NEW WORLDS of Adoption CONFERENCE

“Helping Families Overcome Early Adversity”

APRIL 11TH

This program is sponsored by the Massachusetts Psychological Association. Massachusetts Psychological Association is approved by the American Psychological Association to sponsor continuing education for psychologists. Massachusetts Psychological Association maintains responsibility for this program and its content.

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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 Endowed Chair. He is Principal Investigator on the Minnesota / Texas Adoption Research Project (MITARP), 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.

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).

In this area holds great promise in revealing information about common neural mechanisms underlying many of the poor outcomes we see in these populations. It also provides us with tools for leveraging our emerging understanding about the brain's plasticity over the course of development in order to maximize the effectiveness of interventions. Perhaps nowhere is this more important than in the area of adoption, where there are still very few evidence-based interventions, where many adoptive parents struggle to find appropriate services that can meet the needs of their children and families, and where there is very little state or national legislation to guide the allocation of resources, or the type of support to be provided. This presentation will describe activities of our research group to address these issues, within the context of basic science, intervention, and public policy.

Many decades of research on children who have experienced early life adversity (e.g., abuse, neglect, and extreme poverty) has led to a solid scientific knowledge base about risk and resiliency. It has also led to an array of evidence-based programs that have been shown to positively impact life-course outcomes for these children and their families. Research in this area holds great promise in revealing information about common neural mechanisms underlying many of the poor outcomes we see in these populations. It also provides us with tools for leveraging our emerging understanding about the brain’s plasticity over the course of development in order to maximize the effectiveness of interventions. Perhaps nowhere is this more important than in the area of adoption, where there are still very few evidence-based interventions, where many adoptive parents struggle to find appropriate services that can meet the needs of their children and families, and where there is very little state or national legislation to guide the allocation of resources, or the type of support to be provided. This presentation will describe activities of our research group to address these issues, within the context of basic science, intervention, and public policy.

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PHILIP FISHER, PH.D.
Professor of Psychology, University of Oregon
Philip A. Fisher, Ph.D., is a Professor of Psychology and Research Scientist at the Prevention Science Institute at the University of Oregon. He is Science Director for the National Family and Community Wellness Center at Children’s Hospital of Minnesota on the Developing Child, both based at Harvard University. He is also a Senior Research Scientist at the Oregon Social Learning Center. Dr. Fisher’s work on disadvantaged and maltreated children includes (a) studies to understand the effects of early stress on the developing brain; (b) the development of two-generation prevention and treatment programs to improve high-risk children’s (and their caregivers’) well-being and brain functioning; and (c) advocacy for science-based policy and practice to improve early learning and healthy development in high-risk children. His work has been funded by a number of institutions of the National Institutes of Health. He serves on a number of national advisory groups related to prevention science and community-based research. His intervention programs are being implemented at sites throughout the United States and Europe. He is the recipient of the 2012 Society for Prevention Research Translational Science Award. Dr. Fisher has been an adoptive parent for 16 years.

NANCY SOLOW (CHAIR)
Senior Director, Adoption Journeys
Nancy Solow, MSW, LICSW is a clinical social worker on the Regional Response Team of Adoption Journeys in Fairbanks, MA. A graduate of the Smith College School for Social Work, Nancy specializes in post-adoption services, including family work, adoption identity, attachment trauma, group work and adolescence. She provides services to a wide variety of adoptive families including counseling and advocacy with mental health and education systems. She has worked with foster and adoptive families since 1990, beginning with families in Vermont’s Child Protective sector (CPS). Her professional experience also includes ten years with Casey Family Services in Vermont, and for the past ten years, Adoption Journeys of Massachusetts. She is a certiﬁed trainer in Adoption Competence for the Center for Adoption Support and Education (CASE) and currently provides training to clinicians in Central Massachusetts. In addition, Nancy trains school personnel in strategies for helping students who have histories of attachment trauma. She is a frequent speaker at the Western New England University’s annual social work conference on developmental stages in the adopted child. She is privileged to lead a great deal every day from the parents and children with whom she works and is delighted to present a panel of wise and experienced parents to this conference.

KAREN GREEN
Parent
Karen Green and her partner fostered their daughter from 3 years to 5 years and then adopted her at 5 years of age through DSS. It has been a tremendous challenge to learn how to parent a child with early trauma and attachment issues. However, working closely with Adoption Journeys has helped Karen understand “early trauma” and its impact on the nervous system and her daughter’s behavior. Karen has worked closely with school systems as an advocate for her daughter. After 11 years of parenting her daughter Karen has begun to let go of traditional expectations and realize that the true journey is to help her daughter become “whole” and help her create her own story by integrating experiences from both her birth family and adoptive family. Karen works in the Frontier Regional School District as a Coordinator for Adoption and Community Intervention Coordinator providing support for families and children from birth through school age. ASQ Coordinator she provides access to comprehensive services, child development information, and educational opportunities for parents and families.

ALAN SINGER
Parent
Alan Singer is the proud father of his adopted daughter, Kelsea and husband of nearly twenty years to Cynthia, who celebrated her 50th birthday with a trip to western MA during the latter part of 2002 in order to assume the responsibilities of his present job position as Director of Lending/ Business Development at the Franklin County CDC. Alan’s passion in being of service to others, in part, from sharing his life with his brother, Marshall, who has diagnosed learning disabilities. Living with an older sibling who has emotional and cognitive challenges has allowed Alan to have a better level of understanding and interaction with Kelsea as she learns and grows while dealing with her earlier life setbacks as a foster child. Alan’s Mother, Rita Singer, was also a Special Education teacher and continues to offer support for Alan and Cynthia as they face the constantly evolving challenges they face in their devoted raising of Kelsea into adulthood. Alan, Cynthia and Kelsea have also received excellent support from their team of ray-focusedly highlighted by This New England Attachment Network, Clinical and Support Opportunities, Adoption Journeys and the team of educators involved with implementing Kelsea’s IEP at her grammar school.

MARGO CHAPSKI
Parent
Ms. Chapski and her husband adopted their daughter 8 years ago, when she was 6.5 years old. The adoption was a result of a disruption, and through a private, non-DOT/DSS agency. Historically, their daughter is from Russia, having been institutionalized since birth (28 weeks gestation) until age 5.1 years. She is now 14 years old. Currently, Ms. Chapski is a ‘stay-at-home’ mom, valuing her time and energy to other adoptive parent goals in support group settings, and as a Parent Liaison with Adoption Journeys. She is an educational advocate for her daughter’s needs within the school system. Professionally, Ms. Chapski is an Occupational Therapist with 30 years of experience. She was employed by Behavioral Learning Network for 2 years as a Family Partner, is trained in Psychological First Aid and was an active member of the Trauma Response Team. Ms. Chapski is a certified trainer for the Beyond Consequences Services: Logic and Control parent program and teaches classes throughout the area to professionals and parents.
MICHAEL MCMANUS, M.S.W., LICSW  
Senior Associate at MJ Henry and Associates, Inc  
Dr. McDermott is charting the developmental sensitivity of cognitive and affective regulation across contexts using a combination of behavioral and physiological approaches. To explore these issues, Dr. McDermott is examining the effects of powerful intervention on outcomes for children in Romania who have experienced significant early adversity.