Professors Awarded Research Grants and Recognition for Research

Professors Sharon Danes and Hal Grotevant have recently been awarded large research grants in their areas of interest. Last year, Hal was recognized for his research achievements through the College of Human Ecology's Excellence in Research Award. This year, Sharon was awarded the American Association for Family and Consumer Sciences (AAFCS) Family Economics and Management Section Research Award. They tell their stories in the features that follow.

Rural Family Business Research Project

I recently received a Rural Development National Research Initiative grant through the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) entitled “Rural Family Businesses: Predictors of Viability.” The purpose of the study is to determine the impact of the integration of the business and family systems on the viability of rural family businesses, which includes farms and resorts. Retaining and expanding these family businesses is vital to the economy of rural communities.

My initial study, conducted in 1988, was a survey of farm women in order to discover their work patterns on and off the farm. Minnesota Rural Futures used the data as the springboard of its existence by doing nine public policy forums in the state. The data also served as the foundation of a video entitled, “Who Nurtures the Nurturer?,” developed by the Rural Mental Health Demonstration Project. The video addresses the role overload experienced by farm women and what they, their families, and their communities can do to help them.

The current USDA grant provides the opportunity to investigate the dynamics that occur at the intersection of family and business. Past research on family business has treated the business and the family as two separate systems with little relationship to each other. The premise of the study is that lasting economic success of a family business is not just determined by its financial condition or the economic climate of the community, but also the management capabilities of the family members who provide the power to endure. It is expected that rural family businesses that have consensus about goals and priorities, clarity on who does what and who makes decisions, constructive conflict management modes, creative problem-solving skills, and plans for change, will be more viable than those who do not have these characteristics. The results will be useful to educators, business consultants and those

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The Adoption Research Project

by Hal Grotevant

The media have been full of stories about birthparents trying to reclaim children placed for adoption, and members of the public are confused about the relative benefits and drawbacks of confidential, mediated, and fully open adoptions. The research I have been conducting with Dr. Ruth McRoy, from the University of Texas at Austin, is designed to examine outcomes of different types of adoptions for adopted children, adoptive parents, and birthparents. Between 1987 and 1992, we interviewed 190 adoptive parents, 171 adopted children between ages 4-12, and 169 birthmothers.

Results indicated that adopted children scored within the normal range for self esteem and expressed satisfaction with their current adoption arrangement. Self-esteem, satisfaction with openness, and curiosity about birthparents did not differ by level of openness, although children in open adoptions understood the meaning of adoption more fully. These results were not compatible with claims of critics of open adoption, who stated that such arrangements would damage children's self-esteem and cause them confusion.

Finally, when compared to parents in confidential adoptions, those in open adoptions generally demonstrated higher levels of acknowledgment of the adoption, more empathy toward the birthmother and the child, stronger sense of relationship permanence as projected into the future, and less fear that the birthmother might try to reclaim her children. No support was found for the fears that parents in open adoptions would feel unable to serve as “full parents” to their children or that they would constantly fear or experience intrusion by birthparents.

We have recently received grants that will allow us to visit our participants once again, now that the adopted children are adolescents. I have received $474,244 from the William T. Grant Foundation and Dr. McRoy has received $100,000 from the Hogg Foundation for Mental Health to continue this longitudinal study. This will be the first project ever to chart changes in adoption openness across the whole family system and to examine the factors that predict such changes and outcomes.

Outreach is also important to our project. Our research team has helped the Children, Youth, and Family Consortium Electronic Clearinghouse launch AdoptINFO, an internet-based resource on adoption that can be accessed through Gopher or World Wide Web. We contribute research-based information and provide links to other resources.

Adoption Research Team pictured from left to right: Bill Carter, Dr. Thomas Bohman, Dr. Hal Grotevant, Dr. Gretchen Wrobel, Manfred van Dulmen, Julie Kohler, and Michael Sandin.
News from the Department Head

It has been an exciting few months discussing the merits of reorganizing departments and colleges, forming centers, and affinity groups. Provost Gene Allen asked me to co-chair the discussions with faculty, students, and staff about a proposed merger with the College of Education and Human Development (CEDHD). Dr. Richard Weinberg, co-chair from CEDHD and Director of the Institute of Child Development, and I are both committed to creating ways to meet the new challenges. I received letters from many of our FSOS alumni that helped in responding to the question of reorganization. It was heartening to read about student experiences and to be reminded of the strong reputation that Family Social Science has earned over the past 25 years. If any of you want a copy of the Hogan-Weinberg report on the proposed merger, please call or write to me (see page 7 for phone number, fax number, and address).

We have a lot of good news to celebrate! Carolyn Tubbs from Texas, is joining our faculty in September. She is currently teaching at Texas Tech and completing her doctoral degree at Purdue University. Associate Professors Jim Maddock and Dan Detzner were promoted to Professor, effective in September. Drs. William Goodman, Linda Budd, and Marilyn Mason were promoted to Adjunct Associate Professor. Drs. Paul Rosenblatt and Dan Detzner received College Awards for Educational Leadership and Community Outreach, respectively.

Our undergraduate students were lauded for their outstanding accomplishments at the College Awards Ceremony and several of our graduate and undergraduate students received Waller International Study Awards. And, we had 88 undergraduates receive their degrees this year. We give special credit for the undergraduate students’ recognition and success to the inspired leadership of William Goodman, Program Coordinator, and feature his story in this newsletter.

Continuing Extension Education Program Innovation Fund grant to create a feminism and family course. Ramona developed the course objectives and syllabus in Feminist Pedagogy, a course taught by Professor Lisa Albrecht through the Women’s Studies Department.

The goal of the course is to help students move beyond understanding families at the micro-level, and begin understanding how macro-level systems of race, gender, class, and sexual orientation are manifested in family structure and process. Students will look at how these social systems of inequality affect all people, regardless of whether they are privileged or disadvantaged by them.

Students will investigate how families can be a resource against systems of inequality. “Families of resistance” is a term referring to families in which members create and maintain kinship ties in resistance to the oppressions that can serve to tear the family apart.

Another component of the course entails applying theory to practice. Students will look at how to work as a feminist with or on behalf of families, through visioning what they want for families to be like in the future and strategizing how to make those changes come about.
Research Internship and Fieldwork Experience Courses are Invaluable, Report FSOS Undergraduates

FSOS is keenly aware of the need for a diverse and cogent education to respond to the undergraduate population and global community. In recognition of this factor, William Goodman, Coordinator of Undergraduate Studies, revised and expanded two courses, research internship (FSOS 5202) and the fieldwork experience (FSOS 5249), in which students are encouraged to gain a variety of experiences.

The research internship is designed to help students prepare for academic careers by assisting professors in the conduct of their research. William describes himself as a sort of “broker,” matching students according to their interests with compatible research positions offered by faculty. Undergraduate students become an integral part of the research team. They become involved in everything from participating in research meetings, gathering data, coding data, contributing written pieces to articles, to designing their own research, writing grant proposals, and publishing their own articles!

“Through my experience as part of Hal Grotevant’s adoption research team, I began to apply my education from FSOS courses in a relevant way. I am able to see how theories of boundary ambiguity, identity development, family and community systems, social policy, and others intertwine in actual adoption case histories.” Michael Sandin, a FSOS undergraduate student who recently was awarded a grant from the Undergraduate Research Opportunities Program for his research on adoption.

“The research opportunities I took advantage of have facilitated my graduate studies. If not for those opportunities, I may not have felt confident enough to apply to graduate school. As important, the experience was very helpful in enhancing my record which played a role in my being accepted to graduate school. As a graduate student, I draw from that experience regularly.” Kate Fitterer, a FSOS undergraduate alumna and now a graduate student in Social Work at the University of Minnesota.

“The preparation I possessed went above and beyond customary undergraduate coursework. I experienced a very favorable application process, and was able to choose among several excellent graduate programs.” Tai Mendenhall, FSOS undergraduate alumnus and current graduate student at Kansas State University, received an UROP grant and co-authored a recently published article on adoption.

The fieldwork experience is suitable for students pursuing other careers in the family field. In this course, students apply their academic learning in the fieldwork setting. Students identify networks of professionals that can facilitate job opportunities, examine the needs of diverse populations seeking services, and discuss the ethical issues involved in helping others.

Nancy Poist, a honors student who graduated from FSOS this year, volunteered at a nursing home for her fieldwork experience and plans to look for a job as an advocate for elderly persons in nursing homes or adult daycare. She wrote that the fieldwork experience helped solidify her career goals and the support she gained in class was important. “The seminar portion of the fieldwork practicum afforded an opportunity to process experiences in a climate of safety and acceptance. The support of my professor, William Goodman, and peers was critical to my coping and adaptive strategies.”

Alumni often report that the fieldwork experience enabled them to make contacts and later find employment. Undergraduate alumni Laura LaCroix Dalluhn, Jennifer Holmes, and Jane Klumpyan, who participated as panelists in a discussion at an FSOS
The Meaning of Family to Homeless Families

Lynn Heitritter, a FSOS graduate student, and her family have volunteered at a shelter for homeless families for the past three years. They have tutored children in school subjects, served meals during the holidays, and worked in the medical clinic. It was through these experiences that Lynn became interested in how homeless families define family, and how their identity as a family may be affected by their stay at the homeless shelter.

Lynn conducted a qualitative research project for her Master's thesis, "The Meaning of Family to Homeless Families." She interviewed 15 homeless families, whom she quotes extensively in her thesis. Lynn's hope, she said, was to collect their voices so that together they could make an impact and be heard.

She found that family identity was either enhanced or threatened depending on the circumstances that brought the families to the shelter. For families who felt they had a choice in entering the shelter (e.g., a woman running from an abusive partner) the shelter was viewed as positive. It offered a safe environment in which the family could be kept together. For families who had no choice but to enter a shelter (e.g., families who were evicted from their rented house due to the presence of lead) the move often had a devastating effect. The shelter was seen as an unsafe environment in which family identity was difficult to maintain.

Based on her findings, Lynn hypothesizes that two patterns of adapting to living in shelter may negatively affect family identity. Families who struggle and feel torn apart by their experience may have great difficulty regrouping once they obtain more permanent housing. Families who adapt too much to shelter life may adopt the identity "we are a homeless family," in which part of their identity is to be mobile and not attempt to find permanent housing.
Alumni Update
We're starting a new feature article! Beginning with this issue, each Interactions will feature an alum of FSOS. This newsletter we feature Kathleen O'Donnell.

Kathleen O'Donnell began her graduate studies in Family Social Science Fall 1990 and graduated Spring of 1993 with her Master's degree and a licensure as a parent educator. She worked for a year on the Head Start Transition Project to address the "fade out" affect of the Head Start program. The focus of this project is to increase outreach to kindergarten through third grade children and their families in order to increase children's success in school. Kathleen consulted with and accompanied home-school liaisons to family home visits, and lead the parent education components of family events which encourages parents to look at their patterns of family interactions and recognize their strengths.

She is now working in a St. Paul public elementary school, Hancock-Hamline University Collaborative Magnet. She heads the family component of a Title I, federally funded program aimed at improving children's reading and math skills. Using a systems perspective, Kathleen says schools, families, communities, and neighborhoods need to work together towards a mutual goal of improving children's learning. These systems are often not familiar with one another and unsure of how to work collaboratively. For example, Kathleen explained that while some teachers work diligently to reach out to parents, often there are not programs in place to bring parents and teachers together other than parent/teacher conferences. One of her primary goals is to build relationships between these interfacing systems so the goal of children's academic success and overall well-being can be more effectively achieved. Due to federal cutbacks, Title I funding for such programs may be decreased, putting some of these collaborative programs in jeopardy.

She works to improve outreach programs and the school's climate so parents feel it's a welcoming place. For example, the parent resource center, which Kathleen coordinates, contains books and materials parents can check out to gain ideas about activities to do at home to enhance their children's learning. She also plans family events at school and participates in home visitation.

Kathleen loves the school in which she works because it draws students from all over the city, making for a diverse population. She has been able to use her Spanish language skills when working with some of the families.

Kathleen is also involved with other professionals and programs whose foci are serving families and children. She has spoken to classes of student teachers at Hamline University about the topic of parent involvement in school and she has taught classes at Anoka-Hennepin Technical College in the Child Development Careers Program. She continues to be involved in FSOS and has attended faculty-alumni meetings aimed at planning for the future of the department.

Congratulations are in Order to...

Dan Detzner and Jim Maddock were promoted to "Professor" status.

William Goodman was promoted to "Adjunct Associate Professor."

Dan Detzner received the College of Human Ecology's Contribution to College and Community Award.

Paul Rosenblatt received the College of Human Ecology's Educational Leadership Award.


Jean Bauer, Professor FSOS, Kathleen Mangum, FSOS alumna, Extension Educator and Associate Professor, MES, and Derek Gwinn, Master's student in FSOS, have revised the Minnesota Extension Service publication, "Living Resourcefully with Reduced Income," (BU-2475). The 32-page publication is designed to help individuals gain control of their current situation, suggest ways to evaluate what is happening, and provide resources to assist in living with reduced income.

Jean Bauer completed a term on the Board of Director for the American Council on Consumer Interests. She is currently the chair of search for Editor of the Journal of Consumer Affairs, the council's journal. She was a panel member for the ACCI annual meeting entitled, "Welfare Reform: Issues, Implications and
Public Policy.”

Sharon Danes was selected for the American Association for Family and Consumer Sciences (AAFCS) Family Economics and Management Section Research Award.

Michael Sandin, an undergraduate student, has been awarded a grant from the Undergraduate Research Opportunities Program (UROP) for his research on adoption.

Ronit Leichtentritt and Sylvia Arce Esnaola, doctoral students, both received the 1996-97 Dora Mae Waller Award to conduct research abroad.

Linda Budd and Marilyn Mason, Ph.D. alumni, have been promoted to "Adjunct Associate Professors."

Terri Karis and Bill Allen, doctoral students, passed their prelim oral exams.

Debbie Smith (M.A. 1992) has accepted a position of Assistant Professor of Sociology and the Director of the Family Studies Program in the College of Art and Sciences at the University of Missouri, Kansas City.

Tai Mendenhall, a FSOS undergraduate alumnus, Harold Grotevant, Professor FSOS, and Ruth McRoy, Professor at University of Texas, had their paper, "Adoptive Couples: Communication and Changes Made In Openness Levels," accepted for publication. Tai received a UROP grant to conduct the research. The paper will appear in Family Relationships April, 1996.

Anna Hagemeister and Diane Hovey, both doctoral students, were selected by the Education and Enrichment Section of the National Council on Family Relations to receive scholarships to attend the annual conference.

Lynn Heitritter, a doctoral student, successfully defended her Master's thesis entitled "The Meaning of Family to Homeless Families" on December 15, 1995. Jim Maddock was her advisor.

Beth Maddock-Magistad, a doctoral student, was awarded $2000 from the Kappa Omicron Phi Marie Huff McCubbin Fellowship to be used for her graduate studies.

Dawn Carter, Kathleen Erickson, Meredith Fergus, Heidi Lohn, Molly Lucast, Carol Mulligan, Nancy Poist, Molly Lucast, Kathleen Ridley, Sally Stromquist, and Linda (Lu) Vail are undergraduate honors students.

Ciloue Cheng Stewart, a doctoral

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Congratulations

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student, received a grants-in-aid award from the Society for Psychological Study of Social Issues (SPSSI), and a scholarship from the Twin City Home and Community Section of the American Association of Family and Consumer Sciences. She also has been invited to participate in a workshop in Bangkok, Thailand in July on family policy.

Erin Barrett, an undergraduate student, was awarded a $1100 scholarship in honor of Sara Lou Innes from the Alpha Alumni Chapter of Phi Upsilon Omicron, the Home Economics Honors Society.

Catherine Solheim (Ph.D. 1990) who teaches in the Department of Family and Child Development at Auburn University in Auburn, Alabama recently received tenure and promotion to Associate Professor.

Diane Hovey, a doctoral student, was awarded the McFarland Fellowship for the 1996-97 academic school year.

Lara Campbell, an undergraduate student, was awarded the College of Human Ecology Outstanding Undergraduate Student Award.

Susan Leonard, an undergraduate student, was awarded the College of Human Ecology Humanitarian Award.

Molly Lucast, an undergraduate student, was awarded the College of Human Ecology Leadership Award.

Trena Schmidt, an undergraduate student, was awarded the Student Service to the Campus and Community Award.

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