

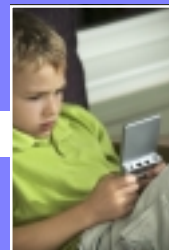
FAMILY FORUM

Family Forum is the newsletter of the Minnesota Council on Family Relations, a State Affiliate of the National Council on Family Relations Summer 2006

PLAN TO ATTEND THE MCFR FALL CONFERENCE

THE IMPACT OF MEDIA AND TECHNOLOGY ON PARENTING:

What's our Role as Educators and Family Practitioners?



Friday, December 1, 2006 - Continuing Education and Conference Center

Keynote presenter: **David Walsh, PhD**

Founder and President, National Institute on Media and the Family and MediaWise®

The December 1, 2006 MCFR Annual Fall Conference will offer important NEW information to help family professionals use media and technology wisely in their work with families. We are seeing rapid changes in technology and the media influences of reality TV; this conference will explore the pros and cons of each as well as the growing dependence on it in our daily life. We will discuss the new framework our digital world offers families as we learn to use technology's

promise and limit the growing divide its access creates for those without resources to acquire it.

Keynote presenter David Walsh, PhD, is founder and president of the National Institute on Media and the Family and MediaWise®. Psychologist, educator, family therapist, author, speaker, husband and father of three, David Walsh is one of the leading authorities in North America on family life, parenting, and the impact of media on children. He is also a leading

voice in addressing the issues of media's impact on brain development in children.

Mark your calendar and plan to attend this informative and practical conference on Friday, December 1, 2006 at the Continuing Education and Conference Center (Formerly Earle Brown Center) U of M St. Paul Campus, 1890 Buford Avenue, St. Paul, MN.

Watch for online registration at www.mcfr.net.

Watch for online registration and additional information at www.mcfr.net.

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President's Letter

Peg Lindlof
MCFR 2006 President



Peg Lindlof

Leading MCFR has been an awe some, inspiring and humbling experience since I became President last December! Everywhere I go in my professional work, I see MCFR members in influential leadership roles. I am proud to be associated with so many knowledgeable, articulate, and dedicated professionals. You may be one of them!

I think we can all be proud of the way MCFR is nurturing the leadership of students in family life professions. Two MSCFR (Minnesota Student Council on Family Relations) members, Sara Lassig and Kristin Schneider, also serve on the MCFR Board. Both volunteered to co-chair committees during the past two years, and have

stepped up to serve as chair or co-chair of the last two MCFR conferences. I believe this has been a win/ win for all of us. Their enthusiasm and knowledge of current research has been positive for MCFR, and at the same time, they have been mentored and supported by seasoned Board members with lots of professional expertise and conference planning experience.

MCFR's professional conferences continue to be outstanding. The most recent conference, Civility & Families: Pathways to Violence Prevention, was a mixture of solid research, cutting-edge practice, and thought-provoking conversation. If you missed it, there are two more excellent conferences in the works. The fall, 2006 conference will offer practical, cutting-edge professional development about technology and families. The conference theme for the spring of 2007 is still being developed, but the topic promises to be intriguing. Watch for more information in the next Family Forum.

There has been lots of excitement around the work of our committees this year.

The Membership Committee has worked hard to design and complete a survey of current members, is revamping the membership structure, and is defining the benefits of MCFR. As an

MCFR member, I'd like you to consider yourself an honorary member of this committee! Talk to your colleagues about the importance of belonging to a professional organization. Invite them to join MCFR, and help them to find information on the website.

I am proud to be associated with so many knowledgeable, articulate, and dedicated professionals.

- The Communications Committee is figuring out how to use technology to support the mission and work of MCFR as efficiently as possible within the limits of our financial resources and capacity. The website is continually being refined and we hope it will become an important link to current research and information about families, especially through our connection to NCFR. The MCFR member listserv is being used more and more as a networking tool. Two issues of the Family Forum newsletter are now distributed online each year, and the third is mailed with the annual ballot included.
The Policy Committee is always looking for ways to support MCFR members by helping them enhance advocacy efforts with strong research. The newest effort is a discussion with the leadership of MNAFEE about how to collaborate more closely with them and with other key organizations that work with families in Minnesota. If each organization focuses its energy on what it does best, all of us will benefit and the results will be powerful!
I mentioned in the last President's column that we have chosen to focus this year on increasing the diversity of

Continued on page 3

MEMBERSHIP COMMITTEE NEWS

NEW MEMBERSHIP DUES

Sara Lassig & Linda Rodgers, Co-Chairs

The membership committee has been busy at work these past couple of months, and have some upcoming changes that we would like to share with the membership.

Starting in September of 2006, MCFR will be adopting its new dues rates. These rates, along with the membership benefits are listed below.

Members will have the opportunity to renew their membership at the current MCFR dues rates before this time, and additional renewal reminders will be sent to all members in the upcoming months.

Beginning in September, the new membership rates will be as follow:

- Professional Membership Rate: \$45
- Full-Time Student and Retiree Membership Rate: \$25
- Organizational Membership: \$75

We have striven to keep our membership dues as low as possible, while also maintaining an organization of which we can all be proud.

PROFESSIONAL MEMBERSHIP

- Subscription to MCFR *Family Forum* (3 issues - two electronic, one paper)
- Reduced registration fees for MCFR annual spring and fall conferences
- Membership to the MCFR listserv
- Opportunities for interaction and involvement with other family professionals; resume-building opportunities through committee work

FULL-TIME STUDENTS & RETIREES

Same benefits as Professional Membership

ORGANIZATIONAL MEMBERSHIP

Same benefits as Professional Membership, plus:

- Subscription to MCFR *Family Forum* (3 issues - two electronic, one paper) sent to one person
- Reduced rates for MCFR annual spring and fall conferences for two members of the organization
- Membership to the MCFR listserv for two individuals in the organization
- Opportunities for interaction, mentoring, and collaboration with family professionals.

BENEFACTOR

Donations above the listed Professional dues - Includes Professional Membership benefits and:

- Recognition at annual conferences and in the *Forum* (unless requested to be anonymous)
- Tax deductions (for donations over and above Professional Membership fee)

COMMUNICATIONS COMMITTEE NEWS

Rose Allen

The MCFR Communications Committee would like to remind you there are a number of ways you can learn about the organization and share information with other MCFR members.

HAS THE LIST SERV BEEN HELPFUL?

E-mail is our best tool to get you timely and pertinent information. The MCFR list serve is a tool we can all use. If you would like to communicate with MCFR membership, you can send a message to the list serv at mcfcr@lists.umn.edu. This is a great way to let fellow members know about jobs or programs you are offering and to ask questions about resources. The list serve is an MCFR membership benefit.

HAVE YOU BEEN ON THE MCFR WEB SITE LATELY?

It's www.mcfcr.net

Our newest project is providing each MCFR member with an opportunity to link from our web site to your organization. Check out <http://www.mcfcr.net/links.html> to see how we link to member's web sites. If you would like to have a link to your web site, contact Rose Allen at allen027@umn.edu

DO YOU READ THE FAMILY FORUM?

We are offering this member newsletter three times a year. The winter and summer issues are in an electronic format and the fall Forum is printed and mailed – to accommodate the annual board election ballot. You are invited to contribute to the Family Forum – we are especially interested in book reviews, articles on special work you are doing, current research and other topics of interest to family professionals. For more information, contact Ron Pitzer at rpitzer@umn.edu.

MSCFR NEWS

By Kristin Schneider

The Minnesota Student Council on Family Relations is undergoing significant changes. We are currently considering expanding the organization to a state-wide student organization. We have spent the last couple of months investigating our options and polling students to discover what they want from MSCFR. We want to make MSCFR a dynamic organization that is driven by the momentum of excitement and passion around family issues and professions. One way we were able to illustrate this passion was by providing student sessions at the Spring conference. In these sessions, students showcased their research on topics relating to the conference themes of civility and violence prevention. This was a stimulating experience that allowed students to connect with professionals outside of academia. The feedback from these sessions was excellent. This is just an example of networking and exhibition opportunities that are available to students involved with MSCFR. If you are a student and are interested in becoming a part of MSCFR, please contact me at kschneid@umn.edu.

PRESIDENT'S LETTER *Continued from page 2*

MCFR membership. We are starting by trying to broaden diversity on the Board of Directors. The **Nominations Committee** is currently working hard to find candidates for our annual ballot who reflect all types of diversity.

Please let me know if you have suggestions or would like to serve on an MCFR committee. We'll be able to do so much more if we increase the number of people available to help. I learned early in my career that "many hands make light work," and it's lots more fun, too! I'd like to personally invite you to join us. Don't wait to be asked! Send a note to me at plindlof@comcast.net and I'll get you connected.

As you may have noticed, I'm bursting with pride about the work and the people of MCFR. It's an honor to serve as your President. I hope to hear from you!

MCFR SPRING CONFERENCE WAS A THOUGHT-PROVOKING EXPERIENCE

By Kristin Schneider

This year's spring conference, Families and Civility: Pathways to Violence Prevention, was a moving, thought-provoking experience. The day began with a brief introduction to the ideas of violence and civility by Donald Gault. His eloquent introduction set the tone for an in-depth, emotional, and enjoyable day.

Dr. Anthony Pellegrini from the department of Educational Psychology at the University of Minnesota presented the keynote address. His discussion on children and bullying and the role of power and dominance in bullying gave us wonderful insight into the dynamics of violence across the lifespan. His talk was so engaging that we had to cut off the discussion portion in order to stay on schedule.



Atum Azzahir (Powderhorn Phillips Cultural Wellness Center), Liliana Espondaburu (Casa de Esperanza) and Norma Renville (Women of Nations) shared their inspiring stories and philosophies during the Cultural Perspectives Panel

The conference participants were then able to select one of three concentrated workshops. These workshops went beyond a standard break-out session and offered focused information and applicable skills for participants to carry forward after the conference. These sessions included: Nonviolent communication presented by Margarita Mac and John Karvel, The Wakanheza Project – Tools for stressful situations presented by Donald Gault and his assistant, and Family Violence Prevention presented by Cari Michels. Each session received rave

reviews from attendees.

After a lunch filled with animated conversation, the entire group watched what I consider to be one of the highlights of the already excellent day – the cultural panel. Norma Renville from Women of Nations, Atum Azzahir from Powderhorn Phillips Cultural Wellness Center, and Liliana Espondaburu from Casa de Esperanza shared their views and their cultures' views on violence. They brought in personal stories and philosophies. They also spoke to one another and the bond they shared was undeniable. Their inspiring discussions on violence and violence prevention were emotional and intense. There were tears on the panel and in the audience. At the close of the panel, participants were then able to select a break-out session to attend.

The session with the highest attendance was a roundtable follow-up to the cultural panel. Many members of the audience were so touched by what they had heard prior that they chose to stay and discuss the issues presented further.

Another break-out option was a dialogue on the topic and ideas of the day – civility and violence. Madge Alberts facilitated this fascinating discussion that gave participants an opportunity to articulate the thoughts they had been pondering over the course of the conference.

The remaining break-out options were a new feature at MCFR conferences, student research sessions. In these sessions, graduate students from the University of Minnesota presented their research and ideas on civility and violence followed by questions and brainstorming with the audience. Cherie Collins presented her research and clinical work on the bi-directional relationship between families and community violence. Lisa Goldstein, Kristin Schneider, and Holli Trombley presented their individual work



Dr. Anthony Pellegrini and Kristin Schneider discuss his research.

that stemmed from a larger project on mothers and children after an acute incident of domestic violence. The interaction between the student presenters and the audience was intriguing. The students commented on how they plan to integrate the ideas developed in the sessions into their future work. It was a wonderful forum for students to present the work they have

devoted themselves to and receive feedback. It also allowed participants to see what students are doing and what new research is emerging.

Finally, the day closed with a wrap-up session by Donald Gault. In this session, Donald drew together all of the themes and thoughts that emerged throughout the day. He posed rhetorical questions for us to ask ourselves and he allowed us to end on a note of hope and inspiration.

Perhaps I am biased because families and violence are my passion, but I felt my soul was nourished by this conference. Even as I write this very streamlined reflection on the day a month later, I am still moved by what I experienced that day. Based on the smiling faces, the lively discussions, and the positive feedback, I don't think I am alone in these thoughts. Thank you to all of you who contributed to the day by your hard work and your attendance.



Nonviolent communication presenter John Karvel chats with a conference participant.

DEAR MCFR,

In the Winter 2006 issue of the **Family Forum**, Ted Bowman published his last "Reader's Corner" column after 17 years of writing reviews for MCFR members. He commented that he reviewed almost 150 books during that time and that he heard from very few MCFR members. I guess it's "better late, than never," so here's my note to Ted:

I'd like to "catch up" and just say thank you, Ted, 150 times! I'm sure I'm not alone when I say that your excellent book commentaries have helped me in my work and my personal life over these 17 years. Your name on an article or book review has always carried the highest level of credibility for me. I know that you write from an ethical and professional

perspective second to none! You commented that writing the column has been a joy. In my experience, reading each of your columns has been a joy, too!

Thanks so much,
Peg Lindlof

MCFR POLICY COMMITTEE UPDATE

Vicki Thrasher Cronin, co-chair, MCFR Policy Committee

As our policy committee continues the work of establishing MCFR as a research arsenal, the press release below reflects a national poll's finding that quality is parent's highest priority; a finding also reflected in a Minnesota poll, February 2006!

NATIONAL POLL REVEALS: PARENTS MOST CONCERNED ABOUT QUALITY OF CHILD CARE

A nationwide poll released recently by the National Association of Child Care Resource & Referral Agencies (NACCRRA) reveals that, more than any other aspect of child care, parents are concerned about its quality. More than half of the parents surveyed ranked quality as their highest priority. Cost ranked second. While parents, naturally, first associate quality with loving and nurturing caregivers, many consider specialized training of caregivers a leading indicator of quality care.

This new data mirrors recent findings specific to Minnesota showing that parents are increasingly focused on the quality of care their children receive. *. Moreover, they consider quality child care to be of such importance that they overwhelmingly support increased state spending on the early education system.** The value of quality child care is a guiding principle of the local statewide affiliate of NACCRRA. The Minnesota Child Care Resource and Referral Network offers parents free information on finding,

identifying, and affording quality child care and additionally works to raise the education levels and resources available to our state's child care providers. The statewide agencies representing Minnesota's R&R system offer grants, professional development training opportunities, and technical assistance to child care professionals.

With nearly 12 million children under the age of 5 in the United States in some type of child care arrangement every week, the importance of quality, affordable care is paramount.

More than nine in 10 parents nationally surveyed favor requiring that caregivers be trained both before and while working with children. Most parents (92 percent) also favor setting quality standards for all types of child care to help children get ready to succeed in school. Recent data shows that Minnesota has room to improve on school readiness with only 50% of our children arriving at school prepared to learn. A voluntary quality

rating system is currently being considered for funding by the legislature as is a bill increasing training hour requirements for licensed family child care providers.

The quality of care a child receives during the first five years of life is critical because 90 percent of brain development occurs during those years. With nearly 12 million children under the age of 5 in the

United States in some type of child care arrangement every week, the importance of quality, affordable care is paramount. Around three-quarters of Minnesota families (74%) with children under 13 use child care regularly.

"The results of our survey should be a wake-up call to policy-makers," says Ann McCully, Minnesota Child Care Resource and Referral Network Executive Director. "Parents need child care, and they don't want just any care; they want high-quality care. They want their children in a safe and healthy learning environment that prepares them to enter school ready to succeed."

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NCFR Annual Conference

IMPORTANT FACTS ABOUT THE NATIONAL COUNCIL ON FAMILY RELATIONS ANNUAL CONFERENCE

Rose Allen, Local Arrangements Co-chair

DATES:

Wednesday, November 8, 2006 through
Saturday, November 11, 2006
Pre-conference sessions – Tuesday,
November 7 and Wednesday, November
8, 2006

LOCATION:

Hyatt Regency, Nicollet Mall, Minneapolis

TITLE:

Unanswered Questions in Marriage and
Family Science

KEYNOTE SPEAKER:

Dr. Alvin Poussaint, Director, Media
Center, Judge Baker Children's Center,
Boston, MA; Professor of Psychiatry and
Faculty; Associate Dean for Student
Affairs, Harvard Medical School,
Cambridge, MA

PLENARY SESSIONS (PARTIAL LIST):

**The Third Parent: What Do We Know -
and what do we need to know about the
role popular media plays in family
process? - Dr. David Walsh**, founder of the
MediaWise Movement, a program of the
National Institute on Media and the Family.

The plenary will be followed by a
Town Hall Meeting

**After "I Do...": New Frontiers in
Marriage and Relationship Education** – a
panel discussion with several pioneers in
relational assessment and therapy including
*Lorraine Blackman, David Olson, and
Scott Stanley*

**What if They Gave a Party and all the
"Boomers" Came? Panel: Lori Sturdevant,
Art Harkins, and other experts**

PRE-CONFERENCE WORKSHOPS:

The emerging trends in motherhood and
fatherhood, the ramifications of the
increasing childrearing obligations of
grandparents, balancing work and home
life, and an update on family theory
construction and research methodologies

In addition to the speakers listed

**NCFR – 68TH ANNUAL CONFERENCE
NOVEMBER 8-11, 2006
HYATT REGENCY HOTEL, MINNEAPOLIS**

above, here are a few additional high-
lights of the conference:

- More than 450 presentations of new
research in various formats: paper
presentations, symposia, workshops,
posters sessions, and interactive round
tables.
- Book and program exhibits from local
and national publishers and service
organizations.
- Phenomenal opportunities for net-
working with noted leaders in the
family field through informal dialogue
and frequently scheduled receptions.
- Employment Matching Service with an
opportunity of face-to-face interviews
with potential employers.
- Interactive tours provide learning
experiences.

COST:

These fees are for registrations received

before August 1:

NCFR Member \$240
NCFR Organization Member \$240
NCFR Student Member* \$ 95
NCFR Emeritus Member** \$125
Second Member of Family \$205
Non-member Professional \$355
Non-member Student* \$145

Single Day Registration:

Professional \$175
Full-time Student* \$85

HOW TO REGISTER:

The registration form is found at [http://
www.ncfr.org/pdf/
Register Print Form.PDF](http://www.ncfr.org/pdf/Register Print Form.PDF). You can print
out a copy and mail or fax (763-781-9348)

your registration. Check
www.ncfr.org for online
registration.

This is the premier
family science research
conference. As an
MCFR member, don't
miss this opportunity to
hear the latest in family
research and join in the
conversation about

issues impacting families today.

HELP WITH LOCAL ARRANGEMENTS FOR THE NCFR ANNUAL CONFERENCE

Rose Allen, Local Arrangements Co-
chair

Are you interested in helping make the
NCFR Annual Conference a memorable
experience for attendees? The Local
Arrangements Committee could use your
help in a number of ways. Here are some
options:

- Staff the hospitality room at the
conference and provide recommenda-
tions for places to go, things to see and
treats to eat for our out of town guests.
- Donate something really wonderful to
the silent auction.
- Help solicit door prizes for the hospi-
tality room
- Work with the VIP Committee to
provide transportation for speakers
- Be available to help with emergencies,
special requests and other services for
attendees
- Offer a helping hand and a welcoming
smile to make the experience of being
in the Twin Cities warm (despite the
weather) and memorable

We will be contacting MCFR members
through the list serv for help with these
and other tasks. If you want to be sure to
get the job you want, contact the Local
Arrangements committee Co-chairs: Rose
Allen at allen027@umn.edu or Jean
Anderson at jeanander525@sherbtl.net

JOIN US AT THE 2006 WORK/FAMILY SUMMIT

Marcie Brooke, NCFR Association of Councils President

"CAPITALIZING ON THE WORKFORCE: TRANSFORMATIONAL SOLUTIONS FOR EMPLOYERS"

What is the Work/Family Summit? It's an annual NCFR-sponsored meeting that brings together national and local leaders in work and family. The purpose is to gather stakeholders who are concerned about children and families from many different arenas to share what they are doing, expand their knowledge, and commit to excellence in the work/life field. MCFR members have a unique opportunity to learn about work/life issues that affect families. Minnesota is one of the leaders in this area.

The day-long summit is a unique opportunity for academic researchers, family practitioners, and business professionals to learn from each other. Members of NCFR and MCFR, family life educators, members of the Alliance of Work Life Professionals, and other business professionals in human resources, health and wellness, and employee assistance are the targeted audience for the summit. This "preconference" before NCFR's 2006 annual conference will be held on Tuesday, November 7, at the Minneapolis Hyatt Regency Hotel, NCFR's official conference center. (Yes, it's Election Day, but filing an absentee ballot is an easy solution.)

HIGHLIGHTS OF THE SUMMIT INCLUDE:

- A research presentation and update by Dr. Martha Farrell Erickson and demographer, Tom Gillespie, framing the discussion with data to answer the question "What's holding us back?"
- Discussion about innovative practices in work/family with panel members from Carlson Companies, RSM McGladrey, and a greater Minnesota hospital. Their ingenuity may shock you!
- The lunch speaker, the COO of RSM

NCFR WORK/FAMILY SUMMIT

NOVEMBER 7, 2006

HYATT REGENCY HOTEL - MINNEAPOLIS

A PRECONFERENCE EVENT

OF THE

NCFR ANNUAL CONFERENCE

UNANSWERED QUESTIONS IN MARRIAGE

AND FAMILY SCIENCE

McGladrey, will share how work/life became one of their company's top seven performance management goals.

- Minnesota Momentum will share projects in place and dreams for the future that reflect the 24/7 needs of businesses and families.
- Wrap-up, including door prize drawings and an informal networking tea (including chocolate, of course!)

This year's Work/Family Summit promises to be the best ever! Please join us on November 7. Dare to dream and to visualize making a difference for children and families everywhere!

RESULTS

Continued from page 5
NACCRRRA's poll represents 592 parents nationwide who have at least one child under age 6. Responses to the poll have an overall margin of error of plus-or-minus 4 percent. Respondents to the poll are representative of the overall population of parents of young children, based on geography and key demographic criteria.

To download a free copy of NACCRRRA's "Parents' Perceptions of Child Care" poll report, visit www.naccrra.org <<http://www.naccrra.org/>>. Parents interested in learning more about quality child care and finding it can contact their local R&R at 888-291-9811 or log on to www.mnchildcare.org <<http://www.mnchildcare.org/>>.

About Child Care Resource and Referral: Across the United States, Child Care Resource and Referral Agencies help families find, select, and pay for child

MCFR POLICY COMMITTEE UPDATE: POLL

care, as well as provide training and support to child care providers and help communities and states meet their child care and parenting needs. Minnesota's CCR&R system helped over 20,000 families navigate the child care system in 2005. The system also improves the quality of child care in the state by offering grants, professional development, and training opportunities, and technical assistance to child care professionals.

Reprinted by permission of Elizabeth Cooper, Communications Coordinator, Minnesota Child Care resource and Referral Network.

* Wilder Research, "Child Care Use in Minnesota", 2004 Statewide Household Child Care Survey. Richard Chase.

**Ready 4K Poll, Hart Research, February 2006.

WHAT VIDEO GAMES HAVE TO TEACH US ABOUT LEARNING AND LITERACY

JAMES PAUL GEE, 2003. PALGRAVE MACMILLAN, NEW YORK, NY. 225 PAGES.

Review submitted by Mike Walcheski

"I'd be happy if he loved to read books half as much as he loves to play video games," is an often heard lament from parents whose children enjoy playing video games. To be honest, I picked this book up on a lark, disbelieving the promise declared in the title.

Written by a seasoned linguist, language and reading specialist, author James Paul Gee, the Tashia Morgridge Professor of Reading in the Department of Curriculum and Instruction at the University of Wisconsin at Madison, makes what seems to be an unorthodox

statement in the title of his book, *What Video Games Have to Teach Us about Learning and Literacy*. And, if the title doesn't grab your attention, his first question "Is playing video games a waste of time," certainly will. Addressing the potential of video games is a controversial endeavor, one that Gee takes up without apology.

You cannot play a video game if you cannot learn it. For the immigrants to video games, the instruction manual is remarkably brief. The evolution of video games has one consistent feature: game designers keep making the games longer and more challenging and still manage to get them learned. The author reasons that good video games employ good learning principles. Gee says, "The key is finding ways to make hard things life-enhancing so that people keep going and don't fall back on learning and thinking only what is simple and easy." The future and current success of video games, according to Gee, is built on an ever-increasing complexity that challenges "players" without exasperating them, a learning principle he finds consistent across all good video games, the "Regime of Competence" principle. In one sense, the book is about the exploration of what these learning principles are.

Uniquely, the text is written in a positive and curious tone. The author steers clear of addressing violence and

gender issues, and instead discusses 36 learning principles he believes are embedded in good video games. As a companion to the learning principles, the reader is introduced to three areas of current literacy research through the discussion of video games: Situated Cognition (thinking connected to specific experiences in the world); Literacy Studies (reading and writing as mental

Addressing the potential of video games is a controversial endeavor, one that Gee takes up without apology.

achievements and social and cultural practices with economic, historical, and political implications); and Connectionism (a belief that suggests people learn best through the identification of patterns picked up through their actual experiences in the world). Gee discusses this current research and video games through practical definitions, plenty of examples, and clear applications to learning principles present and absent in the current educational system.

Essentially, Gee advances his ideas as *the potential* of video games for learning. He makes frequent comparisons to the educational processes lacking in our schools and present in video games. While controversial, the author provides ample content for contemplation and discussion. The author does not assume the reader has played video games, although he discusses his introduction to and experiences playing video games. He advocates we have much to learn from those who play games. The author takes the value of playing video games well beyond the development of hand-eye coordination. Instead, Gee contends the overall value of playing video games might be in the development of a "new" literacy.

Early in the book, Gee lays the groundwork with a discussion of semiotic domains and the advent of a new literacy, playing video games. Through a semiotic domain (the process and ability to learn

and make meaning from multiple modalities) the "gamer" learns through oral and written language, images, sounds, gestures, symbols, graphs, and objects concurrently. Here the author emphasizes the problems of learning content out of context and the manner in which some video games may address those problems. Gee posits that people need to learn and be literate in new semiotic domains throughout their lives. Furthermore, Gee states, "If our modern, global, high-tech, and science driven world does anything, it certainly gives rise to

new semiotic domains and transforms old ones at an ever faster rate." The author strongly suggests this process of introducing new semiotic domains is underrepresented in today's schools and advocates for the inclusion of better principles of learning. Gee approaches video games as a semiotic domain embedded with good learning principles.

What is the learning value in video games? Gee suggests we ask ourselves specific questions about video games as well as other educational practices to clarify our perspective on learning and knowing: What semiotic domain is being entered through this learning? Is it a valuable domain or not? In what sense? Is the learner learning simply to understand parts of the domain or also to participate more fully in the domain by learning to produce meanings in the domain? Throughout the text, the author provides insight into the experiences of those who play videogames, giving the reader a sense of texture for the application of learning principles embedded in video games. Gee suggests four things occur when learning a new semiotic domain; experiencing the world in new ways, forming new affiliations with other participants of the content, preparation for future learning, and thinking about the domain at a "meta" level. He refers to these four concepts as active learning.

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THE ROLE OF FAMILY IN CAREGIVING AND HEALTHCARE

Sara Lässig, M.A.

I am often asked by friends and family if I don't think it's kind of "weird" or "depressing" that I am so interested in things such as death and dying, grief and loss, caregiving, and healthcare decision making. Since it never had seemed that way to me, I never thought much of the questions. However, in the past couple years I have been able to place a much broader meaning and importance on my professional passions and interest. This was due, largely, to recognizing the importance and value of *family*, within all of these different realms of my professional interests. It is my guess that nearly every family professional, regardless of their area of family focus, will at some point be faced with dealing with some of these tough issues either in their own families, or in families they are working with.

Over the past few years, we have heard more and more in the media about issues surrounding healthcare and families. From long-term care insurance, to Medicare Part D, to advance health care directives, there has been a continuing increase in coverage of such issues.

There are several reasons for the increased focus on such issues as healthcare, caregiving, and healthcare decision making, and so many of these reasons do indeed focus on families.

The way people live with illness and the way people die is also changing. Technological advances now allow people to live for years with conditions that would have been near death sentences in previous times. Certainly, this has impacts for families. As the nation learned from the media coverage of Terri Schiavo, not all families and family members agree on issues such as quality of life with an illness or injury, the use of long-term life-sustaining measures, and the use of technology to keep individuals alive. What most people can agree on is that it is vital for every individual to have an advance directive. When an individual has an advance directive (or health care directive), family members and family caregivers will usually have less difficulty making the choices that best match what

they feel their loved one would have wanted.

Family members are increasingly going to be the caregivers, versus outside sources. The rising cost of hospital care, care centers, and other long term care is already impacting families greatly. In fact, the National Family Caregivers Association published state-by-state statistics on the Prevalence and Economic Value of Family Caregiving, with startling numbers. In 2000, Minnesota alone had 472,445 individuals serving as family caregivers, providing over 506 million caregiving hours, at an estimated annual market value of over \$4.4 billion dollars.*

Clearly, families are a huge piece of the puzzle when it comes to dealing with

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caregiving issues, illness, healthcare decision, and end-of-life issues. As family professionals, working in our day-to-day jobs, there are indeed things that we can do to help families dealing with such situations.

- We can remember that families may be dealing with a great deal of stress, grief, and role changes while in situations relating to an illness, a death, or even an impending health care decision. Certainly, any of these situations would affect all members of the family in different ways and different family members may need

different supports.

- We can be aware that often times families are in these situations, without sharing that knowledge with anyone. Before jumping to conclusions about why a parent or child missed an event, a class, or a meeting, or when a pattern of this arises, we can ask if things are okay at home. Caregiving, illnesses, deaths, and grief/loss issues can all have huge impacts on a family's functioning, without others even being aware of what is going on.
- We can offer resources to families that are in the midst of such situations. Sometimes, even a contact number for an organization, support group, or provider can go much further than one may think. Families that are dealing with such situations may not be aware that such resources are available. Some examples include: local hospices, caregiver support groups, caregiver alliances, non-profit medical centers, help-lines, crisis day care services, and more.
- We can choose to be non-judgmental. When families are facing tough decisions regarding life and death, it may seem helpful to offer advice, when perhaps a listening ear would be more appreciated. Many times, I have heard individuals say "It's so different when it's your own family in this situation."
- We can acknowledge that "family" means different things to different people. For some people, their family caregiver may actually be a neighbor or a close friend, who has taken over the role of a family member when there wasn't a family member to fill that role.

** These statistics were developed in 2003 by the National Family Caregivers Association, in conjunction with Peter S. Arno, PhD, Department of Epidemiology and Population Health, Montefiore Medical Center and Albert Einstein College of Medicine.*

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MCFR Award Nominations are Welcome!

Each year MCFR presents two awards to recognize individuals and organizations that do exceptional work with and for families in Minnesota. Any MCFR member is welcome to submit a nomination.

• The Ruth Hathaway Jewson Award

The **Ruth Hathaway Jewson Award** is given to a professional in the family field who has demonstrated outstanding service, research and/or education, and who has provided exceptional contributions to the field.

• The Friend of the Family Award

The **Friend of the Family Award** recognizes an organization or person whose work is outside the family field, but who has made significant contributions to the quality of family life in Minnesota.

Recognition of colleagues who work for families and other organizations whose work contributes to families is vital to MCFR. Please consider nominating an individual or group for either of these awards. Submit names and a short statement of support to Minnell Tralle at trall001@umn.edu.

BOOK REVIEW

Continued from page 8

The remaining chapters of the book address five themes and discuss learning principles related to each. The first theme is learning and identity. Gee asserts that learning to play video games is a good example of how identities are an integral component in learning. The belief that we learn, think and solve problems by reflecting on our previous experiences and the connections we make with them is the focus of the next theme, situated meaning and learning. Telling and doing is the heart of the next theme, how video games deal with overt information and guidance and immersion in practice concurrently. Challenging taken-for-granted views about the world is the fourth theme which Gee titles "Cultural Models." Here he proposes the endless opportunity for expanding content well beyond the entertainment value of video games, suggesting video games can either reinforce or challenge taken-for-granted perspectives on the world. A misconception exists that children play video games alone. The last theme addresses the social aspect of playing video games, playing with others. Here he emphasizes the interpersonal aspects and worth involved while playing the game (Semiotic domain) and talking about the game (Meta discussion) with others.

The author contends that video games are at the beginning of their potential, but

believes they will get "deeper and richer." Gee refers to this new form as "a new form of art." He says it will not replace books, but will sit beside them changing, challenging, and confronting us and our perspectives as have books and other forms of media. There is much to learn, as the author contends, about video games. I am glad I picked up the book, am a little less worried about my children playing video games, and convinced that books are still good.

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A NOTE FROM THE EDITOR

Happy summer to everyone. Hope you enjoy this edition of the newsletter. 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). Thanks.

Ron Pitzer

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MARK YOUR CALENDAR:

FRIDAY, DECEMBER 1, 2006

THE IMPACT OF MEDIA AND
TECHNOLOGY ON PARENTING:
WHAT'S OUR ROLE AS EDUCATORS
AND FAMILY PRACTITIONERS?

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Please consider writing an article for one of our *Family Forum* newsletters. The deadlines are January 30, May 30, and September 30. Email submissions are preferred to rpitzer@umn.edu, but you may mail articles to MCFR at 2738 Evergreen Circle, St. Paul, MN 55110 or fax them to 651-407-1754.

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