

FAMILY FORUM

Family Forum is the newsletter of the Minnesota Council on Family Relations, a State Affiliate of the National Council on Family Relations Summer 2007

SAVE THE DATE!

MINNESOTA COUNCIL ON FAMILY RELATIONS 2007 ANNUAL FALL CONFERENCE

Children's Right to a Healthy Social Environment: How to Protect Them from Social Toxicity

KEYNOTE BY **JAMES GARBARINO, PHD**
DIRECTOR OF THE CENTER FOR THE HUMAN RIGHTS OF CHILDREN,
Loyola University, Chicago, IL



Friday, November 30, 2007

Continuing Education and Conference Center
(Formerly Earle Brown Center) U of M St. Paul Campus, 1890 Buford Avenue, St. Paul, MN

FOCUS OF KEYNOTE AND CONFERENCE:

Most people say that children have the right to live in a healthy social environment. Dr. James Garbarino would argue that in American culture children's rights are threatened by social toxicity. His new research reveals how the environment contains serious threats to a child's development.

- What is social toxicity and where does it come from?
- How can it affect children?
- What can family professionals do to make a difference?

Starting from a "human rights of children" perspective, Dr. Garbarino sheds new light on many issues and provides a starting point for stimulating discussion of American policies and programs. The conference goal is that attendees increase understanding of the issues and commit to action that protects children from social toxicity.

Keynote Presenter - James Garbarino, PhD

Dr. James Garbarino is the Maude C. Clarke Chair in Humanistic Psychology and Director of the Center for the Human Rights of Children at Loyola University in Chicago, Illinois. He is a best-selling author, nationally regarded speaker and expert.

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President's Letter

Minnell Tralle
MCFR 2007 President

Hello MCFR Members;

At my very first MCFR Board Retreat a number of years ago, I was asked to share something about myself that no one in the

Planting seeds ...

room would know. It was January and I shared that I had planted my geranium seeds that week. Many were amazed that I had already begun planting seeds when the ground was still white and frozen. If I hoped for blossoms in June, I needed to get the process going. This is not unlike working on projects or on committees where "seeds" need to be planted and the reward is much further down the line. Had someone not planted the idea that I could serve on the MCFR Board those many years ago, I would not have considered the thought that I could serve as President. Let me plant the idea in your head that you might also consider serving on the Board or as an officer. We have begun suggesting names to the nominating committee, but if this is something that interests you, don't wait - send me an email and we'll get you involved.

Another seed that was planted well over a year ago was the idea of the "Spirituality and Families" conference held in April. That conference was exceptional. Thanks to great leadership, co-sponsorship with the Search Institute and excellent keynote and workshop presenters, this conference provided a great opportunity to dialogue and to better understand ourselves and others.

The Fall conference is in the planning and you'll be pleased to know that James Garbarino has agreed to keynote the

conference to be held on November 30, 2007. Save the date and note that it is the LAST Friday in November instead of the FIRST Friday in December. Another seed just sprouting is the theme for the Spring 2008 conference related to the work of Richard Louv in his book, "The Last Child in the Woods" and Nature Deficit Disorder that we are beginning to hear more about. If you would like to help shape either of these conferences, we welcome planning committee members and ideas.

... sowing promise.

Related to these conferences is the development of a Student Scholarship Fund that can be used to support students who wish to attend MCFR conferences but financially are unable to do so. I would like to encourage all of you to make a donation to this fund. Our second silent auction at the Fall conference will be dedicated to this fund. But don't wait, students will want to be able to attend that conference as well.

At our Board meeting in May we visited with Diane Cushman, Executive Director of the National Council on Family Relations. We began a dialogue with Diane about the issues NCFR faces and the relationship to the affiliates. Diane also assures us that the 2007 Conference in Pittsburgh will be a great one.

I hope you enjoy this issue of the Forum and perhaps it will plant an idea or two.

Minnell Tralle
Trall001@umn.edu

STUDENT SECTION IN ACTION

Kristin Schneider, Student Section Chair

The student section hosted its first big event on April 25. There was good food and even better conversation as family professionals and students gathered to discuss their interests, goals, and experiences. While not everyone could attend, there were also many people who got in touch with either Heather Dubbeldee or Kristin, the student section co-chairs, to express their interest in the group. We are excited to work with those interested to continue to build the section and create new goals as we grow.

In the meantime, our blog is now up and running. You can access it at <http://blog.lib.umn.edu/cline048/mcfr/> and please come and introduce yourself in the virtual world. We are hoping to use the blog to network, discuss ideas, and learn more about each other. We will add new topics monthly, so check in often.

We are also in the midst of creating a listserv for student section members. If you are interested in being part of this listserv, please contact Heather at cline048@umn.edu.

Student Section:

✓ *April 25 Student Event a success*

✓ *Blog is up and running*

✓ *Creating a student section listserv*

✓ *Planning our next event*

The listserv will be another forum for members to exchange thoughts, news, events, and job openings. This listserv will function similarly to the MCFR listserv, but will be geared specifically toward the student section members.

Finally, we are already busy planning our next event. We have

set a date for September 20 from 6-8 PM. The location will be announced closer to the date, but mark your calendars! We are really excited to meet anyone interested in the work and world of students, so please come and let us match a face to a name.

If you have any questions about the student section or would like more information, you can contact me (Kristin) at kschneid@umn.edu.

[WWW.MCFR.NET](http://www.mcfr.net)

DVD NOW AVAILABLE FOR PURCHASE BY MCFR MEMBERS



David Walsh, PhD - Promise and Peril: Parenting in the Media Age

Through an arrangement with MCFR, the recording of Dr. Walsh's keynote presentation from the December 1, 2006 MCFR Annual Conference, "The Impact of Media and Technology on Parenting: What's our Role as Educators and Family Professionals?" is available to MCFR members to purchase copied on a DVD. Dr. Walsh, Founder and President of the National Institute

on Media and the Family, and MediaWise®, offered NEW information and tools to help family professionals use media and technology wisely in their work with families. This 90-minute DVD is an excellent resource for your library.

Available to MCFR Individual, Organizational and Student members for \$25.

Available to MCFR Affiliate members [NCFR members living in MN] for \$35.

Go to www.mcfr.net to print the order form. Order yours today!

SARA LASSIG AWARDED SCHOLARSHIP

Sue Meyers

Sara Lassig, former MCFR Board Member and Student Representative, was awarded the Minnesota Gerontological Society Gerald Bloedow Scholarship for her graduate study at the University of Minnesota. This prestigious scholarship honors both undergraduates and graduates and is quite competitive. Congratulations, Sara!

MCFR MEMBERSHIP COMMITTEE

Tammy Dunrud
Committee Chair

Welcome to new committee members Pat Gulden, Betty Soine and Betty Cooke. With fresh faces to help, we had a great start by setting membership goals and creating short and long-term strategies for the organization. Our main goal as a committee is to enhance the benefits to current and future members of MCFR by making a stronger selling package. Some of the strategies we are suggesting to do this include developing an updated, professional brochure that clearly states the benefits of MCFR, posting good websites, research information and curriculum resources on the listserv, creating a stronger communication with current members and doing more outreach to potential members.

You are most welcome to join in the important work of the membership committee or sharing your thoughts and ideas of how we can better serve you. Please feel free to contact anyone of us.

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THE BENEFITS OF FATHER INVOLVEMENT

Michael Jerpak, Ph.D., CFLE
Associate Professor of Youth and Family Studies
Crossroads College
Rochester, MN

Traditionally, mothers have been held primarily responsible for the nurturing of the family and child development in the United States. Given this reality, most Americans are very comfortable with the role of mothers as they involve themselves with their children. For some, mothering and parenting are synonymous terms.

It is no secret that the American family has changed dramatically in the last few decades. More mothers than ever are involved in the workplace and economic pressures continue to press families to be more flexible in the way they define work and family roles for fathers and mothers. It has become increasingly common for fathers to be the primary caregivers for their children. A recent study found that over 2 million children in the United States are raised by their father as primary caregiver. Fathers now provide three-quarters of the care mothers do. This is up from one-half thirty years ago.

What does this mean? Should we be scared? Aren't fathers more brash and less sensitive? What will happen to our children as fewer and fewer of them receive primary care from their mothers? These are concerns many of us may have (even if we don't talk about them). Change is scary and since most research on families has been done with mothers and children, many of us don't know the benefits of father involvement. Below are some highlights from recent research conducted on the benefits of father involvement. Be careful, you may be surprised by what you read! Some of this goes against some of the traditional beliefs many of us hold as we may be used to preferring mothers as primary caregivers.

- Parenting is a learned behavior for both men and women. Both genders are equally capable of learning how to be effective parents.
- There is no difference between maternal and paternal levels of sensitivity in child attachment.
- Mothers and adolescents express having more conflict and feeling more negative emotion toward each other than do fathers and adolescents.
- Father involvement is associated with higher IQs and higher grades in school.
- Because fathers use more imperatives, attention-getting utterances, and stated sentences than mothers do, they contribute in unique, though poorly understood, ways to linguistic development.

- Infants who are more securely attached to their fathers are more sociable to strangers.
- Father-child attachment has a greater effect on behavior problems than mother-child attachment
- Fathers consistently more involved with infants are more highly engaged with their partners. Good father/mother relationship quality is associated with more sensitive mother and father behavior and higher levels of functioning for children
- Fathers—more than mothers—generate experiences for the young that serve to “toughen” and prepare the child for the nature of the expanding world they enter.
- Children with highly involved fathers are characterized by increased cognitive competence, increased empathy, less sex-stereotyped beliefs, and more internal locus of control.
- Father's emotional and instrumental involvement in the family results in more sensitive maternal behavior and better child outcomes.
- Involved fathers perceive that active engagement in parenting anchored their mental, physical, and relational life.

GERONTOLOGICAL CONFERENCE FOCUSES ON FAMILY

Sue Meyers

Lola Amendt, MCFR member (and former Extension Educator), will co-chair the Minnesota Gerontological Annual Conference in 2008. The tentative theme is: “It's all in the Genes: Aging and the Family.”

Families of all sorts are expected to navigate through the difficulties that arise in later life. Whether it be cultural barriers, dementia, disability, generational differences, abuse, financial constraints, or mental illness, the course a family takes may be as diverse as families are today.

If you are interested in joining Lola (and Sue Meyers, among others), please contact Lola Amendt at lamendt@preshomes.org or at her new location in Prior Lake, 952-594-4838. She is seeking a variety of experiences and backgrounds – and MCFR members could add much to the conference.

THE 10 BASIC PRINCIPLES OF GOOD PARENTING

By Laurence Steinberg. (2004) New York: Simon and Schuster

Reviewed by Marty Rossmann, Coordinator, Parent Warmline, Children's Hospitals and Clinics of Minnesota

Readers should know I am partial to Steinberg's book. I've always thought reviews should be impartial. But this is my all-time favorite parent advice book, and I've read and used at least 300 of them. I'll give all my reasons for thinking this book should be read by every parent, and then, because Steinberg's book does have a couple of minor faults, I'll be fair and discuss those.

Why is this a good book? Just the fact that it was written in 2004 and will never go out-of-date is one reason. The findings from over 75 years of research about parent-child relationships are remarkably consistent and have remained so over time. The link between the research outcomes and healthy child development is so clear and so consistent that what works and what doesn't can be stated as basic truths to guide parents.

This book is based on the science of good parenting—on thousands of well-designed, accurate research studies that cut across different issues and different age periods. In short, it's based on the most scientific information available to parents. Most others are based on personal opinion, on experiences in raising a small number of children, or observations an author made over the course of working with a few dozen families.

Does this mean Steinberg's book is hard-to-read and too scholarly? Not at all! The book is an easy read with practical advice and examples that are useful for every-day parenting. The understanding of the basic principles will help parents to address nuts and bolts concerns, such as helping a child to develop good sleep habits, learn to use the toilet, or get home at a certain time.

Steinberg says that much parenting is necessarily something that's done by rote—without much thought. For example, parents scurry around in the morning trying to find their child's lost shoe before sending them off to school. At the same time, the parent's heads are full of thoughts of what they need to do as soon as they get to work. He points out that there is no time to stop and think about what the best approach might be. Parents just react. But the truth is, some parents have better instincts than others. With better understanding of what works, and why, and with enough practice, Steinberg believes parents natural abilities will get better. Steinberg suggests there are plenty of times when parents can take time to think, such as when a third-grade son is upset because his friends are making fun of him or when tucking a young daughter in bed for the night.

According to this book, the fundamentals of good parenting are the same regardless of the child's gender, the child's age, the child's birth order or number of siblings, whether the parent is a biological or adoptive mother or father, single parent, married, or gay or lesbian. The principles apply wherever parents live in the world and whatever their cultural background or socio-economic status. The basics are the same, even for parents with children who have special needs and for partners who have different parenting styles.

Steinberg does not claim, as other authors are prone to do, that if parents follow the principles elaborated in this book that the child will never have any problems, or conversely, if his advice isn't followed, that the child-rearing battle will be lost

before the child reaches the age of three! He acknowledges that many forces other than their parents influence children—including their genetic makeup, their siblings, their friends, their school, the adults they encounter outside the family and the mass media. But he says he can guarantee that children raised according to the 10 principles are far more likely to develop in healthy ways and far less likely to develop difficulties than children who are raised in a different fashion. Steinberg says this is not an opinion. This is a fact, and there is a lot of strong evidence to back it up.

The principles may appear to be little more than common sense. They certainly do make sense, but, according to Steinberg, their use is anything but common. Many parents violate them all the time. For example, use of harsh punishment is discouraged, but plenty of parents slap and yell at their children at the bus stop or grocery store. Another principle advocates setting limits on children's behavior, but a familiar scene is parents who let their children run wild. Parents are encouraged to treat their children with respect, but parents frequently speak to their children in ways that are nasty or dismissive.

Steinberg's Ten Basic Principles of Good Parenting

1. What You Do Matters
2. You Cannot Be Too Loving
3. Be Involved in Your Child's Life
4. Adapt Your Parenting to Fit Your Child
5. Establish Rules and Set Limits
6. Help Foster Your Child's Independence
7. Be Consistent
8. Avoid Harsh Discipline
9. Explain Your Rules and Decisions
10. Treat Your Child with Respect

I have two suggestions and two questions. I'd move number 10—Treat Your Child with Respect—to be number one. Respect trumps all others and may be the most missing ingredient in parent-child relationships. Respect needs to be in the Number One "respected" place in the list. I'd probably move the order of a few other principles, too. Second, I wish the references used were in the back of the book. Steinberg says parents won't read a book with citations, and he is probably correct, but the list should be provided. Do these principles apply to all cultures

one that's traditionally dominated by fathers, or one that's traditionally dominated by mothers, or one that's constantly harassed by gangs or by police? I believe the answer is yes, but others may not be convinced. Finally, is anything left out? Some might say communication is missing, but it's where it should be, embedded in every principle. Some might say teaching values has been forgotten, but that, too, is a part of everything else.

In conclusion, every parent and every professional should buy, read and use this book. There's a poster of the principles available from Learning Zone Express. Put that on your wall, too. Get the word out—here they are—the principles that, when they are learned and practiced, lead to happy, healthy children and to becoming a happier parent, too!

MCFR MEMBERS INVOLVED IN DEVELOPMENT OF CFLE EXAM

Dawn Cassidy, M.Ed., CFLE
Certification Director, National Council on Family Relations

The National Council on Family Relations (NCFR) is currently in the process of developing an examination for the Certified Family Life Educator (CFLE) credential. The exam will replace a more complicated portfolio review process.

An examination process has been determined to be the most effective and cost-efficient method for awarding the CFLE credential and is the industry standard for credentialing worldwide. The development and administration of an exam will provide a valid, reliable, objective and legally defensible process for evaluating adherence to the criteria needed for the CFLE designation and bring greater credibility to the credential. NCFR has contracted with Schroeder Measurement Technologies (SMT) for the development of the CFLE exam.

The first step in the development of a certification exam is the job analysis (also referred to as a task or knowledge element analysis). A job analysis is a qualitative method of gathering information related to a specific profession. The Job Analysis Committee consisted of eleven NCFR members and CFLEs and included several Minnesotans and MCFR members (see insert). It was important that the committee members, or *Subject Matter Experts*, were thoroughly familiar with the job tasks of the profession and were representative of the demographics of practicing family life educators.

The Job Analysis process proved to be quite challenging! The *Competencies for Family Life Education*, developed by faculty at the Department of Child and Family Studies at Weber State University, provided the foundation for our work. The *Competencies*, published in the National Council on Family Relations' (NCFR) *Tools for Ethical Thinking and Practice in Family Life Education*, mirror the ten family life content areas used for the CFLE credential, and include information on the knowledge and understanding, skills and abilities needed for effective practice. The Ethical Guidelines portion of *Tools for Ethical Thinking and Practice* was developed by the Ethics Committee of the Minnesota Council on Family Relations.

The Job Analysis Committee modified the competencies for inclusion in an online survey which most of you should have received via email in May. Respondents were asked to rank how significant each element was in the practice of a family life educator. For example, the survey respondents were asked to apply the following rating scale:

- 0 = task is not performed by a FLE
- 1 = of no importance
- 2 = of little importance
- 3 = moderately important
- 4 = very important
- 5 = extremely important

Rated are statement like: "Identify developmental stages, transitions, tasks and challenges throughout the lifespan"

The responses to the survey will be analyzed by the CFLE Job Analysis Committee at a second face-to-face meeting in Florida in late June. The results of the survey will help NCFR to determine the content of the CFLE exam. By using a job analysis process we ensure that the content of the CFLE exam will reflect a realistic representation of the skills and abilities needed for effective family life education practice.

In July an Item Writing Committee will meet for a five-day workshop to develop the actual test questions. If all goes as planned, we'll offer the first CFLE exam at the NCFR Annual Conference in Pittsburgh, PA this November.

The Fall 2007 CFLE review will be the last chance to apply for the CFLE credential through the portfolio process. September 4 is the submission deadline, but it is not necessary to wait until the deadline to submit the application. In fact, I am encouraging everyone to submit their application as soon as possible. As the CFLE Certification Director, I do a preliminary review of each application to ensure it is as complete as possible before it is sent off to the Certification Review Committee. The sooner I receive an application, the more time I will have to review it, and the more time the applicant will have to provide additional information, if needed.

There will be some growing pains as

we transition from our current portfolio process to an exam but it will be well worth it! The development and administration of an exam will provide a valid, reliable, objective, and legally defensible process for evaluating adherence to the criteria needed for the CFLE exam and will bring greater credibility to the credential.

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REFLECTIONS ON NCFR HISTORY, RESEARCH AND FAMILY

Sue Meyers

One of my favorite memories from NCFR was a Burgess Award Address by Paul Glick, who later became NCFR President. Glick was Demographer for the U.S. Census Bureau and added a fine family perspective to issues of the day. Demographers have a “dry” presentation to many people, but I found this address to be fascinating. Glick looked at a particular cohort of women born 1910-1920 who were significantly different from previous decades and successive decades. I was intrigued because my mother was born during that decade. Since the research, I have found a number of women in

professional life or in personal action that illustrated the sense of self-direction that was unusual at the time. I have admired these women and have found them to be fine leaders and less judgmental on the actions of others. Their relationships (with partner, spouse or children) were respectful and egalitarian. Cohorts illustrate a group of people who came of age during the same critical times in society. They [this cohort] experienced the end of WWI as well as the Great Depression. They were children or young adults at the onset of the depression and were influenced in different ways from

their slightly older family members or friends. They were more likely to be employed.

It was interesting to me to find snippets from research that surprise me and add to my knowledge base. I still find that NCFR provides those surprises at time. I try to seek out papers that push the edges of what I believe to be true and see if my knowledge needs updating. I don't believe that good research ever goes out of style.

A NOTE FROM THE EDITOR

“Ah! What is so rare as a day in June.” Hope you enjoy this issue of the newsletter, while summer breezes gently blow. My thanks to all of the contributors. Again, I encourage each of you to consider contributing to *Family Forum*—by preparing a book review or a research article/brief or by submitting an item for “Members’ Corner” (our version of Letters to the Editor). Thank you.

Ron Pitzer

Family Forum managing editor
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MCFR STUDENT SCHOLARSHIP FUND

MCFR has established a student scholarship fund and is seeking donations. The fund will allow us to offer scholarships to our conference on November 30 and thereafter. Please watch for an announcement on the listserv and help us build this important resource! for more information, call the office at (651) 407-0950. The donation form is available at www.mcfr.net. Thank you!



NOMINATIONS SOUGHT

Marcie Brooke

Nominating Committee Chair

This is an important ALL-CALL to Minnesota Council on Family Relations members!

The Nominating Committee of MCFR is looking for interested individuals who would like to serve on a very dynamic and fun board for a two or more year term. Please send names of individuals you think could enhance and strengthen our professional organization to mbrooke@wfrf.us. You may submit your own name. We need you to add depth and new invigorating ideas to our growing organization.

A number of years ago, Betty Cooke asked me if I would be willing to run for a position on MCFR's board. I was honored and a bit skeptical. I said Yes! That yes, gave me a wealth of new opportunities, new friendships, new experiences, and great learning. I wish for all of our members to have such a rich experience from our state and national professional organization. Please consider yourself and think of your fellow colleagues who could benefit from this rewarding and enhancing opportunity. It would be wonderful to have names from all over the State on our ballot. Perhaps, you would like to be on a special committee first.....send in your name and interests and we will be in touch.
mbrooke@wfrf.us