ADP Students across the Ages: From First Impressions to Successful Careers

Applied Developmental Psychology is concerned with enhancing developmental processes and preventing developmental disorders in individuals and families across the life span. The Applied Developmental Psychology program here at George Mason University focuses on development during childhood and provides students with in-depth knowledge about typical development, skills for assessing developmental level and conducting research, and techniques for planning and evaluating programs that foster optimal development.

Each semester we highlight students at a different stage of the ADP degree process. For this semester’s newsletter we wanted to give readers an overall picture of the progression of obtaining an MA or PhD degree in Applied Developmental Psychology at George Mason University - from first impressions by students in their first year of the program to alumni using their degrees every day in their successful careers.

Continued on page 3

ADP on the Campaign Trail: Candidate Views on Education and Healthcare

As graduate students in Applied Developmental Psychology, we aspire to one day work with children or families in some capacity (through intervention work, program evaluation, research, policy work, etc.). Therefore, the education and healthcare policies of the next individual to take over as Commander in Chief will impact the work we do every day.

We present the views on both these issues for the following candidates: Barack Obama (D), forty-six year-old U.S. Senator from Illinois, Hillary Clinton (D), sixty year-old U.S. Senator from New York, and John McCain (R), seventy-one year-old U.S. Senator from Arizona. Also officially in the running is Ralph Nader (I), though unfortunately his candidacy was announced too late to present his views here.

Education

No Child Left Behind
The No Child Left Behind (NCLB) Act was signed into law by President Bush in 2001 and was originally designed to hold schools more accountable for the education of children by implementing standardized testing and high expectations as a way to ensure success for every student. Since its inception, it has been criticized for its emphasis on standardized testing and the methods of instruction teachers must utilize in order to ensure that students meet testing requirements and schools continue to receive federal funding.

Continued on page 7
Welcome from the ADPSG President

I am pleased to welcome you to George Mason University and the Applied Developmental Psychology program. Over the past couple of years, the Applied Developmental Psychology Student Group (ADPSG) has provided the opportunity for students to get involved in both the George Mason community, as well as the greater metro area. In the fall, ADPSG participated in the Walk Now for Autism event, which took place on the national mall. Our team raised $410 and the event itself raised over 1 million dollars to benefit autism research. This spring we plan on participating in the Hands on DC to help clean up the DC public schools.

In addition to the semester service projects, ADPSG provides a source of funding for students in the program to attend a number of professional conferences. Lastly, ADPSG is responsible for creating a semester newsletter. This newsletter provides an opportunity to highlight student and faculty publications, current projects occurring in the labs, and general information about the program and community. Hopefully, the current newsletter is no exception. I would like to take this opportunity to extend a large thanks to Jessica, Lindsey, and the rest of the ADPSG staff who spent a great deal of time and effort compiling this edition. Best wishes to all for a successful semester and please contact me if you have any comments or suggestions on how we can improve ADPSG.

- Alyssa Perna
***ADP across the Ages (cont.)***

**First Impressions**

Beginning with our first year students, now in their second semester in ADP, we asked, “What has been your favorite thing about the ADP program at GMU so far?” Their responses reflected both professional opportunities and elements of camaraderie:

“...working in the Head Start centers and teaching undergraduate classes.” – Caroline Boyer

“...meeting people who share similar goals, experiences, and interests as I.” – Bess Lam

“...working in the Cognition, Affect, and Temperament Lab with my advisor (putting goo on undergraduates’ heads). Also getting to know my fellow graduate students” – Dan Zapp

“...getting to know the other students in the program and what their interests are.” – Christen Meisel

“...the people and the fun we have whether we’re in the lab, the classroom, or at a bar. There’s an incredibly friendly and supportive atmosphere here.” – Adrienne Patton

“We [the first year ADP grad students] have bonded over stress.” – Jesse Zadrazil

“There is a sense of companionship rather than competition with both the faculty and the students. There is always someone you can go talk to who is willing to offer a hand, lend resources or give you advice.” – Erica Buchholz

**Second Year Practicum**

All MA students, and PhD students who wish to get an MA on the way to the PhD, complete either a thesis or practicum during their second year. The practicum is intended to be a learning experience where the student receives on-the-job guidance or instruction from a supervisor with specialized knowledge of an applied area. We include here two brief summaries of the practicum placements of two current ADP students, Kristin Cooper and Goksen Yucel.

**Kristin Cooper**

*Family Compass Group*

I am completing my practicum at Family Compass Group, a small private practice in Reston, Virginia. I am involved in their program aimed at helping families of children with Autism through early intervention. An important part of my practicum is learning about the different therapy approaches in Autism so that I can be a part of the development and enrichment of their current therapy program. I am also involved in the family coaching meetings and home visits, and contribute to the case discussions afterwards in which we evaluate the sessions and prepare ideas for the future of that family's program. So far this practicum has been a great experience, and I am finally seeing all my hard work in school being applied!

**Goksen Yucel**

*Children’s National Medical Center*

I am doing my practicum at Children’s National Medical Center in the Child Development Clinic. This practicum is a complimentary experience to my academic study and it makes my program really “applied.” Now I can say it is exceeding my expectations. In the clinic, infants and young children referred for developmental and behavioral problems are evaluated. I am learning to conduct interviews with parents, administer standardized tests such as the Bayley Scales of Infant Development, Ages an Stages, and Vineland Adaptive Behavior Scales, and write assessment reports of the children. I am exposed to children from a wide range of ethnic and cultural backgrounds and socioeconomic conditions. Such an experience certainly improves my skills and knowledge, an important asset for my career. I am very glad that I am doing a practicum, and most importantly that I am doing it at this site.

**Second Year Thesis**

The thesis is intended to demonstrate the student’s capacity to carry out independent research. The research projects students choose are closely related to their general educational objectives and provide them with the opportunity to contribute to knowledge in psychology. We provide here two examples of thesis topics currently being diligently worked on by two ADP students, Yoon Kim and Lindsey Hutchison.
Yoon Kyong Kim
Working Title: Predicting childhood L2 Acquisition: Low-income Latino preschooler’s learning of English as a function of teacher’s dominant language and individual child characteristics

Speaking more than one language is an important skill in today’s global society but becoming fully bilingual can be difficult for low income, English language learners while making their transition to school. Previous literature has focused on how bilingual children perform better than monolinguals on a variety of cognitive tasks, and on different types of bilingual education programs. However, less study has been conducted on individual differences in the development of childhood bilingualism and the influence of preschool teacher’s language use on English language acquisition. In this study, data from the Miami School Readiness Project will be used to predict how much of childhood L2 learning will be explained through individual differences in children’s self-control, attachment, and behavioral concerns and through preschool teacher’s language at school.

Lindsey Hutchison
Working Title: Home and Preschool Literacy Environments of Children from Low-Income Families: Relations with Early Literacy Outcomes

This study will examine various influences on the emergent literacy development of young children from low socioeconomic backgrounds, both native and non-native English speakers. Characteristics of preschoolers’ home literacy environments and classroom literacy environments, as well as how these interact and influence on another, will be explored. Parents filled out a Family Survey (assessing home environment), teachers filled out an Instructional Practices Survey (assessing classroom environment), and outside specialists administered various assessments to children (including the Early Learning Accomplishment Profile or Learning Accomplishment Profile Diagnostic, and the Preschool Language Scale). Analyses will examine the group of children as whole, as well as broken down by primary language spoken in the home.

Dissertations

The dissertation and its oral defense represent the final demonstration that a doctoral candidate has sufficiently mastered the methods and content of the discipline and that he/she can plan a substantive research project, collect, analyze, and interpret the data, and fit the findings into literature in the area. The following are a few examples of doctoral dissertations in progress by ADP’s advanced graduate students.

Sara Kalb
Working Title: The emergence of social-emotional competence in early childhood

Attention to the importance of social-emotional skills in early childhood is reflected in ongoing efforts to incorporate social-emotional components in preschool curricula, in preventive interventions (e.g. PATHS), and in ongoing research suggesting that social-emotional skills are linked to academic and social adjustment. Despite the importance of social-emotional skills in early childhood, the developmental unfolding of social-emotional competence remains unclear due to variations in sampling and methodology. A conceptual model of the development of social-emotional competence in early childhood will be tested in order to address changes in social-emotional competence over time and with regard to a diverse population.

Suzanne Hartman
Working Title: Behavior Problems in Child Care: Associations with Child Care Quality and Importance for School Readiness and Academic Achievement among Ethnically-Diverse Children Living in Poverty

Recent research and teacher reports have highlighted the importance of early behavior skills and lack of behavior problems for children’s school readiness and academic success in school. Significant school readiness and achievement gaps exist between children in poverty and those who are more affluent. Enhancing low-income children’s behavior skills may help children living in poverty be more ready for school and be more
successful. This study examines the importance of behavioral skills at age four for school readiness and academic achievement in early elementary school among 3,019 low-income, ethnically-diverse children. Also investigated will be associations between different childcare features and decreases in children's behavior problems across the childcare year to help provide practitioners with strategies to increase low-income children's school readiness and likelihood of academic success.

Todd Wyatt
Working Title: Parental Responses to Child Expressions in Middle Childhood: Dyadic Emotion Interaction and its Impact on Social Success.

Throughout childhood, communication between parent and child about emotional events has a lasting impact on how that child expresses, regulates and understands their own emotions. Parent-child conversations about emotions serve as an important platform for coaching and teaching the child social and emotional skills (Denham, McKinley, Couchoud & Holt, 1990; Thompson, 1994). In addition, the affect and behavior of parents during interactions with their children is pivotal in its influence on the development of social and emotional competence of their children. This investigation attempts to better understand the interaction between parental affect and contingent reactions to their child’s emotion expressions with their child’s prowess in peer interaction and peer likeability concurrently and in the future.

ADP Alumni Careers

Rene Hackney, PhD
Owner and Lecturer, Parenting Playgroups

Originally a full-time preschool teacher, Rene Hackney holds a Masters (96) in school psychology and a PhD. (05) in developmental psychology from GMU. Currently Rene owns and teaches at Parenting Playgroups, a parent resource center and preschool classroom in Alexandria VA. She lectures on a wide range of topics to parent, teacher, and social work groups. The most popular lecture program is an eight hour series on Positive Discipline. Rene also provides individual consultation to parents on specific issues, conducts classroom observations with recommendations, and hosts a parenting book club which meets once a month. Future plans include finding a publisher for the Positive Discipline workbook that is based on the eight hour lecture program and designing a television talk show on parenting issues.

Email: rene@parentingplaygroups.com

Amy L. Madigan, Ph.D.
Social Science Analyst, HHS

Amy is a Social Science Analyst in the Division of Child and Youth Policy in the Office of the Assistant Secretary for Planning and Evaluation (ASPE) of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS). ASPE is the principal advisor to the Secretary of HHS on policy development and is responsible for a variety of activities including policy coordination, legislation development, policy research, evaluation, and economic analysis. Amy’s work in ASPE focuses on early childhood development issues and programs. She is responsible for developing ASPE’s early childhood research agenda, managing several policy research projects, and utilizing research findings to conduct policy analyses and provide technical assistance on legislative and regulatory proposals for Head Start and the Child Care and Development Fund.

Email: amy.madigan@hhs.gov

Louis Manfra, Ph.D.
Faculty, Florida International University

Louis is an assistant professor in the Early Childhood Program at Florida International University, and started in the program in 2006. He is currently researching young children’s cognitive development and its relations with later academic outcomes. Louis typically teaches two classes a semester related to early child development and/or research methods, and is involved in several service activities for the college.

Email: manfra@fiu.edu
Let’s All Welcome New ADP Faculty Member

**Timothy Curby!**

Please see the Fall 2008 Edition of the ADP newsletter for more on Dr. Curby, his interests, and his plans at GMU!

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>What’s Going on in ADP Research Labs?</th>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Dr. Susanne Denham</strong>&lt;br&gt;<a href="mailto:sdenham@gmu.edu">sdenham@gmu.edu</a></td>
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<tr>
<td><em>Dr. Denham’s Lab</em></td>
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<tr>
<td>Social and emotional development, social processes in children, developmental psychopathology, and ethnographic and observational research methods</td>
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<td><strong>Dr. Robert Pasnak</strong>&lt;br&gt;<a href="mailto:rpasnak@gmu.edu">rpasnak@gmu.edu</a></td>
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<td><em>Dr. Pasnak’s Lab</em></td>
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<tr>
<td>Perceptual learning and cognitive development in children, age-appropriateness of cognitive constructs, populations at risk for cognitive delay, and socio-emotional concomitants of increased cognitive competence</td>
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<td><strong>Dr. Koraly Pérez-Edgar</strong>&lt;br&gt;<a href="mailto:kperezed@gmu.edu">kperezed@gmu.edu</a></td>
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<tr>
<td><em>Dr. Pérez-Edgar’s Lab:</em></td>
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<tr>
<td>Impact of emotion and attention on the way individuals interact with the social world, temperament, behavior, cognitive functioning, psychophysiology, and neuroimaging</td>
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<td><strong>Dr. Johannes Rojahn</strong>&lt;br&gt;<a href="mailto:jrojahn@gmu.edu">jrojahn@gmu.edu</a></td>
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<td><em>Dr. Rojahn’s Lab</em></td>
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<tr>
<td>Intellectual and developmental disabilities, challenging behaviors, psychopathology, applied behavior analysis (ABA), socio-emotional competence, and interpersonal functioning</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Dr. Adam Winsler</strong>&lt;br&gt;<a href="mailto:awinsler@gmu.edu">awinsler@gmu.edu</a></td>
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<td><em>Dr. Winsler’s Lab</em></td>
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<td>Children’s transition to school, the development of self-regulation, children’s private speech, Vygotskian sociocultural theory, bilingualism, parent-child interactions, and prevention of behavior disorders</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Timothy Curby</strong></td>
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<td><a href="mailto:tcurby@virginia.edu">tcurby@virginia.edu</a></td>
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<tr>
<td>Teacher-child interactions in the early years of school</td>
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Please check back in the fall for more detailed information about Dr. Curby’s lab.
Obama stresses that the original intentions of the Act were noble, but the fallout from it has caused classrooms to shift away from a focus on teaching science and math, subject areas he believes to be critical to later success in any professional field. Obama proposes to reform the NCLB Act by focusing on early childhood education and encouraging parents to take more active roles in the education of their children. He also stresses the importance of supporting “failing” schools by providing them with additional help and resources, as opposed to punishing them for not meeting NCLB standards. Obama argues that, “Labeling a school and its students as failures one day and then throwing your hands up and walking away from them the next is wrong.”

Looking to the opposite side of the campaign trail, John McCain has provided little on his stand on educational issues, including NCLB, though this may change once he actually achieves the Republican nomination for president. McCain values choice and competition in the education system. He believes that the NCLB Act provided a good beginning by holding schools accountable for the failure of students. McCain wants to reform the Act by giving parents the power to choose the school their child attends. This is evidenced by a quote from his webpage, where McCain states, “If a school will not change, the student should be able to change schools.”

Clinton also agrees with the original intentions of NCLB and supported its passage into law in 2001. Like Obama, she now views the Act as one full of empty promises that does nothing more than curb a student’s ability to be creative in the learning process. In a speech at an annual teacher’s convention, Clinton stated, “It’s time we had a president who cares more about learning than about memorizing…The tests have become the curriculum instead of the other way around.” Though she has not proposed a specific plan for reform of the Act, Clinton recommends less reliance on standardized testing, smaller class sizes, more parent involvement, and higher pay for teachers.

Early Childhood Education

Both Obama and Clinton support the establishment of voluntary universal pre-kindergarten programs in every state in the U.S. They also express a strong desire to increase the number of children eligible for Early Head Start, as well as increasing funding for Head Start.

McCain also expresses a desire to ensure that children are better prepared for entry into formal schooling by reforming Head Start, though he does not go into detail about what this reform would entail.

While Obama and Clinton view education reform as a top issue on the national agenda, McCain is at present more vague, highlighting other issues such as national security and decreasing government spending. On the other hand, in a country reeling from national debt weighing it down into what could likely become another recession, some might question whether or not to spend the billions of additional U.S. federal dollars that would be required to bring Obama and Clinton’s dreams for educational reform to fruition.
**Healthcare**

Approximately 47 million Americans are living without healthcare, 9 million of whom are children. And these numbers are increasing every day. All three candidates have spoken about the importance of lowering healthcare costs, including costs for prescription drugs, by increasing the competition amongst health insurance providers.

McCain also stresses the importance of teaching children the value in a healthy lifestyle to help curb the rising incidence of childhood obesity and diabetes.

**Closing Remarks**

All of these issues are important to consider as we watch the presidential hopefuls make their way around the United States during the primary race, which will culminate in late June in Nebraska. The Democratic candidate needs 2,025 delegates to win the nomination. As of February 25, Obama’s count is 1,327 and Clinton’s is 1,255. The Republican candidate needs 1,191 delegates to earn the nomination and McCain is currently at 971.

Obama’s plan stresses coverage for all, with mandatory coverage for children. This includes the option of children remaining on their parents’ health insurance plan until 25 years of age. He wants healthcare to be affordable by all citizens and he does not want people to be discriminated against based on a pre-existing illness or disability.

Clinton’s “American Health Choices” plan is all about making healthcare affordable, available, and reliable. She proposes assistance to working families so that they can afford coverage. She also believes in more choices being available to those interested in having affordable healthcare. In addition, Clinton does not want a healthcare plan to be tied to a specific job, so that if an individual leaves his/her current place of employment, he/she would not automatically lose health coverage.

McCain focuses on the importance of preserving Medicare and Medicaid. He also wants families to be more in control in the type of healthcare coverage they receive. He wants those with chronic illnesses to be provided higher quality care. He, too, would like to see all citizens covered. In addition, he proposes providing individuals and families with tax credits (up to $5,000) in order to encourage them to seek an insurance plan.

After the votes are tallied at the National Conventions (late August for the Democrats and early September for the Republicans), the final decision will come on November 4th, when voters will choose the leader of our nation for the next four years. This individual, whether Democrat or Republican, is destined to become not only influential in the world, but one who has the power to either open or close doors to our quickly approaching careers as developmental psychologists. As future researchers, psychologists, educators, and/or parents, it is our responsibility to carefully consider the impact each candidate might have on the nation’s children – a responsibility that ultimately comes down to the decision we make on one day with one vote.
## Conference Update

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<th>Conference</th>
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<th>Location</th>
<th>Deadline for Submission</th>
<th>Website</th>
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Join other ADP students on April 26, 2008 and participate in the **Hands On DC Work-a-Thon** taking place at DC inner-city schools in need of restoration

Volunteers will work on landscaping, painting, etc.  
Go to [www.handsondc.org](http://www.handsondc.org) to find out more. 
Contact Alyssa Perna at [aperna@gmu.edu](mailto:aperna@gmu.edu) to become part of the ADPSG team.

Let’s make this event a great success!
Spring Colloquia Series Underway!

Take a look at the exciting talks being given by scholars from all around the country! All are welcome to attend these events, which take place every Wednesday 11:30-12:30 in Robinson A249

Mar 5
Dr. Sara Rimm-Kaufman - Curry School of Education, UVA
Current Research on the Responsive Classroom Approach: Examining the Evidentiary Basis of a Social and Emotional Learning Intervention

March 19
Dr. Andrea Chronis-Tuscano - Department of Clinical Psychology, UMD
Impact of Parental Psychopathology on Developmental and Treatment Outcomes for Children with ADHD

March 26
Dr. Mary Ann McCabe - Director, Office for Policy and Communications, SRCD

April 2
Dr. Debra Rog, Westat
TBA

April 9
Dr. Marty Zaslow - Vice President, ChildTrends
Early childhood professional development: Emerging evidence on strategies for the transfer of knowledge into practice

April 16
Dr. Charlotte Patterson, UVA
Sexual Orientation and Family Lives: Psychological Perspectives

April 23
Dr. Charissa Cheah, UMBC
The parenting and social development of Chinese immigrant preschool children

April 30
Donna Christian - President, Center for Applied Linguistics
Connecting Research and Practice at the Center for Applied Linguistics

Save the Date!

for the ADP Program’s annual year end party!

When: May 3rd

Time: 7:00 pm

Where: Dr. Perez-Edgar's House

Additional information will be distributed at a later date

CONGRATULATIONS!

Dr. Johannes Rojahn assumes Editor-in-Chief of new Journal of Mental Health Research in Intellectual Disabilities

Official Publication of the National Association of the Dually Diagnosed
http://www.thenadd.org/
Frequently Asked Questions

How can I obtain additional funding?

Funding can be obtained through research assistantships and/or teaching assistant positions. For more information on research assistant positions contact your advisor, and for information on teaching positions contact Dr. Hurley in the Psychology Undergraduate office at mhhurley2@gmu.edu.

Are there any free workshops available for students?

Yes. The Writing Center, Learning Services, Mathematc Tutoring Center, Student Technology Assistance & Resource Center offer various workshops throughout the year in order to make your graduate school experience easier. For more information please visit: http://www.gmu.edu/mlstudents/ and http://media.gmu.edu

Where can I obtain information about domicile classification?

To qualify for in-state tuition, you must have “in-state” status, which you establish after living in the state of Virginia for at least one year and have all the proper documentations. For more information visit: http://registrar.gmu.edu/students/domicile/

Are international students eligible for establishing domicile in VA?

The fact that an individual is a citizen of another country does not automatically disqualify that person from establishing domicile in Virginia. However, it depends on your immigration status. If you are not a U.S. Citizen you will need to present your immigration documentation to the institution. For more information please visit: http://www.schev.edu/Students/VAdomicileInfo.asp?from=adminfaculty

Where can I park on campus?

Lot F and Rappahannock River Ln (road between Lots F and G) will remain closed due to the construction of Parking Deck III, which is scheduled to open in May of 2009. In the mean time, the places students will most likely find a parking spot are Lot K or Lot A. Lot L is also a less well-known area that is worth scouting. If no spots are to be had in any of these locations, the parking lot next to the Field House (Lot M) always has available places. For more information please visit: http://www.gmu.edu/uniserv/parking/index.html

Where can I workout for FREE on campus?

The Aquatic and Fitness Center and the Field House are both FREE for full-time students. Just show them your Mason I.D., and you’re in! For more information please visit: http://www.gmu.edu/service/aquatics/index.html

How can I get more involved?

As an ADP student you are automatically a member of the Applied Developmental Psychology Student Group (ADPSG) and can become a member of the Developmental, Biopsychology, and School Psychology Organization (DBSPO). Additionally these groups offer funding for conferences, host social gatherings, and can provide valuable information about practica sites. For more information please visit: http://adp.gmu.edu/adpsg and http://adp.gmu.edu dbspo/index.cfm
Recent Lab Publications and Presentations

**Dr. Susanne Denham**

**Publications**


**Presentations and Posters**


**Dr. Robert Pasnak**

**Publications**


**Presentations and Posters**


Romero, S., Perez, K., Pasnak, R., & Lehman, E. *Selection of friends by preschool children.* Paper to be presented at the 20th Biennial Conference on Human Development, Indianapolis, IN.


**DR. KORALY PÉREZ-EDGAR**

**Publications**


**Presentations and Posters**


**DR. JOHANNES ROJAHN**

**Publications**


**DR. ADAM WINSLER**

**Publications**


**Book Chapters Under Contract**


**Presentations and Posters**


Hutchison, L., Crane, J., Winsler, A., Mendoza, D., & Bader-Tables, R. (2008, April). *How are typically developing preschool children in reverse mainstream classrooms doing on pre-academic, social skills, and behavior problems compared to typical children in regular pre-kindergarten programs?* Poster to be presented at the 20th Biennial Conference on Human Development, Indianapolis, IN.


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**SMILE, ADP!**

ADP Volunteers at the “Walk Now for Autism” Event in D.C.

Todd Wyatt, Sue Hartman, and Jessica Johnson painting a recycling bin for a GMU Environmental Association event.

George Mason University
4400 University Drive,
MSN 3F5
Fairfax, VA 22030

We’re also on the web:
Adp.gmu.edu
Adp.gmu.edu/adpsg

For questions, comments, or contributions to further editions of the ADP Newsletter, please contact Jessica Johnson at jjohnsm@gmu.edu

Jessica Johnson and Lindsey Hutchison presenting a poster at the “On New Shores: Understanding Immigrant Children” conference in Guelph, Canada
Notes