



Family Link

SPRING 2011

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Crossroads Collaborative: How do Youth Perceive Their Own Sexuality?



*Stephen T. Russell
and Adela C. Licona
teach a graduate
seminar class for
the Crossroads
Collaborative.*

*(photo courtesy of
Beatriz Verdugo)*

The prestigious Ford Foundation is giving voice to the struggles young people face today as they search for understanding about their sexuality. The Foundation has asked the Frances McClelland Institute for Children, Youth, and Families to help. By fueling the public discussion with data, the Frances McClelland Institute is contributing to policies and programs that affect young people's sexual choices and health.

The Crossroads Collaborative will help us understand how youth perceive their own sexuality, their health, and their rights. Collaborative partner YWCA Tucson is expanding its youth-centered racial justice program to include sexuality and gender justice, and they are developing a "Youth Bill of Rights." Another collaborator of the southern Arizona project is the San Francisco-based Gay-Straight Alliance Network.

"This is about asking questions and taking on new perspectives for policymakers, lawyers and teachers."

— Stephen T. Russell

The Foundation's timing is good: our culture is rapidly diversifying, social media and other social technology are ascendant, young people are buffeted by destabilizing economic conditions, and the issues are politicized by a deep ideological divide.

"We are bringing stories and numbers together in a way that is informed by public dialogue and in turn, informs public dialogue; is community and policy relevant; and in a way that can lead to change," said Licona, an assistant professor in the English Department.

Institute Director Stephen T. Russell, Ph.D., is collaborating with the UA's Adela C. Licona, Ph.D., on the Crossroads Collaborative, one of six projects nationwide to receive Ford's "Innovative Research on Youth Sexuality" grants that, at the UA, will be funded at \$730,000 over two years.

The initiative also trains a new generation of youth sexuality experts and is funding five UA graduate students who are conducting research either for a thesis or dissertation on topics around youth sexuality. Licona and Russell also initiated a youth sexuality and health graduate seminar.

"These new projects represent the next generation of exploration into this very human part of our lives. The thing that most excites us about these projects is the explicit commitment of the teams to link their research to public conversation and public policy debate," said Margaret Hempel, Ford's director of sexuality and reproductive health and rights.

"We feel we are at a crossroads," Russell said, noting that the project is targeting youth tethered between childhood and adulthood. "We are at a critical moment where we can create another public dialogue. What we really need to know is how to help youth," Russell said. "This is about asking questions and taking on new perspectives for policymakers, lawyers and teachers."



From the Director

The Frances McClelland Institute continues to grow: new studies are being launched that will contribute to deeper understandings of youth rights, family economic stress and young adult health, and the effectiveness of programs to promote early childhood well-being in Arizona.



We recently had the honor of hosting the European Association for Research on Adolescence / Society for Research on Adolescence 2011 Summer School, with support from a €50,000 grant from the Jacobs Foundation of Switzerland. 24 Ph.D. students and 7 senior scholars from multiple disciplines and all over the world here in

Tucson for a scientific training conference: friendships were made, and we believe the experience will strengthen the scholarship of new scholars studying adolescence in a diverse and changing world.

Finally, we've just completed another school year. This spring we added new faculty to the institute, which you will learn about in these pages. And in the coming year we are launching a new initiative on early childhood – we have several events planned in the coming year, so check the website and stay tuned.

Stephen T. Russell, Ph.D., Director
Professor, Fitch Nesbitt Endowed Chair

Michelle Walsh: Using Data to Make a Difference



The Frances McClelland Institute for Children, Youth, and Families has added depth to its evaluation research bench with the addition of Michelle Walsh, Ph.D. Her expertise in grant writing, study design, measurement and data analysis is focused on creative solutions to the real-world social and health-related issues that face families and the programs that serve them.

She believes that diverse university-community partnerships are key in ensuring that high-quality research makes a real difference in people's lives.

"I will be part of the Institute's newly-forming Early Childhood Initiative and am looking forward to collaborations across other Institute initiatives. I also plan to continue participating on a number of multidisciplinary teams with colleagues from across the UA campus, including psychology, law, public health, and the Arizona Cancer Center," says Dr. Walsh, an associate research professor.

Dr. Walsh was a Marshall Scholar at Oxford University. She received her doctorate in program evaluation and research

methodology, and in developmental psychology from the UA's Department of Psychology, where she was the associate director of the Evaluation, Research and Development Unit before joining the Frances McClelland Institute team.

Dr. Walsh's current projects include:

- Working with the Asian Pacific Community in Action to analyze their developing public health consortium.
- Studying the oral health of Arizona's children with the Arizona Department of Health Services.
- Helping First Things First identify community needs and assets.
- Conducting analyses of insurance coverage and medical debt amongst Arizona families for St. Luke's Health Initiatives.
- Providing technical support to the Navajo Nation in their community-led effort to understand how traditional Navajo treatment enhances outpatient substance abuse care.

New Early Childhood Initiative: Prevention, Early Intervention, Risk, Resilience



Under the leadership of the Frances McClelland Institute's Ann M. Mastergeorge, Ph.D., the Institute's new Early Childhood Initiative is bringing together collaborative researchers from across the University of Arizona. Their research focus is prevention, early intervention, risk, and

resilience in children from birth to five years of age—a particularly important age group because early interventions lead to better outcomes for children and their families.

To date, some of the UA researcher collaborations include

- Frances McClelland Institute for Children, Youth, and Families
- Cooperative Extension, College of Agriculture and Life Sciences
- Center for Mind, Brain, and Behavior, College of Science
- Sonoran Center for Excellence in Developmental Disabilities, College of Medicine
- Early Childhood Program, College of Education

The researchers are in turn partnering with local and state-wide organizations and agencies, and other universities to create a hub of early childhood science and practices within the McClelland Institute.

Ann M. Mastergeorge, Ph.D., is a developmental psychologist who recently joined the John & Doris Norton School of Family and Consumer Sciences as an associate professor. She received her doctorate in educational and developmental psychology from the University of California, Los Angeles. The focus of her current research includes the early identification and early intervention in autism and Fragile X Syndrome, children at-risk for developmental and socioemotional issues, parenting stress and depression, mother-child interaction and joint attention, language development, early problem-solving skills, and school readiness.

Guiding Principles

- Link neuroscience and behavioral science
- Develop and implement early interventions that are evidence-based
- Include partnerships among parents, teachers and peers
- Highlight specific school-readiness skills and strategies
- Provide evidence that guides policy briefs, policy implementation in early childhood, and community outreach practices

Some of our external (to the UA) partners:

- First Things First
- Southwest Human Development
- Southwest Autism Research and Resource Center
- National Professional Development Center for Autism Spectrum Disorders
- M.I.N.D. Institute, University of California Medical Center, UC Davis
- The Brazelton Institute, Harvard Medical School
- University of Washington
- Early Head Start Consortium

Looking Ahead: Resources for Parents

Linking university research with the needs of families is key to the Early Childhood Initiative. Please check our website later this year for fun opportunities for parents and young children (ages birth to five) to participate in research on children's development. You will also find a variety of parenting resources online later in 2011.

New Book: Decade Review of Adolescence Research

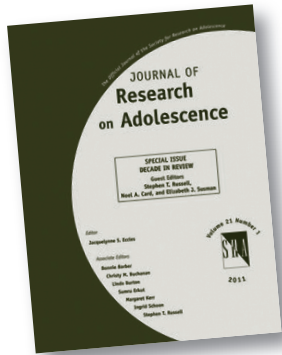
Frances McClelland Institute for Children, Youth, and Families Director Stephen T. Russell, Ph.D., and affiliated faculty Noel Card, Ph.D., were honored to be the editors of a special issue of the *Journal of Research on Adolescence* (JRA)—a multi-disciplinary and international publication that has significantly advanced our knowledge of adolescents. The special issue was also published as a book.

“We want this ‘Decade in Review’ edition to encourage continuing research on adolescent development,” said Dr. Russell. “We hope it will be a guide and inspiration for the next generation of adolescent development scholars and students at all levels of academic standing. We’ve seen

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the growth of work in this area and we hope the journal will grow as a beacon to influence critical thinking about existing work, expand theories regarding the complexity of adolescents, and spur the development of new methodologies for capturing changes in the lives of adolescents.”

Topics were identified and leaders in the field invited to contribute reviews in their subfield of expertise on scholarship published in the JRA from approximately 2000-2010. The areas selected include a range of topics—some are traditional areas of study such as decision making and sexuality and others have gained new momentum such as obesity and same-sex sexualities.

For a copy, go to the publisher’s website <http://www.wiley.com/WileyCDA/> and search for “Journal of Research on Adolescence.”

In the next issue...

- Dr. Rebecca Nathanson’s project Kids’ Court School
- Dr. Michele Walsh receives funding from First Things First to identify community needs and assets.
- Dr. Stephen T. Russell receives funding to study family economics and alcohol abuse.
- Dr. Stephen T. Russell receives funding to understand suicide risk for LGBT teens.
- Back From Rwanda: An Inside Look at the Primate Studies Field Course

Upcoming events...

- **Primate Studies Field School**, July 9-29, 2011
- **I.A.R.R. Mini Conference**, October 20-22, 2011

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The Frances McClelland Institute for Children, Youth, and Families is housed in The John and Doris Norton School of Family and Consumer Sciences, College of Agriculture and Life Sciences at the University of Arizona. The Institute serves as a catalyst for cross-disciplinary research dealing with children, youth, and families.



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