



Virginia Association of Marriage and Family Counselors

Issue #1

Newsletter

Fall, 2002

President's Message

On behalf of the Board of Directors, I want to personally thank all new and returning members for your support of VAMFC and its commitment to providing connection and support to those in the study and practice of family counseling across the Commonwealth. As I begin my sixth year on the VAMFC Board and my second run as its President, I stand more committed than ever to the need for family assistance in today's rapidly changing and tumultuous world. As a family counselor myself, I also realize the complexities and stresses of providing clinical assistance to troubled families, as well as the need for sources of new information, professional collaboration, and collegial support for those providing such assistance. It shall be the goal of VAMFC in 2002-2003 to provide resources to its members in all of those categories.

1. New Information: Through the current issue and two subsequent VAMFC newsletters, we hope to keep you up to date on the latest opportunities and/or developments in research, technique, legislation, licensure, and training in our field. The newsletter also provides a wonderful opportunity for each of you to share your professional knowledge and experiences with colleagues; however, it will only serve in that capacity if you take the time to document your experiences in the form of newsletter articles. It is my hope that this year the newsletter will present input from a larger cross-section of the membership than ever before.

Another major source of information for VAMFC members is our web page that can be found at www.vamfc.org. On the web you can find a listing and biographies of Board

members, the organizational mission statement and bi-laws, minutes of past Board meetings, copies of past newsletters, links to the web sites of relevant professional organizations, a bibliography of recommended professional literature, announcements of upcoming events, and contact/application information for both VCA and VAMFC.

2. Professional Collaboration: An exciting aspect of the creation of our web site is the prospect that it introduces for "real-time" or, at least, very "quick-time" interaction among members from separate locations across the state. A goal for the coming year will be to explore and implement new ways to make the web site more interactive. This way, members can share useful information and ideas with each other quickly and easily. Toward this goal of developing VAMFC's utility as a medium for professional collaboration among its members, I will welcome (and rely upon) your input—please let me know if you have thoughts or ideas! You can contact me at any of my addresses listed in this issue.

Workshops are another valuable opportunity for professional collaboration that VAMFC is committed to provide. Through our past sponsorship of professional workshops, marriage and family counselors from diverse settings have been afforded an inexpensive and convenient opportunity for face-to-face interaction and exchange of ideas with colleagues that hopefully have enhanced their professional effectiveness. This year will be no exception; VAMFC plans to sponsor a low-cost professional workshop in early spring, 2003. The details of the workshop will be discussed at

our November meeting, and we will post the information to the web page as soon as it is known. Workshop topics are drawn from members' suggestions. Therefore, I ask that any members who would like us to sponsor a workshop on a specific topic in the future submit their topics to me for Board consideration.

Another way that VAMFC promotes professional sharing and collaboration is through its members' leadership in the activities of professional organizations. VAMFC Board members and members at large have presented regularly at state and national conferences. This professional sharing ensures that future conferences include workshops and presentations that are relevant and beneficial for marriage and family counselors. VAMFC Board and members are particularly active during the VCA Conference. Last year, Board members delivered a formal presentation at the VCA conference on the benefits of including family counseling when dealing with school violence. Though we are not sponsoring such a workshop this year, most of our Board and a number of members will be presenting independently; consequently, there are sure to be plenty of opportunities at VCA for learning and collaboration among members of the marriage and family counseling community.

3. Collegial Support: Perhaps the greatest benefit of my own involvement in VAMFC has been the opportunity it has provided me for contact with colleagues with similar interests, experiences, and concerns. I value being able to turn to these colleagues for consultation and support. During the establishment of the marriage & family counseling licensure process, VAMFC was a collective "voice" for family counselors in Virginia. Family counseling practitioners, educators, and students alike joined together to make their needs and desires known. This action was instrumental in securing a fair and equitable licensure process. VAMFC continues to provide a unique forum for focusing the collective energies of these

different groups within our field as well as an opportunity for the development of friendships and collegial relationships among group members whose paths otherwise might not cross. New membership and participation in our leadership are needed to maintain these essential functions. I thank all our new and returning members for your interest and concern, and I encourage you to consider further involvement in VAMFC leadership if you have not done so.

We have begun 2003 with serious economic difficulties in Virginia, and it does not appear that we will be free from them any time soon. With diminished resources everywhere, it is going to be more important than ever to get the "most bang the buck" in those investments that are made. In keeping, VAMFC will strive to ensure that the services it provides to its members are the services that are most beneficial. Our current services are those that our membership have deemed most beneficial in the past, but these are rapidly changing times. I invite all members to contact me or other Board members if you have ideas for how VAMFC can better serve you. Overall, I am confident that we can navigate and ultimately surmount the current budget challenge.

Graduate Student Research Grant!!!

The VAMFC Board has established a \$250.00 research grant to fund graduate student research in marriage and family counseling. Those interested in applying for this grant should submit a proposal to: Dr. Rip McAdams, The College of William & Mary, Jones Hall, Room 318 Williamsburg, Virginia 23187. Grant proposals should include the following information:

- name and student status (masters, doctoral),
- institution, purpose of research (including brief theoretical rationale/lit review and hypotheses),
- description of research (including assessment methods),
- tentative time frame to complete research,

- statement reflecting how this research will enhance the profession of family counseling,
- statement reflecting how the grant funds will be used.

Grant recipients agree to provide a report of the results of the research to the VAMFC board following completion of the study. Deadline for application is, December 31, 2002. Grant proposals should be no longer than two pages and include the applicant's full name, address, and telephone number. The grant will be awarded by February 28, 2003.

Things to Look For at VCA Convention, 2002

VAMFC Full Membership Meeting: On Thursday November 14th from 12:30 until 2:00, the VAMFC Board will have a meeting that is open to all members. This event is the only time each year when so many VAMFC members are likely to be available in one location. All members are encouraged to take the opportunity of meet the Board and to participate in the management of your VCA Division. The location of the meeting will be announced in the conference materials provided at registration. Please join us!

VAMFC Display Table: Throughout the conference, VAMFC will host a display table along with other VCA Divisions. This year (like last) we will be sharing a table with VACES to ensure we have the “person power” to staff it during all hours that the displays are open. The VAMFC table will offer brochures, newsletters, and most importantly, people who can inform interested visitors regarding our mission, membership, and activities. Any member interested in the staffing of the display table is encouraged to contact Rip McAdams (crlcad@wm.edu)--your assistance will be greatly appreciated. Even if you cannot help with the staffing, we hope that you will make a point of dropping by the table to say hello and lend support to the Division. Be sure identify yourself as a

VAMFC member when you come by—we want to get to know you.

Feature Article AGING BABY BOOMERS Jacqueline Gatewood, PsyD. School of Psychology and Counseling Regent University

The baby boomer generation (76 million Americans born from 1946 to 1964) has presented challenges to society from infancy. They created a need for larger homes to accommodate their parent's larger families. The construction of schools and the addition of teachers and school personnel followed. And later, the demand for higher education filled colleges in record numbers. They flooded the job market creating unprecedented growth.

There were changes in consumption patterns as the baby boomers aged, accelerating home construction and pushing forward the technology of convenience. Today's boomers want (and expect) all of the “gadgets” that make life easier. (“Doesn't everyone have a dishwasher?”) And they want them now! (“Buy now. No payments until next year.”)

Boomers are commonly perceived as: being well educated and preoccupied with careers; delaying marriage or remaining single; having fewer children (often later) or choosing not to have children; taking more risks than older generations; being achievement-oriented and status-conscious; and being health and fitness conscious. The boomers have been labeled the “Me” generation.

The boomer generation has had many societal experiences that have influenced their lives. The civil rights movement and the women's movement have left their mark. The Vietnam conflict affected the boomer's perception of war. The assassination of President Kennedy, Robert Kennedy, and Martin Luther King, Jr.; Watergate; and Iran-Contra impacted this generation politically.

Among the many observations that have been made about the baby boomers is their renewed

interest in spirituality. This has been evidenced by the New Age movement, a mix of Christian and Eastern philosophies with a dose of self-psychology and its own distinct music. Boomers seem to be in search of something – excellence, nirvana, inner peace – but above all – meaning and purpose in life. A prime example of this boomer spirituality appears daily as television’s number one talk show hostess, Oprah Winfrey, has “taken the high road”, focusing on life’s meaning and purpose. Her guests exemplify the panorama of new age spiritual beliefs that are currently experiencing popularity. She is TV’s New Age guru and commands a large following. How this “boomer spirituality” will impact their lives in the later years remains to be seen.

Now the boomers are at mid-life (35 to 53 years old) and they pose new challenges as they enter their “golden years”. By year 2005, they will become a majority in the 50 to 74 year old group. There is some speculation about how the boomers will fare in later life. Some project an optimistic view, believing that boomers will be better off than their parents while others see a different road ahead, especially in the financial realm.

In the next three decades, the baby boomers will be 65 to 83 years old and this dramatic increase in older adults will add urgency to issues relating to the aging process. The boomers will create a “new day” for the social security system. As the age of qualifying for this entitlement increases, it is apparent that the youngest boomers will have to remain in the work force longer than their parents did.

As a result of fewer children born to baby boomers, there will be a smaller work force to support social security. Economists predict that the aging boomers will retire but most will not quit working. They will leave their careers to work full or part time in other jobs. Some (about one-fifth) will be able to fully retire, some will partially or modestly retire, and some (more likely the single earner household) will have a meager retirement. The gap between the have and the have-nots will widen. Aging baby boomers will encounter a similar range of problems faced by today’s older

adults, along with the unique problems facing older boomers. Counselors will see clients who are experiencing emotional problems, such as, coping with: extended time in the labor force and delayed retirement; living arrangements that involve living alone or in fourth generation households; and a decline in income and standard of living. Mental illness will be an issue because of the sheer numbers of patients. The need for mental health services will increase in the aging boomer population. Counselors will be faced with the prospects of receiving less pay for services rendered due to the restrictions of Medicare, Medicaid, and managed care. Ultimately, the question may be, “Who will be willing to work for less?”

Baby boomers are a unique population and they are likely to sustain their unique traits as they move into their later years. Counselors need to be prepared to provide therapeutic support for the aging boomers, taking into consideration the life experiences that have molded their ideas and their spiritual beliefs.

Read Any Good Books Lately?

VAMFC is always looking for good new resources in marriage and family counseling to share with the members on the web site Reading List. As you have come across good new materials, please let us hear about them, so that others will be aware.

Call For New Leadership

In the spring, VAMFC will be looking for new Board members to replace those whose terms are coming to an end. Positions that we will be looking for include President Elect, Secretary, and Treasurer. Several Committee chair positions may also be needed. The vitality of VAMFC is maintained solely by the influx of new leadership coupled with the knowledge and experience of the “veteran” leaders. The “price” of Board membership is attendance at four half-day meetings

per year. The benefits far exceed the costs and include collaboration and fellowship with a wonderful group of professionals committed to family counseling as well as the opportunity to “speak” on behalf of family counselors at the state level. As a two term President of VAMFC I invite and encourage other members to step up to the plate and volunteer for Board and Committee positions in VAMFC when they are announced. Only through your willingness to step in as others retire can VAMFC maintain the vitality needed to effectively represent marriage and family counselors at the state level. Anyone interested in becoming a Board or Committee member should contact Rip McAdams at crmcad@wm.edu. We look forward to hearing from you!

Thank you Avis and Allen!

The VAMFC Board expresses its sincere thanks to Avis Quinn and Allen Forrest who retired from Board membership this year. Both have served VAMFC in Board and Committee positions for many years and who. Allen was a charter member of VAMFC and served as its President and a variety of other leadership positions over the years. Avis served in the always- demanding role of Newsletter Editor, and brought levels of enthusiasm and professionalism to that role that will not easily be replaced. We wish you well and have no doubt that you will continue to make admirable contributions to the profession .

Feature Article

Family Structure and Youth Aggression – Dysfunctional Hierarchy Part 1 of a 3 Part Series by Rip McAdams & Victoria Foster The College of William & Mary

The roots of most violent behavior develop during childhood, the time when family members and family processes are characteristically the most prevalent influences in an individual's life.

Consequently, understanding the impact of family relationships on the development of a violent individual may be a necessary prerequisite to developing effective methods for violence prevention and intervention. The influence of family relationships on violent behavior may explain why efforts to describe and predict violence on the basis of individual personality or character traits alone have proven largely unsuccessful.

From a structural perspective, a dysfunctional family is one in which problems in one or more elements of its structure have impaired its resources for coping with and adapting to contextual stressors. With its resources overloaded, the dysfunctional family is no longer able to adequately deal with the stress or nurture the growth of its individual members or the family unit as a whole. The loss of family support and guidance is particularly detrimental to children who are dependent upon them for their survival and healthy development. In fact, the aforementioned cognitive characteristics common to aggressive children appear would seem to have origins in one or more of the basic elements of a dysfunctional family structure.

Dysfunctional Hierarchy

A dysfunctional hierarchy is said to exist when parents or primary caregivers (to be used synonymously) lack the authority and/or willingness to make and carry out critical family decisions. The reasons for parents' failure to take leadership are virtually unlimited; however, marital discord, work-related fatigue, substance abuse, mental illness, youthfulness (e.g., teenaged parents), and lack of parenting skills are often at the source.

Parents impaired by alcohol or drug abuse or suffering from mental illness may simply not have the physical and mental capacities to handle their parental responsibilities. Teenaged parents often lack the maturity, skills, and experience to parent effectively. Parents working long hours to make ends meet in financially strapped families may not have sufficient presence in the family to provide effective leadership. This may be especially true in single-parent families where parental presence in the home is, by necessity, not possible during work

hours. Without the time and energy to develop their parenting skills, work-stressed parents may be ineffective family leaders even when they are present in the home.

Unable to manage the concurrent demands of work, parenting, and social responsibilities and needs, some parents may seek relief by relinquishing some level of their parental responsibility to other family members living in the home such as grandparents, aunts/uncles, boy/girlfriends, or older children. Expanding the family system in such a way can be beneficial by expanding resources, providing multiple role models, and reducing stress. However, when parents employ this practice, they must take care to assure their children of the strength and enduring nature of the parental commitment despite challenging circumstances. Children in families suffer when they perceive their parents as neglectful or abusive of their authority as family leaders, caretakers, and role models.

Neglect. Children of neglectful parents are denied the structure and/or nurturance that they need to feel safe and competent. Without consistent parental direction in their day-to-day tasks, children are likely to experience frequent and repeated failures that will ultimately contribute to a self-image of inadequacy and incompetence. Without parental modeling, support, and nurturance in the face of defeat, they cannot develop the ability to contain their emotions and "self-soothe" in times of emotional stress. Lacking the skills and confidence needed to succeed in their lives as well as the self-control they need to deal with the pain and frustration of repeated failure, these children are understandably at increased risk of uncontrolled and violent responses in the face of real or perceived life challenges.

Abuse. Abuse of parental power is defined as the parent's use of punishment as a means to express anger and resentment rather than as an instrument for appropriately altering a child's behavior. When parental behavior threatens children's safety and well being, the children suffer a confusing collapse of behavioral strategy, in that

there are simultaneous impulses to approach the parent as a haven of safety and to flee from the parent as a source of alarm. Unable to control the conditions under which they can safely gain proximity to their primary caregiver, they react in a disorganized, disoriented manner, including attempts to compensate for their loss of control by exerting violent physical control over the immediate environment.

Another means by which children appear to deal with their anger, frustration, and fear from parental rejection and abuse is through projection of the emotions onto others over whom they feel they have more access and control. Studies support Newhill's (1992) finding that aggressive children are more likely to inaccurately view others as hostile and controlling and to attribute malevolent intentions to their neutral actions -- in effect, more likely to exhibit and act on paranoid tendencies. Their violent responses toward "threatening" individuals may serve as misdirected retribution for the hurt done to them by abusive parents.

Discord/violence. Children in families where discord and aggression are modeled in their parents' relationship are more prone to violent behavior. As stated previously, it is through interaction with the parental subsystem that children in a family will learn to accept authority and, ultimately, to appropriately manage greater measures of personal responsibility and power. However, through that same interaction they can also learn to abuse power when abuse of power is the preeminent model provided by their primary caregivers. Abusive behavior patterns as well as stereotypical power disparities based on gender and racial prejudice are conveyed from parent to child through the process of social learning. The evidence is clear that witnessing parental discord encourages aggression in children, and especially in boys. Children who witness actual violence by their parents and between their parents are the most likely to become violent themselves. From their parental models, some of these children may come to incorporate threatening and violent behavior as their primary means of relating to others.

Board Members & Committee Chairs

<p>President: (voting)</p>	<p>Rip McAdams The College of William & Mary School of Education PO Box 8795 Williamsburg, VA 23187-8795 wk 757.221.2338 hm 757.220.8493 email crmcad@wm.edu</p>	<p>Past-President: (Nomination and Election Committee)</p>	<p>Karen Eriksen Old Dominion University Darden School of Education #110 Norfolk, VA 23529 Wk: (757)683-3460 Hm: (757)623-1109 Email: keriksen@odu.edu</p>
<p>President- Elect: (voting)</p>	<p>Victoria A. Foster The College of William & Mary School of Education PO Box 8795 Williamsburg, VA 23187-8795 wk 757.221.2338 hm 757.220.8493 email vafost@wm.edu</p>	<p>Government Relations Liaison:</p>	<p>Debbie Turner 4638 Kensington Avenue Richmond, VA 23226-1311 Home telephone: 804-353-2184 Work telephone: 804-780-4388 Fax at work: 804-780-8184 email: debnackley@AOL.com</p>
<p>Secretary: (voting)</p>	<p>Judy Stone The College of William & Mary School of Education PO Box 8795 Williamsburg, VA 23187-8795 Wk 757-221-2419 hm 757-258-9091 Email jaston@wm.edu</p>	<p>Newsletter Editors:</p>	<p>Denny Frank Chris Sacco-Bene The College of William & Mary School of Education PO Box 8795 Williamsburg, VA 23187-8795 Wk 757.221.2363 Email (Chris) cxsacc@wm.edu (Denny) dxfran@wm.edu</p>
<p>Treasurer: (voting)</p>	<p>Juliann Smith 2310 Carter Road S.W. Roanoke, VA 24015 hm 540.343.7440 email jusmith7@vt.edu</p>	<p>Workshop: (Professional Development)</p>	<p>Open</p>
<p>Board Member At Large: (voting)</p>	<p>Wally Scott Director, Center for Counseling & Student Development Radford University P.O. Box 6902 Radford, VA 24142 Wk 540.831-5226 Hm 540.633-2285 Email wscott@radford.edu</p>	<p>Membership Committee:</p>	<p>Jacque Gatewood School of Psychology & Counseling Regent University 1000 Regent University Drive Virginia Beach, VA 23464-9800 Wk 757.226-4295 Email jacqgat@regent.edu</p>
<p>Student Member: (voting)</p>	<p>Hugh Jackson The College of William & Mary School of Education PO Box 8795 Williamsburg, VA 23187-8795 Wk 757.221-2363 Email ahjack@wm.edu</p>		

Think Family!

Virginia Association of Marriage & Family Counselors
Attn: Dr. Rip McAdams
PO Box 8795, College of William & Mary
Williamsburg, VA 23187-8795

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