

For Immediate Release

WORLD-CLASS SCHOLARS TO USE EVOLUTIONARY THEORY IN SEARCH FOR SOLUTIONS TO HIGH-RISK ADOLESCENT BEHAVIOR

TUCSON, Ariz. – Sept. 17, 2009 – The Evolution Institute and the University of Arizona's Frances McClelland Institute for Children, Youth, and Families are co-hosting an invitation-only workshop at the university, Oct. 30 - Nov. 2, for world-renowned scholars who will apply evolutionary theory to the development of practical solutions for high-risk adolescent behaviors plaguing Western societies.

The workshop, "Adolescent Risk Behaviors: The Need for an Evolutionary Analysis," will address why adolescents are susceptible to drug abuse, gang membership, competition for status and respect, teen pregnancy and other risky activities that take their toll on teens, families and communities, according to Bruce J. Ellis, Ph.D., Norton Endowed Chair of Fathers, Parenting, and Families at the McClelland Institute. Participants will share their findings with southern Arizona community, health and business leaders in a public roundtable discussion at the conclusion of the workshop. That forum will take place from 10 a.m. to 11 a.m., Nov. 2, at the Tucson Marriott University Park, 880 E. Second St.

"Society's usual response to such behaviors is to assume that they're the outcome of harsh social environments children have encountered during their formative years," said Ellis, who is the event organizer. "But that's not always the case. By applying our knowledge of evolutionary theory we can present alternative perspectives and shape solutions that can begin to prevent or reduce such harmful behaviors."

The Frances McClelland Institute is a catalyst for research that addresses the most critical social, emotional and physical issues facing families today. It focuses on collaborative, multidisciplinary research and community outreach in three areas: Fathers, Parenting, and Families; Adolescent Health and Development; and Health, Emotion and Relationships.

"Our mission dovetails nicely with the Evolution Institute's goal of solving real-world problems with knowledge gained through a study of evolutionary science," said Stephen T. Russell, Ph.D., director of the Frances McClelland Institute. "We're confident that participant recommendations will help reduce the pervasiveness of these self-destructive and costly problems facing our communities."

Workshop participants include: Dr. Jay Belsky, Birkbeck College, London; He is an internationally recognized expert in the field of child development and family studies. His areas of special expertise include the effects of day care, parent-child relations during the infancy and early childhood years, the transition to parenthood, the etiology of child maltreatment, and the evolutionary basis of parent and child functioning. He is a founding and collaborating investigator on the NICHD Study of Child Care and Youth Development (US) and the National Evaluation of Sure Start (UK). [\(Hide\)](#) Dr. Anthony Biglan, Oregon Research Institute, Eugene; Dr. Ronald Dahl, University of Pittsburgh; He is a pediatrician with considerable research interests in the areas of sleep/arousal and affect regulation and its relevance to development of behavioral and emotional disorders in children and adolescents. His work focuses on early adolescence and pubertal maturation as a developmental period with unique opportunities for early intervention in relation to a wide range of behavioral and emotional health problems. He has published extensively on adolescent development, sleep disorders, and behavioral/emotional health in children.

[\(Hide\)](#)Dr. Jacquelynne Eccles, University of Michigan; Over the last 30 years, she has conducted research on a wide variety of topics including gender-role socialization, teacher expectancies, classroom influences on student motivation and social development in the family and school context. Her research interests include: family and school influences on development; development in high risk settings; development of self-esteem, activity preferences, and task choice; adolescent development; identity formation; transition into adulthood; biosocial influences and development; gender role development; and role of ethnicity in development and socialization. She is editor of the *Journal of Research in Adolescence*. [\(Hide\)](#)Dr. Bruce Ellis, University of Arizona; Dr. Dennis Embry, PAXIS Institute, Tucson; Dr. A.J. Figueredo, University of Arizona; Dr. Mark Flinn, He serves as Director of the graduate program in Ethology and Evolutionary Psychology (EEP), and is affiliated with the graduate programs in Program Evaluation and Research Methodology (PERM) and Psychology, Policy, and Law (PPL). Professor Figueredo's major area of research interest is the evolutionary psychology and behavioral development of life history strategy, sex, and violence in human and nonhuman animals. He also studies the quantitative ethology and social development of insects, birds, and primates. [\(Hide\)](#)University of Missouri, Colombia; His research interests are in evolutionary human biology, behavior, and culture. Dr. Flinn's current research efforts involve an ongoing 20-year study of childhood stress, family relationships, and health in a rural Caribbean community by longitudinal monitoring of hormone and immune function from saliva and urine samples, ethnographic observation of child activities and social environment, and medical histories, growth measures, and parasite exams. The purpose is to identify specific psychosocial causes and consequences of childhood stress. The project is the first to longitudinally investigate stress in a naturalistic setting using hormonal assays and quantitative behavioral observation techniques in addition to standard human biological, ethnographic, medical, and psychological methods. [\(Hide\)](#)Dr. Patricia Hawley, University of Kansas; Dr. Anthony Volk, Brock University, Ontario, Canada; Dr. Carol Worthman, Emory University, Atlanta.

To learn more about the participants and the event, please visit: <http://theEvolutionInstitute.org/>.

To participate in the post-event Community Roundtable Discussion in Tucson, please contact Ms. Carmin Chan, McClelland Institute (<http://McClellandInstitute.arizona.edu/>) (520) 621-8067, cmchan@email.arizona.edu.

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