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ABOUT THE RUDD FAMILY FOUNDATION CHAIR IN PSYCHOLOGY

The Rudd Family Foundation Chair is located within the Department of Psychological and Brain Sciences at the University of Massachusetts Amherst 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.
FROM THE CHAIR

Dear Friends,

Friday, March 13, 2020 is a date I will long remember. It was the day that in-person instruction and on-campus activities ceased because of the menacing COVID-19 pandemic. At the time, we thought we’d be working remotely for a week or two and that the students would return after spring break. Little did we know that we’d be gone for a year and a half! As did much of the world, UMass Amherst turned on a dime, shifting classes, research, and administration from the familiar in-person meetings to virtual meetings and remote instruction.

It was quite a scramble. Most of us had never taught an online course; but all of a sudden, we had to figure out how to do it. Looking back, I am amazed at the resilience shown by our university in responding to the threat. UMass classrooms and labs remained closed through the summer of 2021, with students and professors returning in September 2021. As I write this at the end of 2021, most university activities have returned to being fully in-person, but our ideas about how the university’s missions of teaching, research, and outreach can be accomplished have been forever changed.

Because of the pandemic, we did not produce an annual report for 2020; this “pandemic edition” of our annual report series highlights accomplishments of the Rudd Family Foundation Chair in Psychology during calendar years 2020 and 2021.

Our mission continues to guide our work while also allowing room for new initiatives.

The Rudd Adoption Research Program:

- advances knowledge about the psychology of adoption;
- provides evidence-based knowledge to inform adoption policy and practice;
- engages with community partners to incubate, implement, and evaluate innovative programs that have potential for broad impact;
- mentors the next generation of adoption-competent scholars; and
- creates an adoption-friendly campus at UMass Amherst.

This mission and the activities that support it have allowed us to build a center of excellence in adoption research at UMass Amherst. We recognize that expertise in adoption comes in many forms, but that one source of expertise, the lived experience of adopted persons, is often underrepresented. Therefore, our 2020 conference on “Adopted Adults: Connections across Generations” elevated the voices of many adopted persons who are professionals and students in the field. We invited Hollee McGinnis, PhD, herself adopted from Korea, to be our first external program chair for the conference. The perspectives of adult adoptees, both during and after the conference, have provided important insights for the field to consider.

We continue to work toward our goal of creating an “adoption-friendly campus” at UMass Amherst and a destination of choice for faculty and students interested in adoption; this goal has now been added to our official mission.

I invite you to review this summary of our activities and see for yourself the exciting ways in which our programs have developed. As always, we express our continuing thanks for their generosity to Andrew and Virginia Rudd, to Scott Chaplin, and to our individual donors and organizational funding partners who make our work possible every day.

With best wishes,

Harold D. Grotevant, PhD
Rudd Family Foundation Chair in Psychology
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Advancing Knowledge about the Psychology of Adoption

The Rudd Adoption Research Program advances our knowledge of adoption psychology through original research.

Teachers’ Knowledge and Attitudes About Adoption and Adopted Children

Abbie Goldberg, PhD, the Jan and Larry Landry University Professor of Psychology and director of women’s and gender studies program at Clark University was appointed Rudd Family Visiting Professor during spring 2021. Goldberg was chosen for this honor because of her deep understanding of adopted children and their families and her research suggesting that many adoptive families feel that their children’s schools are not meeting their educational or personal needs. Her past research (e.g., Goldberg & Smith, 2017; Goldberg, Black, Sweeney, & Moyer, 2017) provided insights about the importance of the parent community in adoptive parents’ feelings of belonging versus alienation in school settings, as well as the importance and corresponding challenges associated with being highly involved in one’s child’s school as an adoptive parent. Therefore, her term as visiting professor was designed to deepen our knowledge about the connection between adoptive families and their children’s schools, with a special focus on hearing from teachers.

During her appointment, she (in collaboration with Hal Grotevant and Jen Dolan) conducted research examining teachers’ experiences with adopted children and their families. The input from two focus groups helped inform the questions that would be included on a survey that was broadly disseminated in April and May 2021. Survey responses were gathered from 207 teachers, paraprofessionals, and other school professionals from across the United States, representing all grade levels K–12. A comprehensive report from this research is posted on our website at umass.edu/ruddchair/report.

Results of this project highlighted that teachers often have incomplete knowledge about adoption, especially about the diversity of adopted children and families. They also lack comprehensive information about the family histories of the children in their classrooms, which might hamper their ability to plan effectively for their students’ success. School systems need to discuss how to balance families’ rights to privacy (about their children’s adoption) with their need to know information which could help them meet the educational needs of the children in their care. At the same time, training is needed for school personnel to help them interpret the information they obtain about the children and families as well as what follow-up questions to ask so that they can respond in productive ways. Further dissemination plans for information based on this research are underway, including a presentation by Goldberg in February 2022.

Rudd program research found that teachers have incomplete knowledge about the diversity of adopted children and families they are serving.
OPENNESS IN ADOPTION: OUTCOMES FROM CHILDHOOD TO YOUNG ADULTHOOD

The Rudd Adoption Lab is also home to the Minnesota Texas Adoption Research Project, a longitudinal investigation involving 190 adoptive families and 169 birth mothers who have been followed since the mid-1980s; the participants who were children at the outset are now in their 30s and starting families. Results of this study continue to be disseminated in numerous ways, including through important peer-reviewed journals such as Developmental Psychology, the Journal of Family Psychology, Child Development Perspectives, the International Journal of Behavioral Development and several chapters in the new Routledge Handbook of Adoption (published in 2020). This work has also been represented at important national and international conferences, including every one of the seven International Conferences on Adoption Research (from 1999 to 2021).

The body of work coming from MTARP has influenced adoption practice and policy throughout the North America, Europe, Australia, and New Zealand. During 2020–2021, new publications and presentations addressed the following questions:

• How do adoptees fare as young adults, and what are their concerns?
• Are there special or additional challenges that young adult adoptees face when they become parents, in comparison to their nonadopted peers?
• What role does technology-mediated communication (e.g., social media, texting, email) play in maintaining contact between adoptees and their birth parents?

To answer this last question, we asked the young adult participants in MTARP (mean age = 31 years) to report on their current and desired future use of both traditional (e.g., sharing photos, phone calls, letters) and tech-mediated (e.g., video conferencing, social media, texting) types of communication to stay in touch with their birth relatives (Cashen, et al. 2021, Family Relations). Young adults who had current contact with their birth mothers reported using both traditional and tech-mediated means of staying in touch. Those who wanted greater closeness with their birth mothers in the future also indicated a desire to increase their use of traditional but not tech-mediated modes of communication. These findings suggest that adult adoptees see traditional modes of communication as potentially more useful for facilitating a closer relationship with their birth mother. Tech-mediated modes may be seen as allowing for a greater degree of emotional distance as relationships are being formed. But once a level of closeness has been established, traditional means such as phone calls and in-person visits may be seen as more effective in achieving greater closeness.

The Rudd Lab has mentored a steady stream of undergraduate honors theses, master’s theses, and doctoral dissertations. Active collaborations on MTARP continue with colleagues at the University of Texas at Austin, Bethel University, and the University of Kentucky. In addition to research from MTARP, the Rudd Lab has hosted research from the Contemporary Adoptive Families Study, the Adoption Mentoring Partnership, the Adoption Genetic Family History Project, the National Longitudinal Study of Adolescent and Adult Health, and others.

DISCLOSURE TO CHILDREN CONCEIVED BY GAMETE AND EMBRYO DONATION

Harold Grotevant, PhD, has also been a consultant on a project examining how parents disclose information to their children about the fact that they were conceived through the use of assisted reproductive technology (ART). Although there are many parallels between disclosure to children about adoption and about ART, this is one of the first ART projects to incorporate information learned from Grotevant and colleagues’ longitudinal research on openness in adoption. This project, led by Dr. Patricia Hershberger from the College of Nursing at the University of Illinois Chicago, is funded by NIH and the Association of Women’s Health, Obstetric, and Neonatal Nurses. A recent article (Hershberger et al, 2021 in press, Fertility and Sterility Reports), reported results of a study of families with donor-conceived children between the ages of 4 months and 16 years. Parents discussed when and how they told their children about their genetic origins. They shared specific language and stories they used in the telling conversations and also discussed other strategies they used, such as children’s books, creating songs, and using videos or drawings. These findings are being used by the team to develop tools that parents can use to assist in this process.
Providing Evidence-Based Knowledge to Inform Policy and Practice

Due to the pandemic, we pivoted from a one-day conference that would have reached about 250 people to a yearlong series of talks that reached thousands of people. These talks are still available on our website at no cost.

Before the world locked down because of the COVID-19 pandemic, we had planned a rich program for our 2020 annual conference, “Adopted Adults: Connections Across Generations,” scheduled for April 17, 2020. Speakers were secured, attendees had registered, hotel and flight reservations had been booked, award plaques were ordered, and we were ready to host another exciting on-campus conference. As the magnitude of the COVID surge became clear, we had to make the difficult and painful decision to cancel the in-person conference. As it turned out, most conferences worldwide scheduled for April and beyond were also canceled. We quickly had to turn our attention to getting our classes online and adapting to a new way of living. Hand sanitizer, disinfectant wipes, and masks became important and scarce commodities.

Once we caught our breath, it became clear to us that we had an opportunity for the planned conference to have an even broader (as in global) reach by hosting it online. A one-day conference in Amherst could serve 200–250 people who were able to travel to campus; the videos (now on YouTube at youtube.com/user/RuddAdoption) have been watched by many hundreds across the globe and continue to be available on demand at no cost.

Our conference program chair, Hollee McGinnis, PhD, and our speakers were energized at the prospect of taking the conference online, and so we developed tools and strategies for delivering the conference content through a mix of synchronous and asynchronous formats. Our event coordinator, Amanda Moore, provided expert guidance to make a seamless transition from in-person to online. Here we present an overview of the conference content, offered online from September 2020 through May 2021. The content was advertised again during September–November, 2021 and continues to be available online.
Hollee A. McGinnis, PhD, was selected as conference program chair for the 2020 conference. An assistant professor in the Virginia Commonwealth University School of Social Work, she is an active member of the Rudd Adoption Research Program Advisory Board. She was selected for this important role because of her unique combination of lived experience (having been adopted from Korea) and professional experience in adoption research, policy, and advocacy. Her research examines the social and cultural determinants of children’s mental health and well-being, with a specific focus on improving outcomes across the lifespan for children with histories of early childhood adversity and child welfare involvement in the U.S. and globally. This research is informed by her post-MSW training in children’s mental health at the Yale Child Study Center, work as the policy director at the Donaldson Adoption Institute, and founder of the nonprofit organization for adult intercountry adoptees and adoptive families, Also-Known-As, Inc.

With McGinnis’ leadership, three sessions were offered during fall 2020, and three more were offered during spring 2021. All sessions were offered at no cost to the public, thanks to the generosity of our donors, conference sponsors, and speakers. Links to detailed information and program content can be found at umass.edu/ruddchair/virtual-conference-2020-21-program.

SESSION 1
Intergenerational Relationships and Community Connections, highlighted the experiences of three generations of adult adoptees (adopted in the 1950s, 1970s, and 1990s; from Korea and Russia) and addressed how adopted adults have developed strong connections within the adoption community and are now providing global leadership for those connections. Participants included Hollee McGinnis, Susan Cox, Alex Gilbert, and Grace O’Neil.

SESSION 2
Intergenerational Relationships, focused on the important transitions that occur when adult adoptees become parents, and when adoptive and birth parents become grandparents. This session is composed of four video segments: three brief 10–15 minute sessions highlighting research being conducted by Addie Wyman Battalen (Birth Mothers Now Grandmothers), JaeRan Kim (Intergenerationality of Korean Adoptee Parents), and Julia Rimmer (The Later Lives of Adoptive Families); and a panel discussion involving the three researchers as well as Chris Downs and Joe Kroll, moderated by Hal Grotevant.

SESSION 3
Growing Up Adopted, acknowledged that adults who have been adopted or cared for in foster care have often used their experiences creatively, producing written memoirs and anthologies, poetry, performance, and documentaries. Art has often been used for meaning-making and healing, and yet clinically trained therapists rarely utilize the arts as part of treatment. In this session Glenn Morey, a Korean adoptee, shared two short clips from his project, Side by Side. His filming of 100 first-person narratives of adoption and aging out of Korean orphanages focuses on the themes of growing up adopted and search for birth family. Mental health professionals who work with adoptees (Amanda Baden and Susan Branco) then engaged with the filmmaker to discuss: How are adult adoptees’ and foster alumni narratives valuable for professionals? What are the roles of arts in healing? What can the arts teach clinicians about how to help clients?

SESSION 4
This session featured a keynote from Gina Miranda Samuels, PhD, on the topic, Authorizing our own Pathways and Counterspaces of Resilience and Healing: Navigating Adoption and other Displacements in Adulthood. During this session, Samuels spoke about developing an adult identity that incorporates adoption as well as the other important aspects of one’s life. Doing family and race through transracial adoption as the person who is adopted means a never-ending negotiation of family, identity, race, and belonging—core elements of basic human development across the life course. But the fact
of one's adoption often causes ambiguous losses and degrees of disconnections from information, relationships, and places core to these processes of development. This keynote explored the many ways in which pathways of resilience and healing are often articulated for us and in turn, invalidate, distort, or harm our own developmental capacities and needs into adulthood. Samuels was joined by fellow adoption advocates April Curtis and Tim Monti-Wohlpart, who provided insight on the keynote based on their years of experience as adoption advocates influencing policy and legislation.

SESSION 5
In Genetic Testing for Health & Birth Search, we explored the different benefits and risks posed by genetic testing and genetic counseling, as well as looked into the factors that drive adoptees and adoptive parents to attempt to uncover answers through genetics. We spoke with researchers Greg Barsh, Heewon Lee, Richard Lee, and Tom May who have focused their work on investigating the various options available to adoptees while on their journey to discover answers through genetic testing.

SESSION 6
The online conference closed with Migrating Towards Wholeness: Adult Adoptees and Writing to Heal. We were joined by Liz DeBetta, an alumna of our Summer Adoption Research Institute, who talked about the curriculum she created that utilizes expressive writing as an opportunity for adult adoptees to begin to migrate trauma and begin to heal. This session provided an opportunity to listen and learn from the experiences of a group of adult adoptees ranging in age from their 20s through their 60s; for some of them, this was the first space in which they felt they could share their stories safely.

During the virtual conference, Susan Soonkeum Cox was presented with the Rudd program’s Lifetime Achievement Award for Excellence in Adoption Policy and Advocacy. Cox recently retired as vice president for Policy and External Affairs at Holt International. Adopted from Korea in 1956, her life experience as an early international adoptee has given her a unique personal and professional perspective. Her career of exceptional leadership and advocacy, including as a member of the Hague Special Commission on Intercountry Adoption, has led to significant reforms that have benefited the global adoption community. In addition to her many other awards and recognitions, Cox was recently honored with the Prime Minister’s Citation, from the Prime Minister of South Korea, for her career-long work on behalf of children.

Two awards were presented for outstanding poster presentations: to Anna Wright (Virginia Commonwealth University), Wendy Kliever, Joana Salifu Yendork, Simron Richard, and Princess-Melissa Washington-Nortey, for their poster: “Profiles of Adjustment among Institutionalized Children in Ghana: Predictors of Positive Functioning,” and to Reihonna Frost-Calhoun (Clark University), Molly Sweetser, Abbie Goldberg, and Ivana Staiti, for their poster, “Child Would Do Best with a Mom and Dad: Descriptions of Heteronormativity in State Foster Care Photolistings.”

In addition to our online conference, Rudd program personnel were also heavily involved in two other avenues of research dissemination. The Routledge Handbook of Adoption (2020) included 10 chapters authored by current or former Rudd faculty, affiliates, students, or advisory board members. Rudd faculty and students also had a strong presence at the 7th International Conference on Adoption Research (ICAR7). The conference, originally scheduled for Milan Italy in July 2020, was canceled and rescheduled for July 2021. Unfortunately, global travel restrictions continued in place, forcing the conference online. Although we missed seeing each other in person, the conference likely had a much broader reach than it would have had on site.

Finally, in addition to our conference, publications, and presentations, we also have an active social media presence on Facebook, with Facebook pages for the Rudd Adoption Research Program as well as for specialized groups such as the Summer Adoption Research Institute Alumni and the Adopted Student Advisory Panel. We host a Rudd Adoption YouTube channel, where we post videos from our annual conferences; we also archive the PowerPoints and posters from our annual conferences on the UMass Scholarworks system for easy public access. Our research faculty and students are also present on ResearchGate. Visit our website at umass.edu/ruddchair for links to all these resources.
ENGAGING WITH COMMUNITY PARTNERS TO INCUBATE, IMPLEMENT, AND EVALUATE INNOVATIVE PROGRAMS

ADOPTION MENTORING PRACTICUM PARTNERSHIP
Ten years have passed since the Rudd Program partnered with Big Brothers Big Sisters of Hampshire County (BBBS) to create the Adoption Mentoring Partnership, which matches UMass Amherst and Five Colleges undergraduate students who were adopted with young adopted children in the community. Over that time, we provided intensive support to 49 mentor-mentee matches (98 individuals), most of whom continued in the program for one to three years.

Many changes occurred during that decade, including a significant decline in international adoptions to the U.S. Although it was always our goal to match mentors and mentees on their path to adoption (whether it be internationally or from foster care), BBBS had fewer and fewer adopted children to refer for our program. At the same time, we had a relatively large number of undergraduate students (mostly adopted internationally) who were seeking opportunities to work in the adoption field. In addition, the pandemic brought about fundamental changes in mentoring, from always being in-person to being mediated by platforms such as Skype and Zoom.

With the help of our community partners and Rudd Visiting Professor Jean Rhodes, we looked back on our experience of the past decade and looked forward to the future. Through this process, AMP was transformed in 2021 to AMPP (Adoption Mentoring Practicum and Partnership). This updated program includes matches from our existing mentors and mentees and creates additional practicum opportunities for university students who want to gain experience in programs or agencies relating to adoption or foster care.

During fall semester 2021, six students from UMass Amherst and Mount Holyoke College participated in the seminar. The students’ exposure to video presentations and articles by researchers who are adopted led to rich discussions. Students were also involved in self-reflection and class presentations. Through sharing this experience, they formed tight connections with each other and agreed to stay in touch on a regular basis.

Experience had taught us the importance of the seminar to support the adopted student mentors. Many of them had noted that the class was the first time they were in an adoption-centric academic setting. Through the readings, assignments and class discussions students have shared; they have a deeper understanding of their adoptive identity. Thus, the seminar (Adoption Practicum Seminar, PSY 395A) continues, in support of students involved in AMPP. The goal of finding community-based practicum experiences was made difficult by the pandemic, but we are optimistic that this situation will improve once agencies open up more opportunities post-pandemic.

TREEHOUSE COMMUNITY AND RE-ENVISIONING FOSTER CARE IN AMERICA
Since the founding of the Rudd Program, another key community partner has been the Treehouse Community in Easthampton, an intentional intergenerational community focused on families raising children who were adopted from foster care, with the support of a vibrant community of elders. Rudd staff have been involved in Treehouse strategic planning and the national advisory board, evaluation research on the community, and co-sponsorship of a major conference in 2016. We continue to be involved with the design team, charting the future of the Treehouse Community and the movement it has generated, Re-Envisioning Foster Care in America (REFCA). The award-winning Treehouse model is now being replicated on the east and west coasts, and the REFCA model is stimulating new initiatives across the country.
MENTORING THE NEXT GENERATION OF ADOPTION-COMPETENT SCHOLARS

The Rudd Adoption Research Program trains postdoctoral and graduate students who are seeking to become adoption-competent researchers.

TRAINEES WORKING IN THE RUDD LAB DURING 2020–2021 INCLUDED THE FOLLOWING:

Krystal Cashen, PhD
Family contexts of development of sexual identity

Krystal Cashen completed her PhD in developmental science through the Rudd lab (2020). She is currently a postdoctoral research and teaching fellow at the University of Kentucky, working with former Rudd postdoc, Rachel Farr. Krystal will be joining the faculty of Ohio Wesleyan University in fall 2022 as tenure track assistant professor of psychology. She is interested in diverse family systems (including adoptive families and LGBT parented families) and the development of relational and identity outcomes, especially during adolescence and young adulthood. She recently published or presented work on relational competence in young adult adoptees (Cashen & Grotevant); ways in which parents think about their roles as parents and how those cognitions are linked to behavior (Lo, Cashen, & Grotevant; Lo & Cashen); use of tech-mediated and traditional modes of communication in relationships between adoptees and their birth relatives (Cashen, Grotevant, Wyman Battalen, Sellers, & McRoy); and distinctive characteristics of young adult adoptees as parents (Cashen, Grotevant, & Farr). Her dissertation, Stigmatization and Community Connections: Associations with mental health, sexual identity development, and peer relationships in emerging adults with LGBTQ+ parents, examined an especially important unresearched topic, as the first generation to grow up in families with legally recognized same-sex marriages comes of age. Krystal’s project was recognized by a dissertation award from the UMass Center for Research on Families.

Grace Cho, BA, ALM, MS
Suicide risk in adolescents and young adults

Grace Cho’s master’s thesis (Cultural influences on the pathway from adult disconnection to alcohol use: A moderated mediation study of suicide attempts in adolescents, 2021) examined a moderated mediation model with the hypotheses that adolescents’ feelings of disconnection from important adults in their lives (mother, father, teacher, adults in general) would increase risk for problematic alcohol use, which would in turn increase risk for suicide attempts. This study used data from the National Longitudinal Study of Adolescent to Adult Health (Add Health), a nationally representative sample of American youth. Analyses revealed that disconnection from mother and teacher predicted alcohol use for white students, and disconnection from teacher predicted alcohol use for black students. Problematic alcohol use increased the likelihood of suicide attempts in all models tested, but problematic alcohol use only mediated the relationship between mother and teacher disconnection and suicide attempts for white students. Thus, the mediation effect was stronger for white students compared to black students. Therefore, disconnection to mothers and teachers may increase risk for suicide attempts through problematic alcohol use; this mediation effect may be stronger for white adolescents enrolled in school, but future research needs to account for additional adult figures, different substances, and include vulnerable adolescents not enrolled in school.

Christina Hogan, BA
Parenting stress and development of emotion regulation in children

Christina Hogan is a fourth-year clinical psychology graduate student at UMass Amherst working with Harold Grotevant, PhD, and Jennifer McDermott, PhD. This year in the Rudd Adoption Research Lab, she has been examining data from the Minnesota/Texas Adoption Research Project (MTARP) to understand more about the relation between family context and adopted children’s clinical symptomology. The paper’s main questions ask which patterns of family functioning, parent stress, and parent/child incompatibility are more predictive of concurrent psychological distress in both adoptive parents and in the adoptees themselves. This project is unique in that it examines dyadic data using an APIM model (actor-partner interdependence model) to account for the influences that adoptive parents have on each other’s predictors and outcomes. Preliminary results of these analyses have demonstrated that higher levels of family functioning...
(i.e., improved functioning) and higher levels of perceived compatibility between parent and adoptee are important predictors of lower levels of clinical symptomology in both adoptive parents and adoptees.

Albert Lo, MS
Adoptive parenting cognitions, attachment, and identity development
Ongoing projects during 2020 and 2021 included a qualitative project identifying the negative beliefs and experiences of adopted adolescents at risk for higher levels of difficulties than their peers (Lo, Grotevant, Baden, & Hogan, in preparation). The goal of the project is to inform providers working with adopted persons and their families who report adoption-related challenges. Projects that were published in 2020 and 2021 involved validating Kirk’s Shared Fate Theory within the context of more contemporary (i.e., open) adoptions and extending the theory to include adopted adolescents’ perceptions of attachment towards their parents. Results suggested that adoptive parents’ acknowledgement of their child’s adoptive background continues to be important for positive family outcomes. During 2021, Albert completed his doctoral dissertation in the Rudd lab, “Acculturative parenting cognitions: Bicultural socialization beliefs among Chinese American parents.” Albert is currently in his predoctoral clinical internship at the Virginia Treatment Center for Children, Richmond, Va.

Jessica A. Matthews, PhD
Emerging adult adoptees’ relationships with birth parents
Postdoctoral Fellow Jessica Matthews (2017–2020) focused on adoptees’ relationships with their birth fathers, assisted by an eager team of undergraduate research assistants. Although the MTARP project did not interview birth fathers directly, the project’s young adult adoptees (in their mid-20s) were asked specifically about their relationships with their birth fathers. The interviews suggest that the source and amount of information they have about their birth father impacts their overall positive and negative feelings towards him. Adoptees with contact had more nuanced understanding and were much more likely to feel positively about their birth father than those who had no contact. The qualitative analysis of the interviews revealed considerable heterogeneity in the individual stories of adoptees. A good number of adoptees without contact felt that it would be very difficult to find their birth fathers, either because he was never told about the child, they had no information about him, or someone was intentionally keeping them apart. The study also underscored the complicated role of the adoptee’s birth mother and her impact on the adoptee’s relationship with the birth father.

Anna Wright, PhD
Healthy and problematic adjustment in adoptees from adolescence to adulthood
Postdoctoral Fellow Anna (Annie) Wright worked on three projects during her postdoctoral year (2020–2021). Following her postdoc, Wright accepted a research/clinical position in the Department of Psychiatry at Virginia Commonwealth University. Her projects drew on different facets of the rich MTARP data archive to explore three topics. The first examined profiles of adoptee adjustment in young adulthood (Wright, Wang, & Grotevant), a period which is under-studied. The analysis revealed three patterns: the largest group showed healthy, competent adjustment across eight domains; a second group was “getting along,” and the third (smallest) group was struggling a bit. A second study (Wright & Grotevant) conducted a linguistic analysis of interviews with adoptive mothers and fathers when their children were adolescents. This paper provides evidence that the nuanced ways in which parents talked to the interviewer about adoption, even aside from the broader message they are trying to convey, relates to their adolescents’ positive or negative affect toward their birth mother, their curiosity about her, their satisfaction with the level of openness in their relationship, and their relationship expectations for her. A third paper (Wright, Carlson, & Grotevant) examined parent and adolescent reports of adoptee internalizing symptoms, and how parent-adolescent agreement on symptoms related to whether the adoptee was receiving counseling services at that time. Of greatest concern was the finding that a large portion of adolescents reported significant levels of internalizing symptoms while their parent did not, and that many of these adoptees were not receiving any counseling services. Results demonstrate the importance of parent-adolescent communication about mental health concerns and the need to improve parents’ perceptions of their adolescents’ mental health in order to ensure that they have access to clinical services that have the potential to help them.
MAKING UMASS AMHERST AN ADOPTION-FRIENDLY CAMPUS

The Rudd Adoption Research Program furthers its mission by making UMass Amherst an adoption-friendly campus.

Making UMass Amherst an adoption-friendly campus means that we provide innovative courses and educational opportunities for undergraduate students, sponsor community-building activities, and support UMass faculty and staff who are adoptive or foster parents.

COURSES AND EDUCATIONAL OPPORTUNITIES
The Rudd Program provides educational opportunities for undergraduate students through several credit-bearing classes and through incorporating undergraduates as research assistants in our lab.

- We regularly offer an undergraduate seminar (Psy 391AD: The Psychology of Adoption) both in person and online. This is one of the very few undergraduate courses on adoption taught in psychology departments anywhere in the world. During fall 2020 semester, this course was offered as part of the department’s regular curriculum, but in a fully online synchronous format because of COVID lockdown. It is also offered online through the UMass Amherst University Without Walls.
- The Adoption Practicum Seminar (Psy 395A), offered every semester, provides an academic foundation for students who have experienced adoption or foster care to participate in the Adoption Mentoring Practicum Partnership, in which they might mentor an adopted child in the community or undertake a community-based practicum focusing on adoption. This seminar was taught by doctoral candidate Albert Lo, who worked closely with the AMP students and the BBBS Case Manager, Ruth Harms, in 2021; the seminar was taught by Jen Dolan.
- For the past five years, “Giving Voice to Adoption” (Psy 191) has been offered by Jen Dolan to first-year students as a Faculty First Year Seminar (FFYS), which enables first-year students to be in a small class (19 students maximum) to learn about a topic the instructor is passionate about. FFYS also helps students acclimate to college life by introducing them to the many resources that UMass has to offer. Most of the students in the class are not adopted, but some have friends or relatives who are. Some are interested in adopting or fostering when they are older, and some have no experience with adoption but are simply interested in the topic. The highlight of the course is the session during which students who are members of the Adopted Student Advisory Panel (ASAP) come to share their personal adoption stories. In addition to defining the different types of adoption, topics covered in the class include foster care, international adoption, birth parents, adoption by same sex couples, and adoptive identity.
- In addition to these structured courses, we also engage undergraduate students as research assistants in our lab. Students work on specific projects, many of which culminate in research papers or conference presentations; students in the Commonwealth Honors College conduct thesis research on adoption-related topics.
COMMUNITY BUILDING ACTIVITIES

The Rudd Program has also created two organizations for UMass Amherst students who are adopted — the Adoption Mentoring and Practicum Partnership (see page 7) and the Adopted Student Advisory Panel (ASAP), a registered student organization that involves camaraderie, education, and advocacy, led by capable, energetic students. The development of ASAP was guided by our experience with AMPP, which revealed that the mentors found a great deal of value in meeting together as a cohort. It provides students with a place in which they can talk about adoption and how that identity plays a role in their lives. The students, who meet on a biweekly basis, developed the following mission statement: The mission of the UMass Adopted Student Advisory Panel (ASAP) is to advise professionals and non-professionals in the field of adoption about how to best support those who are adopted and their families. In addition, the group engages in adoption related advocacy by raising awareness on campus about the lived experience of those who are adopted.

Now in the fifth year, the students elected officers and have set broad goals of Retention, Outreach, Advising and Membership (ROAM). Each meeting starts with an engaging check-in and ends with “real talk” in which the students share experiences they have faced in regards to being adopted.

Outreach activities of ASAP include:

• Serving on panels as presenters for adoptive parents;
• Organizing the “We Celebrate Adoption” events which entailed creating and staffing information tables for students and the public and also hosting a social event for local children who are adopted;
• Recruiting members for the club in the Campus Center and at club fairs;
• Creating a video about what it means to be adopted;
• Participating as guest speakers in classes at UMass about their lived experience of being adopted;
• Presenting on a panel at a national conference on the future of adoption.

The following quote, from undergraduate ASAP student Ana, speaks so fully about the meaning of these opportunities for the participants:

“Last year I heard about an event called, ‘We Celebrate Adoption.’ As an adopted student, specifically one who has struggled with the challenges that come with adoption, I was really intrigued by this event. I attended the event and the feelings I experienced were extremely unexpected. The only way I can explain it is by saying that I felt I belonged. This was a feeling I’ve rarely felt in the past 21 years, so I knew I had to learn more about the group. Last semester I began attending meetings and I was continuously amazed by how much I had in common with everyone. Things that I’d experienced in my life such as stereotypes, discrimination, shame, etc. were not absurd or strange. These were things that other students, people like me, had experienced too! However, the moment I realized I wanted to be a bigger part of this club and help people learn about adoption occurred when I was on the panel for Jen’s class. It was a wonderful experience and the feedback we received from the students was very positive. I really enjoyed the fact that I was able to help people understand what adoption is like and dispel some stereotypes.”

Officers from the Adopted Student Advisory Panel:
(L to R): Hope Cantwell, treasurer; Mikayla Martinelli, secretary; Skylar Unger, president; Alex Fisk, vice president
Jen Dolan has also been working actively with the Dean of Students Office to identify and meet the unique needs of UMass students who have experienced foster care. Through these efforts, gatherings such as “We Celebrate Adoption” and our annual conference, the visibility of adoption and foster care has been elevated on the UMass campus. UMass is already becoming a “destination of choice” for people with personal connections to adoption, and we hope that will continue to grow.

SUPPORTING ADOPTIVE AND FOSTER FAMILIES

Since fall 2013, adoptive and foster parents at UMass Amherst have been getting together on a monthly basis to talk about their children in a safe and understanding space. Raising children who are adopted is similar in many ways to raising biological children, but there are also important differences. These differences bring the group together. Participants discuss topics such as school related issues (ex. family tree assignments, bringing in baby photos, IEPs, parent classroom presentations about adoption etc), microaggressions, lack of medical history, children’s desire to know about their birth family, and whether or not to include adoption related information on the college application. Researchers as well as students from ASAP have also talked with the parents.

In time it became apparent that parents who adopted their children internationally had different parenting experiences than parents who foster or who adopted their children through the child welfare system. The parent group was then split into two, with the understanding that anyone could attend either group. Foster/adoptive parents often have lots to share about the child welfare system along with the process of terminating the parental rights of the child’s parents they are fostering. There also tends to be more direct involvement with birth family members among this group than with the parents who adopted internationally.

With each group there is an opportunity to share both joys and challenges. Parents are also often able to share similar experiences and offer resources or their own insights. Friendships have been formed, and many parents get together outside of the regular monthly meetings.

COMING IN 2022!

We are pleased to announce that the third Rudd Summer Adoption Research Institute will be offered (virtually) from May 18–27, 2022.

A cohort of 20 graduate students and recent doctoral recipients will come together with 11 faculty from the U.S. and abroad for an intensive week of discussions about topics such as culture, race, and class in designing and interpreting adoption research; conducting research with LGBT adoptive families; translating and dissemination research findings for impact; analysis of longitudinal and family-level data; qualitative data analysis; use of secondary data sets; and more. For more information, see umass.edu/ruddchair/summer-adoption-research-institute.
During 2020–2021, the Rudd program welcomed two Rudd Family Visiting Professors and a Fulbright Visiting Scholar from Ireland. The Rudd Family Visiting Professorship was established through the generosity of the Andrew and Virginia Rudd family in order to bring talented mid-career and senior adoption scholars to the UMass campus in order to enhance training opportunities, participate in innovative and collaborative research efforts, and expand the implementation of the best adoption practices in the United States and internationally.

Jean Rhodes, PhD, served as Rudd Visiting Professor during a week-long residency in February 2020. Rhodes is the Frank L. Boyden Professor of Clinical Psychology and director of the Center for Evidence-Based Mentoring at the University of Massachusetts Boston. She is the editor of the Chronicle of Evidence-Based Mentoring, which translates and disseminates the best research on mentoring to the public, professionals, and policymakers. Her most recent book, Older and Wiser: New Ideas for Youth Mentoring in the 21st Century, was published by Harvard University Press in 2020. As one of the world’s leading experts on mentoring, she consulted with members of the Rudd team who are involved in the Adoption Mentoring Partnership, a collaboration between the Rudd Adoption Research Program and Big Brothers Big Sisters of Hampshire County. Discussions centered around best practices in adoption mentoring, program evaluation and future directions. She also met with staff of the local Big Brothers Big Sisters organization for broader discussions about evidence-based trends in mentoring. Rhodes gave a public lecture based on her research on mentoring, titled “Older and Wiser: Rethinking Youth Mentoring for the 21st Century.” Discussions during her residency focused around how best to make AMP transferable to other sites around the country and how to deploy new technologies, such as mentoring apps, to improve the quality and effectiveness of mentoring, especially as they might better meet the needs of adopted persons.

Abbie Goldberg, PhD, was appointed Rudd Family Visiting Professor during the spring 2021 semester. She is the Jan and Larry Landry University Professor of Psychology at Clark University, where she is also the director of the women’s and gender studies program. Broadly, her research focuses on how a variety of social locations (e.g., gender, sexual orientation, social class) and contexts (e.g., work, family, community) shape processes of development and mental health. For 15 years, she has been conducting a longitudinal study of adoptive parenthood among lesbian, gay, and heterosexual couples. She was selected for the Rudd Visiting Professorship because of her work on the relationship that adoptive families have with their children’s schools. This research has provided insights about the importance of the parent community in adoptive parents’ feelings of belonging versus alienation in school settings, as well as the importance and corresponding challenges associated with being highly involved in one’s child’s school as an adoptive parent. During her appointment, she (in collaboration with Hal Grotevant and Jen Dolan) conducted research examining teachers’ experiences with adopted children and their families. The input from two focus groups helped inform the questions that would be included on a survey that was broadly disseminated in April and May 2021. Survey responses were gathered from 207 teachers, paraprofessionals, and other school professionals from across the United States, representing all grade levels K–12. A comprehensive report from this research is posted on our website at umass.edu/ruddchair/report. Further dissemination plans for information based on this research are underway, including a presentation by Goldberg in early 2022.

Anne Marie Shier (BSoSc, MSW, PG Diploma Teaching and Learning) was a Fulbright Visiting Scholar from Ireland to the Rudd Adoption Research Program from September 2021 to January 2022. She is a lecturer at Technological University Dublin and a doctoral candidate at University College Cork. Shier previously worked as an Adoption Social Worker (Information and Trace). She became acquainted with the Rudd Program through her participation in the 2019 Summer Adoption Research Institute (SARI) on the UMass campus. Her Fulbright stay allowed her focused time to complete writing her dissertation, “Intercountry Adoption Reunion in the Irish Context.” During her residency, she presented a colloquium, “Using Social Media and Technology in Adoption Search and Reunion: The Lived Experiences of Irish Intercountry Adoptees.” This presentation revealed the central role of social media and technology in reunion between persons adopted to Ireland from other countries and their birth family members. It explored how social media and technology have facilitated, “normalized,” and “casualized” aspects of contact with birth family; increased the pace of contact; and can be challenging in relation to managing contact and boundaries for adoptees and birth family members. Although social media has facilitated participants’ contact with birth family, prepared them for initial in-person contact, and acts as a substitute for in-person contact between meetings, this study suggests it cannot and does not replace the need for “real-life,” in-person contact. Appropriate for a presentation on social media, Shier’s talk was offered via Zoom to a large international audience. It is available for viewing on the Rudd Adoption YouTube channel.
PUBLICATIONS & PRESENTATIONS

PUBLICATIONS IN PRESS


PUBLISHED IN 2020 – 2021


PRESENTATIONS IN 2020 – 2021


Cashen, K.K., & Grotevant, H.D. (2021, July). Associations between relational competence and adjustment in emerging adult adoptees. Paper presented at the 7th International Conference on Adoption Research (ICAR7), Milan, Italy (synchronous/remote presentation).


Martinez-Mora, L., Adroher, S., Grotevant, H.D., Juffer, F., Palacios, J., & Simmonds, J. (2020, July). Ethical principles and child protection alternatives. Is adoption the “last resort”? In J. Palacios (Chair), Adoption as a legitimate and evidenced based child protection solution. Symposium accepted for presentation at the 7th International Conference on Adoption Research, Milan, Italy (accepted but not presented due to conference cancelation).

Matthews, J.A.K., Grotevant, H.D., & McRoy, R.G., (2020, July). The relationship with the birth mother and how it impacts the emerging adult adoptee’s relationship with their birth father. Paper accepted for presentation at the 7th International Conference on Adoption Research, Milan, Italy (accepted but not presented due to conference cancelation).


THESES AND DISSERTATIONS COMPLETED IN THE RUDD LAB


Names of current and former Rudd program faculty affiliates, staff, and students are in bold.
TRANSFORMATIVE GENEROSITY

RUDD FAMILY VISITING PROFESSORSHIP
Andrew and Virginia Rudd, adoptive parents and visionary philanthropists, saw the need for stronger connections between the academic research being produced at universities and the needs experienced by those with personal connections to adoption in the community. With their initial endowment at UMass Amherst, the Rudd Family Foundation Chair in Psychology, they aspired to stimulate and support research while simultaneously encouraging its translation and dissemination to people who could use it, including parents, clinicians, policymakers, educators, and health care professionals. Subsequent donations and matching gifts created the Rudd Family Endowed Fund for Outreach to Adoptive Parents in 2014.

In 2016, a generous new contribution from Andrew and Virginia Rudd established the Rudd Family Visiting Professorship. This new fund has endowed a visiting professorship within the Rudd Program at UMass in order to enhance training, encourage innovative and collaborative research paths, and expand the implementation of the best adoption practices in the United States and internationally. Recipients are selected for their expertise in adoption and for their commitment to use their residency to promote dissemination of knowledge to the larger adoption community, including researchers, practitioners, community members, policymakers, and students. Recent Visiting Professors were Jean Rhodes, PhD, (2020) and Abbie Goldberg, PhD, (2021). See section on Visiting Scholars for details about their residencies.

The Rudds’ vision and their support have made it possible for the adoption program to become well-established in the adoption research world, in the community, and at UMass. Because it is supported by permanent endowments, we look forward to its ability to flourish and grow into the future.

The program has also benefited from the support of another major donor, Scott D. Chaplin (UMass Amherst Class of 1989), whose life has been touched by adoption. “Giving is an affirmation of how great UMass Amherst was for me,” Chaplin said. “The adoption research is interesting and unique and UMass is really making a name for itself in this area.”

Gifts made to the Rudd Family Foundation Chair in Psychology, the Rudd Family Endowed Fund for Outreach to Adoptive Parents, and the Rudd Family Visiting Professorship support the priorities of the Rudd Adoption Research Program reflected in this report. Donations will support activities such as adoption research, the annual conference, the Adoption Mentoring Partnership, adoption research training, graduate student and postdoctoral scholar stipends, and visiting scholars.

For further information about this unique opportunity, please contact:
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(Continued...)
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