique challenges. They will discuss the advantages and the difficulties of involving birth parents and the larger birth family during foster care, the Care and Protection process, and post-legalization.

12:15  LUNCH, POSTER SESSION, BOOK SALE & NETWORKING

1:30  BREAKOUT SESSION 1 (4 OPTIONS)

1.  STUDENT UNION, BALLROOM
“My Birth Mother Friended Me!” Adoptive Family Relationships in the Social Networking Era  | Presenter: Susan Ogden
This workshop will explore adoptive and birth family relationships that have opened up through social networking and the accompanying clinical and relationship issues. Several case studies will be discussed to demonstrate the varying needs of the participants and best practice tools such as mediation to manage expectations and conflict.

2.  STUDENT UNION, CAPE COD LOUNGE
The Minnesota Texas Adoption Research Project: Navigating Contact from Childhood into Young Adulthood
This session will present findings from the longitudinal Minnesota Texas Adoption Research Project, which has followed 190 adoptive families and 169 birthmothers since the mid 1980s to the present, when the adopted children are now young adults.

3.  CAMPUS CENTER, ROOM 917
Openness in Domestic Infant Adoption: A Longitudinal Examination of Adoptive Parents, Birth Parents and Adoptees from Research and Practice  | Presenters: Jenae Neiderhiser & Janice Goldwater
This talk will focus on adoption process, especially openness, and child and adult well being. The presenters will use the Early Growth and Development Study (EGDS) to describe how openness evolves over time and how this may (or may not) impact the well being of adoptive parents, adopted children and birth parents. This session will also describe the psychological and practical elements of open adoption with an overview of how an agency prepares parents and nurtures the evolving needs of all members of the triad. Lessons from the field will be shared along with strategies to enrich and manage the sometimes complicated and unique aspects of this family constellation.

4.  CAMPUS CENTER, ROOM 908
Professional Development and Resources for Students and New Professionals  | Presenter: Rachel Farr
This workshop will be tailored to the interests of those attending, addressing issues such as graduate programs, publishing adoption research, adoption research methods, locating samples, conferences and professional organizations, and obtaining funding.
2:45  B R E A K

3:00  B R E A K O U T  S E S S I O N  2  (4  O P T I O N S)

1. @student union, ballroom
   Making Open Adoptions Work for You - Preparing Birth and Adoptive Families
   Presenters: Susan Smith & Deborah Siegel
   After a brief review of what research tells us about openness in adoptions today, the workshop will focus on a curriculum developed by the Donaldson Adoption Institute for preparing expectant parents considering open adoptions and prospective adoptive parents. We also will hear from parties enjoying open adoptions as to what makes it work well for them.

2. @student union, cape cod lounge
   Meeting Chinese Birth Parents: Myths, Realities, and Other Imagined Stories
   Presenter: Julia Vich-Bertran
   In the past two decades, the Chinese Transnational Adoption Program (CTAP) transformed China into the primary source of “adoptable” children for western countries. Julia will introduce different stories of Chinese birth families that she personally helped to reconnect to the new American and Spanish families that adopted their children. She has found that this creates a richer picture of the cultural and ethical complexities involved in the CTAP which allows her to break most of the cultural and gender-based stereotypes that have founded and supported this program. This workshop will highlight the importance of research done in the birth countries and how the perspectives of all parties involved must be included when re-assessing the advantages and disadvantages of any transnational adoption program.

   Contact with Birth Families in Intercountry Adoption: It’s More Commonplace Than You Think
   Presenters: Ellen Pinderhughes, Jessica Matthews, & Adam Pertman
   This session will evaluate the general assumption that intercountry adoptions are closed, and that adoptive families rarely, if ever, have contact with birth families in their countries of origin. The Evan B. Donaldson Adoption Institute and researchers at Tufts University have conducted a large, international survey of over 500 intercountry adoption agencies, and this study will be presented along with the implications that data suggest greater inclusion of birth relatives can be a positive even if it adds complexity over more traditionally closed adoptions.

3.  campus center, room 917
   Contact After Adoption 16 Years On: The Experience of Adopted Young People, Adoptive Parents, and Birth Relatives
   Presenters: Elsbeth Neil, Mary Beek & Emma Ward
   The “Contact after Adoption” study is a longitudinal study following a group of children who were placed for adoption when under the age of four years, 70% of whom had been adopted from the care system. Adopted young people, adoptive parents, and birth relatives are being interviewed which provides a unique opportunity to look at the long term nature of post-adoption contact from the perspectives of these three parties. This symposium will outline the different pathways of contact from the plan made at the time of the child’s placement through to the contact that is happening as the young people move into adulthood.

4.  campus center, room 908
   Adopted People’s Longitudinal Experience of Birth Sibling Relationships Post-Reunion: Messages for Adoption Practice Today
   Presenter: Heather Ottaway
   Sibling relationships are complex, many-faceted and arguably one of the least understood human relationships across different continents and cultures. The study being presented in this session works to increase knowledge about how these relationships are developed, maintained, and experienced across the life-span from the adopted person’s perspective in the UK, and how this knowledge can therefore be applied to social work practice with children requiring adoption today who have siblings.

   Why Quebec’s Foster-to-Adopt Parents Do Not Seem to Consider Contact After Adoption as a Positive
   Presenter: Genevieve Page
   In Quebec, Canada, most domestic adoptions occur in the context of a foster-to-adopt program called the “mixed-bank”. Within this program, prospective adoptive parents have to agree to foster a child before they can legally adopt him or her, without knowing how long their fostering role will last or whether the child will ever become adoptable. This workshop will examine the effects of mixed-bank adoptions to help participants better understand how foster-to-adopt parents develop a sense of being the parent of the child they foster.

4:15  E N D

View the PRESENTERS’ BIOS AT: umass.edu/adoptionconference
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>No.</th>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Authors</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.</td>
<td>What Parents are Doing When They Discuss Birth Parents and the Adoption Story with Their Children</td>
<td>Susanne Agerbak (Tufts University), Melissa Philips, Loey Bromberg, Amanda Young, Ellen E. Pinderhughes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.</td>
<td>The Personal Experiences of Chinese Adoptees in the United States</td>
<td>Marguerite S. Aldrich (Western Connecticut State University)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.</td>
<td>Do Adoptive Families Avoid Discussing Search and Reunion?</td>
<td>Diana L. Baltimore (Iowa State University), Sedahlia Jasper Crase</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.</td>
<td>Adoption Motivations, Coparenting, and Mental Health Among Same-sex and Heterosexual Couples</td>
<td>Rachel Farr (University of Massachusetts Amherst)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.</td>
<td>When “What Works” Becomes “What Worked”: Changed Social Context and Adoptee Views Toward Contact</td>
<td>Quade Yoo Song French (University of Massachusetts Amherst)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6.</td>
<td>An Exploratory Analysis of Microaggressions Experienced By Adolescent Adopted Individuals</td>
<td>Karin J. Garber (University of Massachusetts Amherst), Harold D. Grotevant</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7.</td>
<td>How are Internal Attributes Related to Korean Transracial Adoptees’ Sense of Belonging and Exclusion?</td>
<td>Danielle Godon (Mount Holyoke College), Patricia G. Ramsey</td>
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<tr>
<td>8.</td>
<td>Planning for Open Adoption in Korea</td>
<td>Hyang Eun Kim (Kosin University)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9.</td>
<td>Testing a Theoretical Process Involving Associations Among Personality, Family Interactions, and Adolescent Externalizing in Adoptive and Non-adoptive Families</td>
<td>Bibiana D. Koh (Augsburg College), Martha A. Rueter</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10.</td>
<td>Contact and Knowledge in the Adoption Kinship Network: What Benefits Network Members Most</td>
<td>David M. Martin (University of Minnesota), Jenae M. Neiderhiser, Leslie D. Leve, Daniel S. Shaw, Laura V. Scaramella, David Reiss</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11.</td>
<td>Constructing Adoptive Fatherhood: Narratives of Adoption After Primary Infertility</td>
<td>Ross W. McCallum (University of Manitoba), Maria I. Medved, Diane Hiebert-Murphy, Kerstin Roger</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12.</td>
<td>Consequences of a Gay Adoption Ban: Perspectives of Gay and Lesbian Parents in Florida</td>
<td>April M. Moyer (Clark University), Elizabeth R. Weber, Abbie E. Goldberg</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13.</td>
<td>Birth mothers’ Experiences with Open Adoptions: Satisfaction, Disappointment and Long-term Adjustment</td>
<td>Karen Tessier (Mount Holyoke College), Patricia G. Ramsey</td>
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<td>15.</td>
<td>Same-sex Adoptive Families: Parent-Child Conversations About Legal Inequalities</td>
<td>Elizabeth Weber (Clark University), Abbie Goldberg</td>
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<tr>
<td>16.</td>
<td>Birth Parents and Openness with Adoptive Families: An Examination of Actual Contact &amp; Satisfaction with Contact</td>
<td>Amy L. Whitesel (George Washington University), Jody M. Ganiban, Leslie D. Leve, Daniel S. Shaw, Misaki N. Natsuaki, David Reiss, Jenae M. Neiderhiser</td>
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<tr>
<td>17.</td>
<td>Children, Youth and Parents Speak Out on Open Adoption</td>
<td>Christopher Langelier (HEROES/Treehouse Community), Kim Stevens</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
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
A gift from Andrew and Virginia Rudd, combined with matching funds, established the Rudd Family Foundation Endowed Chair. The Rudd's 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).

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 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

In short, 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.

The program is directed by Harold D. Grotevant, Ph.D., who holds the Rudd Family Foundation Chair in Psychology at UMass Amherst. He is 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. His work has resulted in over 100 articles published in professional journals as well as several books, including Openness in Adoption: Exploring Family Connections (with Ruth McRoy, Sage Publications, 1998). He is a Fellow of the American Psychological Association, Association for Psychological Science, and the National Council on Family Relations; Senior Research Fellow of the Evan B. Donaldson Adoption Institute; former Board President of Adoptive Families of America; and recipient of research, teaching, and leadership awards. Here he is pictured with Andrew and Virginia Rudd, whose generous gift established the Rudd Family Foundation Chair in Psychology.