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Family Connections

BYU School of Family Life
Alumni Magazine
Fall 2013



Russell Virgin: Mountainland Head Start

Rachel Sheffield: Capitol Hill

Families of Faith Project

Success of the MFT Program

MESSAGE FROM THE DIRECTOR:

Dean M. Busby

Dear School of Family Life Alumni,

Welcome to another edition of *Family Connections*. I am particularly pleased that in this edition we are highlighting two of the unique strengths of our school, the family therapy program, and some of our research that integrates family life and religion. According to both external and internal data, our family therapy program is a premier, if not the premier program in the world. The clinical training that is provided in this program is very strong. Those who have graduated with degrees in family therapy from BYU have provided assistance to families they desperately needed to help them make it through some of the most pressing problems that can be experienced from trauma and abuse to divorce and discouragement.

In addition, the scholarship that is consistently produced by the faculty and students in this program is helping far more than just the handful of students who are trained as therapists each year and the clients they reach. This scholarship has helped shape the clinical training of virtually every family therapist in any program in the last few decades and thereby indirectly helped far more families than our alumni could reach in the therapy room. When I add to these contributions all of the significant service and teaching of undergraduates that the faculty in the family therapy program provide it is really quite astonishing how much of an influence this program has had for good. I think you will enjoy learning more about the family therapy program at BYU.

In this volume you will also read about some of the best scholarship on religion and family life that has been published in professional journals. This project has been conducted by Dr. Dollahite and his colleagues and includes detailed interviews with hundreds of families from different faiths. We need more in-depth research like this in every area of family life, but in particular the way religion and family life interact and intersect has been understudied. While it



is relatively fast and simple today to construct a survey and administer it over the internet to many people, the type of research conducted by Dr. Dollahite is some of the most time-consuming, difficult, and rare research that has ever been done. Many graduate and undergraduate students have to transcribe, code, and help analyze the thousands of hours of tapes that are archived from these interviews before they can be used for articles

and books. In addition, it is often not politically correct or popular to conduct research on religion and religiosity and it is most impressive that Dr. Dollahite and his team have been able to get their research accepted in rigorous peer-reviewed journals. I'm sure you'll learn something of value by considering this research and the role religion has played in your family life.

Sincerely,

Dean M. Busby

Director, BYU School of Family Life

**BYU School of Family Life
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ALUMNI PROFILE:

Russell Virgin

Helping Families through the Head Start Program

“I believe in the strength and the importance of the family,” Russell Virgin said. “And I feel like when that structure is in place, knows how to function properly with the resources they have, then their options and opportunities are limitless.”

Using these core values as his base, BYU School of Family Life alumnus Russell Virgin serves as the Family and Community Services Director at Mountainland Head Start in Utah County. Head Start gives low-income families the opportunity for their children to participate in a high quality preschool, as well as help parents learn basic strategies on how to overcome poverty and become self-sufficient.

“Head Start is essentially a two-part program,” Virgin said. “It’s a preschool for low-income families who either qualify based upon income or if they have a child with a disability.... The second part of it is a family assistance program. What we do is we try and help families set goals, connect with community resources that they may need, help them overcome poverty, and help them increase their education.”

Head Start’s preschool classes are designed to help children learn not only the basic cognitive skills needed for kindergarten—their ABCs, numbers, etc.—but motor development skills, as well. Head Start does an Ages and Stages Questionnaire at the beginning of the year to discover what stage each child is at so that teachers can then create a curriculum plan specific to each child’s needs. From there, the children learn in a play-based model where they dress up and use imaginative skills as well as read and sing songs.

Virgin’s job at Head Start deals more with the Family Services side. He supervises coordinators who work on home visits to Head Start families, meeting the needs of the children, enrollment, recruitment, and partnering with community agencies.

“Specifically, my job is to strategize how all that works,” Virgin said. “And how we can make it work better, while keeping compliance with the federal laws with Head Start.”

One of the jobs Virgin does, along with his team of Family



PHOTO BY NICOLE HILLSTEAD

Virgin Family; Russell, Ashley, Brooklynn, Kynlee, and Ella

Advocates at Head Start, is help families set goals for self-sufficiency and general improvement, meet deadlines, and take the steps to accomplish those goals.

“One of my favorite things that I have seen is to watch families learn how to progress through goals,” Virgin said. “We walk them through the steps of identifying where they want to change something in their life and then we identify little things that they can do to get them to their long-term goal.”

Goals the families set can be anywhere from employment to family vacations, but each one teaches the family how to obtain the needs of their family, become self-sufficient, and have hope.

Family Advocates are also there to help identify and alleviate stressors within the families. Some stressors include lack of education, language barriers, employment issues, and even a misunderstanding of the development of their children.

“Something I’ve learned as a parent is that if you can understand the development of your child you can avoid a lot of stress and a lot of frustration,” Virgin said. “You can recognize and say this is a developmental issue—this child is not just a

stubborn kid, doesn't have self control—he or she just hasn't developed that yet. That helps alleviate a ton of stress on parents, and they're dealing with plenty of other stressors."

On the preschool side of Head Start they are able to help parents recognize the needs of their children. Before being enrolled, each child goes through a physical and dental exam which can catch things that might be an issue for the child.

"We've been able to catch severe dental issues and help them get the work done that they need done," Virgin said. "And that affects them in every aspect of their life, from always being in pain to how well they eat. We've also helped kids whose parents didn't realize their child couldn't see, and help them get glasses for the first time. That is a really rewarding experience to watch as well."

Russell Virgin graduated from the BYU School of Family Life with a degree in Marriage, Family, and Human Development



PHOTO BY NICOLE HILLSTEAD

Russell Virgin's two oldest daughters. Kynlee (left) Brooklynn (right)

in 2009 and began working at Head Start that summer.

He then left Head Start to pursue a Masters in Public Administration and graduated again from BYU in 2012. Virgin was asked to come back on to Head Start, filling a temporary position, during his second year working on his MPA. After working at Head Start through a number of temporary po-

sitions he was then put into the position he holds now as Family and Community Services Director.

Virgin has three daughters, ages four, two, and a brand new baby. He met his wife, Ashley, at BYU where she was studying Recreational Therapy. Virgin has appreciated the education and lessons he learned while in his undergraduate SFL program and has been able to apply them to his own life practically every day.

“It was a great program to help me understand parenting in general.”

-Russell Virgin

“Knowing how a child develops from my own [SFL] education has benefitted me immensely,” Virgin said. “To know what a child needs at different stages is so helpful. It was a great program to help me understand parenting in general.”

Virgin believes firmly in the importance of strong families and finds that the most rewarding part about working at Head Start is being able to see families, parents, and children improve their lives and work toward self-sufficiency.

ALUMNI PROFILE:

Rachel Sheffield

Influencing Family Policy on Capitol Hill

She started out shy, hoping not to have to interact too much with people outside of her comfort zone, expecting to stay in the background, and not calling attention to herself. Now, Rachel Sheffield is a policy analyst in Washington DC writing research papers, speaking with the national media, and influencing family policies on Capitol Hill.

"I've experienced some personal development," Sheffield said with classic understatement. "For me, being able to speak to the media is something I never really saw myself doing. I tend to be a bit shyer and a bit more introverted and prefer to stay behind the scenes. But this has really encouraged me to get out there and to talk."

Sheffield works for the conservative Heritage Foundation where she's spent the last five years promoting family-friendly policies through solid research on policy issues and marketing the findings to members of Congress, policymakers, and the media. Her office is a 5-minute stroll to the U.S. Capitol Building.

Sheffield is a policy analyst who works specifically on social welfare issues. She looks at how family instability and breakdown contribute to poverty and how government welfare programs respond to these challenges.

It's difficult to define Sheffield's job, as there are many different aspects to her work.

"There's a lot of writing," Sheffield said. "Research papers, for example, on policy and how we can reform through policy. We also have a blog so I'll write a couple of blogs a week which are shorter and more for a lay audience; they're more simple and respond to the day-to-day current issues going on. Our primary goal though, is to influence Capitol Hill, so we try to work with Congressmen and Congresswomen and their staff to give them guidance on policy. Also, we talk with the media; newspaper reporters, radio interviews, and occasionally a TV interview to talk about the policies that we work on."



PHOTO BY CHANDLER A. PRINCE

Rachel Sheffield at work at the Heritage Foundation with Capitol Hill just a few blocks away.

Sheffield was originally introduced to the Heritage Foundation when she visited Washington DC as part of the BYU Washington Seminar internship program during her undergraduate studies. "I saw some of the research they were doing here and it was unique from a lot of the perspectives I had seen when it came to family issues," Sheffield said. "I was interested in that and interested in the work the Heritage Foundation does on promoting healthy marriages and family."

Sheffield's initial curiosity about what makes people function the way they do and how people go about having a strong marriage and family are what sparked her undergraduate and graduate studies at BYU. Originally Sheffield declared herself an elementary education major, but realized that she loved her MFHD classes and decided to change majors. Sheffield graduated from BYU with her masters degree in Marriage, Family, and Human Development in 2008.

There were many things about BYU and her classes that have helped Sheffield end up at the Heritage Foundation. Much of the research done in her classes at BYU, as well as the view of how the family benefits society, prepared her well for the kind of work Sheffield does now. She found that the principles taught at BYU and how they were taught

aligned well with the goals of the Heritage Foundation.

During her undergraduate studies, Sheffield worked as a research assistant for the Research Hub of the National Healthy Marriage Resource Center, which was then supported by a federal grant to the School of Family Life at BYU. She summarized research on various topics related to marriage. The Hub Director, Dr. Alan Hawkins, remarked: “Rachel was one of the quietest students I’ve ever interacted with. Her peers working on the project were boisterous extroverts and I worried a little about her in our meetings. But she always delivered first-class work to me. It has been a delight to see her do so well in her early career.”

Sheffield has had many opportunities to see the benefits of her work. She spoke of being in meetings with many good people that have committed their lives to strengthening the family, promoting good policies and principles, and strengthening society. Sheffield enjoys when student groups visit the Heritage Foundation and she is able to see them recognize the importance of stable, healthy marriages and families.

“Talking to a student group that will come in, and telling them about why marriage is important,” Sheffield notes, “why a married mother and father make such a big difference in a child’s life and seeing the light go on, and realizing that’s not something that they hear every day—those experiences have been really rewarding.”



PHOTO BY CHANDLER A. PRINCE

Front of the Heritage Foundation building in Washington DC

Working as a policy analyst, Sheffield has had the opportunity to travel. In 2009 Sheffield went to Amsterdam to partici-

“I’m able to understand policy, politics, and more of the cultural debate surrounding family issues.”

-Rachel Sheffield

pate in the World Congress on the Family. “It was nice to be able to go there and participate with people from all around the world who are working on family issues,” Sheffield said.

Sheffield is the second of four children in her family and was originally from the Los Angeles area. Having experienced both the East and West coast, Sheffield has nothing but positive things to say about both. Working on the East coast has been rewarding. She enjoys her work and the environment at the Heritage Foundation.

“I feel like I’ve learned a lot from this job,” Sheffield said. “I’m able to understand policy, politics, and more of the cultural debate that’s going on surrounding family issues.”

For an introvert who preferred to go unnoticed and had no interest in public speaking, let alone speaking with the national media, SFL graduate Rachel Sheffield has made herself a successful policy analyst who’s able to inform and persuade both the public and Members of Congress on Capitol Hill.

CURRENT RESEARCH:

American Families of Faith Project



Professor David Dollahite of Brigham Young University

More than a decade of extensive analyses of in-depth interviews with over 200 religious families has allowed faculty and students in the American Families of Faith project to make some remarkable discoveries. This project, sponsored with funds from the BYU Eliza R. Snow Fellowship, has given Dr. David Dollahite of Brigham Young University, and Dr. Loren Marks of Louisiana State University, as well as numerous students, the opportunity to learn how religion can make

a difference in marriage, parenting, youth identity, and family relationships.

“There have been a lot of very good studies done in the social sciences that have shown that there are some important correlations between religious beliefs and practices and a number of positive outcomes in marriage and family life,” Dr. Dollahite said. “But we know less about why. What’s going on? What is it about religious belief and practice that makes a difference for couples and families? So our research has been focused on why religion matters and how religion works at the heart of family relationships.”

Through these in-depth interviews with married couples, and their adolescent children, Dollahite and his students and colleagues found that nearly all couples believed that religion has helped in their relationship with their spouse. A certain sub-group of these religious couples strongly noted their relationship with God as a transcendent moral authority.

“Those couples talked about ways that belief in and relationship with God helped them to check their own selfish

tendencies and improve themselves as a marital partner,” Dollahite said.

Another interesting finding, this one based on interviews with 80 youth in religious families, had to do with their interpretations of sacrifices for their faith and what those sacrifices meant to them. Youth mentioned many kinds of sacrifices, including loss of sleep, conflicting activities on their day of religious practice, dietary restrictions, different dress standards, and media choices. The intriguing finding was that the majority of these youth didn’t consider these things a sacrifice but rather a blessing to their lives and a gift for God.

“A number of them talked about a strong sense of identity,” Dollahite said. “They knew who they were, they were willing to be different, and they knew that other kids knew that they had standards.”

When asked about important findings pertaining to marriage, Dollahite reported, “We have identified how religious beliefs such as the permanence of marriage and practices such as prayer helped couples avoid and resolve marital conflict; we have identified processes at work among religious couples that promote fidelity; we have identified ways that religious belief and practice help couples make important changes and cope with difficult challenges; and we identified



PHOTO BY NICOLE HILLSTEAD

The Jewish Dreidel, a four-sided spinning top containing letters from the Jewish alphabet on each side.



PHOTO BY NICOLE HILLSTEAD

Orthodox Christian Icons are art filled with symbolism meant to convey information about the person depicted

the ways that religious belief and practice strengthens marital commitment.”

When asked about important findings pertaining to youth, Dollahite said, “We have identified what we called “anchors of religious commitment,” or those personal and relational processes that encouraged youth to develop and maintain their religious commitment; we have identified processes that lead adolescents to establish a strong religious identity, including building strong relationships with parents and youth leaders; we have identified the kinds of sacrifices that religious youth make for their faith, the reasons they are willing to make those sacrifices, and the ways youth believe making these sacrifices bless their lives; and we identified how parents can talk with their youth in ways that are more likely to result in youth-initiated further religious conversations and feeling good about them.

Nearly 50 academic papers have been published based on the American Families of Faith research. In addition, Dollahite and his colleague, Dr. Marks, a former graduate student, are currently writing two books that include some of the major findings from their research.

This ongoing research has given many BYU and Louisiana State University students the opportunity to help read, code, and analyze the various interviews and learn more about faiths outside of their own.

Most students who work with Dr. Dollahite on the American Families of Faith project have found they enjoy learning and hearing about other families’ experiences with religion.

“I learned that these people were very admirable,” BYU graduate student Toshi Shichida said. “Their faith is so firm and strong. At the same time their family relationship is very good; they love each other. In a sense I felt like they are

building a sort of ideal family.”

In many cases the students have even mentioned how studying the different religions has helped solidify their own testimonies in the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints.

One of Dollahite’s student coders, Heather Garbe-Patiño said, “Their responses to the interview questions kind of explain their beliefs and also show that when they don’t know the answer to questions, that sometimes they wish they did. And sometimes I do know the answer from my [LDS] beliefs and for me that helps strengthen my testimony, but also see truth in other people’s beliefs.”



PHOTO BY KRISTIN BROWN PHOTOGRAPHY

Heather Garbe-Patiño, BYU student and research coder.

Students have benefitted from this research in another way as well; Dr. Dollahite has translated his research into a popular class at BYU, SFL 345, Family in World Religions. The class, like Dollahite’s research, focuses on the Abrahamic faiths (Christianity, Judaism, and Islam), and the way these adherents practice their faith in their home and family relationships.

Students have the opportunity to hear about Dr. Dollahite’s personal experiences interviewing these families and are able to read articles that have been published from his research project. The class also includes outside readings of books written by practitioners of those faiths, guest speakers who are practitioners of other faiths, films and clips of various religious traditions and practices, and students even attend a religious service outside of their own.

“The families I interviewed usually were willing to talk in great depth and detail about how their faith has made a difference to them,” Dollahite said. “My students have told me that that has been a real blessing for them to learn how deeply families of various faiths strive to live their faith at home.”

Learn More at:
AmericanFamiliesofFaith.byu.edu

WHERE ARE THEY NOW?

RETIRED FACULTY:

Terrance D. Olson

BY: SAGE ERICKSON

Four Decades of Service at BYU

Professor Terrance D. Olson of the School of Family Life has been a valued member of the BYU faculty since 1974. He retired this past summer as the senior-most faculty in the School of Family Life. Olson's journey thus far has been a surprising turn of events that led him to his career and where he is today.

Olson grew up in Albuquerque, New Mexico, with summer visits to the farm in Idaho where his father grew up. His father was a bomber pilot in World War II who died in combat when Olson was just 6 weeks old. His mother remarried which makes all of his cherished siblings "half-siblings." However, they all considered themselves one big family.

After serving a mission for the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints in Scotland, Elder Olson returned to BYU. There he met his wife, Karen, in a religion class. He was then at a loss about what to study and shifted his major from Chemistry to English to Political Science before he decided to study sociology. He graduated with a degree in sociology and wanted to become a school counselor. A series of "accidents," however, would change his course.

A friend of his wife recommended the School of Family Life's Masters program. After investigating the program, he decided that would be the best route for him. He then went on to get his Ph.D. at Florida State University in the late 1960s, studying marriage and family therapy, social psychological theory, and family life education.

Olson was surprised upon graduation when a job offer brought him back to his hometown in Albuquerque, New Mexico. He taught for three years at the University of New Mexico, even though he never attended school there. At UNM, he became involved in training marriage and family life educators in the public schools. Unknowingly, this focus on family life education would help him secure his next position at BYU.



Professor Terrance D. Olson

Discovery and Transformation

In the early 1970s, Olson was invited by BYU to apply for a faculty position. He realized after the interview that his work training family life educators was one of the key reasons he was hired. This was undoubtedly because of BYU's commitment to strengthening marriages and families. This focus on education and prevention narrowed Olson's

passion and course. He thought more about where quality relationships come from, how to change people's way of being rather than just their way of seeing, and began to work more intensely with the moral dimension in family life education and of living true to one's conscience.

Olson gradually discovered that the heart of quality marriage and family relationships was not in gaining knowledge or even in becoming skillful, but was rooted in the ethical quality of one's heart. This transformation of thought, regarding where relationship problems come from and how they are solved was generated by Dr. C. Terry Warner, a BYU philosophy professor, whose mentoring set the course of Olson's theory, research, and family life education efforts for the remainder of his career.

Warner articulated a view of human being that affirmed how, in everyday life we experience promptings of conscience to which we can live true or false. A father who feels he should read a bedtime story to his child either honors that feeling or resists it by, for instance, watching the sports channel instead.

Professor Olson saw that one reason why some people ben-



PHOTO BY SAGE ERICKSON

Professor Olson teaching one of his classes at BYU

enefit from family life education and others do not is because of their own resistance to promptings of conscience. He also began to realize the difference between teaching about families and teaching for families. Instead of just teaching information concerning families, Olson would try to focus on the meaning of families' recurring destructive symptoms and whether they could see alternative ways of being with each other.

These ideas shaped him as a teacher, as well. "My transformation as a family life educator went from focusing exclusively on presenting knowledge and skills to proposing an alternative view of what it means to be human. As to being effective as a family life educator or therapist, it is not my experience, not my knowledge, not my skills, that seem to be the root of success, but whether or not when I deliver family life education content I am being humane. I must 'be' that which I am teaching it is possible to be."

Reflections on BYU and the School of Family Life

Brigham Young University seemed like the right place for Olson. He said, "I have felt the most freedom at BYU," including the freedom to pursue his study of the moral dimension in family life education. In addition, Olson feels that "The Family: A Proclamation to the World" helped the School of Family Life put everything in its proper order and perspective at BYU. Knowing that the family is the fundamental unit of soci-

ety gives a starting point for everything else. It helps people know where good resources are and where to go when dealing with different problems.

For the last decade, Professor Olson's favorite class to teach was Moral Foundations of Family Life. This was an advanced course that has served as a capstone class for many of the SFL majors. The class is a bit unorthodox in the SFL curriculum because it is based more on philosophy and theory rather than research. But teaching this course each semester is what kept Olson in the profession for so many years.

"When the students see themselves in the ideas taught," Olson says, "they see how to transform destructive attitudes and behaviors into a constructive or more humane way of being." Students have learned from Olson that in matters social, emotional, spiritual, or psychological, the starting point to quality relationships is in the ethical quality of our hearts.

Professor Terrance Olson retired from BYU this summer after nearly 4 decades of service. But he is hardly retired from his work. He is still presenting at professional conferences and submitting his work to professional journals. He and his wife plan to serve a fulltime mission for the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints in the near future. Wherever he goes, Olson's experience as a family life educator who allows the moral dimension to be a part of what is taught will surely be valuable in many circumstances.

CURRENT PROGRAMS:

Marriage and Family Therapy

BYU's Marriage and Family Therapy Program: More than Four Decades of Success

Since 1967, BYU's Marriage and Family Therapy (MFT) program has trained more than 600 students and contributed a minimum of 300,000 hours of direct face-to-face therapy within the Utah county community that surrounds BYU. Each year the program accepts 10-13 masters students and 3-5 doctoral students. Each of these students is required to receive 500 hours of professionally supervised clinical hours of experience. A conservative estimate of the number of hours of direct therapy provided by BYU MFT graduates to children, youth, couples, and families over the past four decades is 1,000,000. All those hours add up to a lot of opportunities to help strengthen marriages and families.

"The biggest success and accomplishment of the program are all of those people who have received really good, high quality therapy, either in our clinic or in the field after the students have graduated," according to Dr. Roy Bean, one of BYU's Marriage and Family Therapy professors, and the current program director.

Training Students

BYU's Marriage and Family Therapy program is known for its excellent faculty who are able to mentor students in clinical work and family research. As professor Bean says, "We try to wear multiple hats."

"We provide the students with a really good training experience, clinically," Bean said. "We help them work on themselves as they grow in the program. And they are also engaged with us in the research process."

"We want the students to graduate with a skill set that's going to allow them to find employment," Bean said. "We give the students a set of skills, a set of experiences, and a curriculum that positions them for success in the work place."



PHOTO BY NICOLE HILLSTEAD

BYU's on-campus comprehensive clinic

Students are drawn to the Marriage and Family Therapy program for many different reasons. Some show an interest because of their own experiences with family dissolution, others have had experiences working with troubled children, and some express an interest in teaching others about the great potential for happiness within a home.

Lexie Pfeifer, a MFT doctoral student, worked in a group home as a caregiver for children. Being so connected with these young kids is what encouraged her to study Marriage and Family Therapy.

"I got a job in Maryland working at a group home for teenage girls," Pfeifer said. "I was a direct caregiver, I resolved crises, I ran errands, and I took them to doctor's appointments. I decided then that I really wanted to be the person who worked more one-on-one with them at the core of what they were struggling with, and that's when I decided to apply to the program."

The doctoral program's main focus is training students to do first-class family and clinical research. The students work closely with faculty members to gain knowledge on successful research methods. For the masters students, the program is centered more on clinical studies and how to become a good therapist for couples, families, and children.

Whether at the doctoral or masters level, students enjoy the classes and training experiences. Pfeiffer mentioned a group therapy class she took that taught her a lot about herself. This class required students to participate in group therapy sessions as both the clinician and the client so they were able to see a therapy session from all angles.

Pfeifer currently works with post-trauma children and families at an internship in Virginia. She mentions how self-awareness has become a new part of her life:

“The MFT program emphasized understanding ourselves,” Pfeifer said. “Having an understanding of how we impact the therapy process because of our experiences and our reactions to things. The program taught me how to gain self-awareness about how I react to things and people so that I can be more helpful to clients.”

“The program taught me how to gain self-awareness about how I react to things and people so that I can be more helpful to clients”

-Lexie Pfeifer

Students recognize changes within their own lives, and ways in which the MFT program has influenced that change. Some have noticed a change in their relationships, while others underline their new sense of self-awareness.

“As a Marriage and Family Therapist, I'm a lot more focused on relationships and helping people with their relationships,”

doctoral student Sergio Pereyra said, “which makes me then reflect on my own relationships, and realize improvements I could make in my own life. I think overall, that has been very helpful with my wife, my kids, my other family members, and even at church and in callings.”

Many students have commented on how the MFT faculty care about each student and their progress. “They do a nice job of mentoring their students,” MFT Alumni Andy Brimhall said. “This, I think, makes students want to come back to their program and teach. I think this also has to do with a balance, where in our field, there are some programs that are really strong clinically and there are other programs that are really strong in research. But BYU is one of the few programs that has a nice balance of both.”

Faculty members have an understanding of the importance of families and a passion for their field. This passion is seen and appreciated by the students they teach.

Research Leaders

Most graduate students also work closely with MFT faculty on current research projects. The BYU MFT program was ranked first in the nation in the number of MFT publications between 2000-2005, according to a recent article in the MFT field's flagship journal¹.

Much of the research that faculty and graduate students are doing contribute valuable knowledge to the larger MFT profession. For instance, Dr. Russ Crane, a professor in the MFT program, works on the link between the use of medical services and mental health treatment.

“One of the things we want to always understand is if someone is struggling with mental health problems—depression, anxiety, or some other disorder—does that make them more or less likely to use other medical services,” Professor Bean said.

Dr. Crane's research has strengthened the MFT field by showing that those who receive marriage and family therapy generally end up needing less healthcare for physical ailments and using fewer healthcare dollars than those who use other

¹ See Dupree, W. J., White, M. B., Meredith, W. H., Ruddick, L., & Anderson, M. P. (2009). Evaluating scholarship productivity in COAMFTE-accredited PhD programs. *Journal of Marital and Family Therapy*, 35, 204-219.

forms of mental health treatment. MFT treatment tries to deal with helping the whole family system, not just a single individual.

Several MFT faculty are currently conducting a study that examines client, therapist, and in-session factors that predict successful outcomes for clients in marriage and family therapy. This cutting-edge research project will yield data that can help to improve the effectiveness of marriage and family therapy and the training of MFT students.

Other MFT faculty have worked with clinical programs in several countries to promote the MFT profession internationally, where it is less established.

The MFT faculty's high level of research productivity has made them leaders in the MFT field. That leadership is demonstrated in numerous ways. There are only a handful of MFT doctoral programs nationwide, so approximately five years ago BYU hosted a meeting with faculty members from across the country to help brainstorm ways in which all the programs can be successful. "BYU's Marriage and Family Therapy faculty have been part of the process of initiating a conversation about how doctoral education is different," Professor Bean said, "what we need to do to be productive scholars and add to our roles as educators and trainers."

Many MFT faculty also do family life research not directly related to therapy. For instance, several MFT faculty participate with non-clinical faculty in the School of Family Life in the Flourishing Families study, which is a 5-year, multi-method, detailed examination of the inner-family life of more than 500 families with adolescents. Numerous published articles from this study have helped the broader family sciences field understand the family processes that help families to flourish.

The Next Generation of Success

After 46 years of success in BYU's Marriage and Family Therapy program, faculty members and students are always looking to raise the bar. Most of the faculty members who helped the program achieve its current success are now retired, but BYU brings in new faculty with the same kind of desire to strive for the best and do so through hand-in-hand training

and research with each student. For instance, Dr. Bean, the current program director, and Dr. Jonathon Sandberg, both were masters students in the MFT program. They completed their doctoral studies elsewhere and taught for several years at other universities. But they have returned now as faculty members to strengthen BYU's program and the next generation of students. One of the MFT program's newest faculty hires is Dr. Angela Bradford.

Bradford did her undergraduate studies at BYU and then went on to Auburn University to finish her graduate work. She decided to rejoin the forces at BYU this year because of her love for the people and the environment.

"I like my colleagues quite a bit," Bradford said. "I was very impressed with them when I came out to interview. This is a supportive atmosphere; academia can be a little bit stressful and demanding, so I really liked how supportive it was here within the department as well as the University at a broader level."

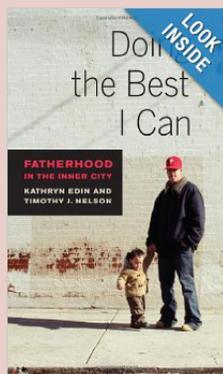
Bradford looks forward to adding to the MFT program and its research. She hopes to raise the bar on quality of research even higher and help strengthen the clinical research agenda at BYU.

Bringing all these aspects together in to one has made BYU's Marriage and Family Therapy program a remarkable one. It is, the "perfect storm," as described by Jared DuPree, former MFT professor at University of Houston - Clear Lake and current administrator for North Central University

"It is rare to find a program that has the clinical capabilities, research capabilities, faculty, students, and resources all at once. It's the perfect storm—in a good way," DuPree said. "The potential for continued innovation and creativity is high when these elements come together."

LIFELONG LEARNING

A BYU education should be: *Spiritually Strengthening, Intellectually Enlarging, Character Building, Leading to Lifelong Learning and Service.* In that spirit, the school of Family Life faculty have suggested some recent publications of potential interest to SFL alumni to help them stay current in the field.



Kathryn Edin & Timothy J. Nelson. (2013). *Doing the Best I Can: Fatherhood in the Inner City*. Berkeley, CA: University of California Press.

Doing the Best I Can is a paradigm-shifting look at fatherhood among inner-city men often dismissed as “deadbeat dads.” Kathryn Edin and Timothy J. Nelson explore how disadvantaged couples come together and get pregnant quickly—without planning.

The authors chronicle the high hopes for forging lasting family bonds that pregnancy inspires, and pinpoint the fatal flaws that often lead to the relationship’s demise. They offer keen insight into a radical redefinition of family life where the father-child bond is central and parental ties are peripheral.

Drawing on years of fieldwork, they show how dramatic economic and cultural changes have transformed the meaning of fatherhood among the urban poor. Intimate interviews with more than 100 fathers make real the significant obstacles faced by low-income men at every step in the familial process: from the difficulties of romantic relationships, to decision-making dilemmas at conception, to the often celebratory moment of birth, and finally to the hardships that accompany the early years of the child’s life, and beyond.

The National Marriage Project at the University of Virginia, The National Campaign to Prevent Teen and Unplanned Pregnancy, and the RELATE Institute.

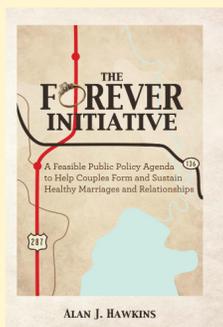
<http://nationalmarriageproject.org/wp-content/uploads/2013/03/KnotYet-FinalForWeb.pdf>

The age at which men and women marry is now at historic heights and is still climbing. The age at which women have children is also increasing, but not nearly as quickly as the delay in marriage.

Although many men and women have been postponing marriage, they have not put off childbearing at the same pace. In fact, the median age at first birth for women (25.7) now falls before the median age at first marriage (26.5). *Knot Yet* examines the economic and cultural causes, as well as the positive and negative consequences for twenty-something women, men, their children, and communities. This is an engaging report co-authored by SFL faculty member Jason S. Carroll



Kay Hymowitz, Jason S. Carroll, W. Bradford Wilcox, & Kelleen Kaye. (2013). *Knot Yet: The Benefits and Costs of Delayed Marriage in America*.



Alan J. Hawkins (2013). *The Forever Initiative: A Feasible Public Policy Agenda to Help Couples Form and Sustain Healthy Marriages and Relationships*. North Charleston, South Carolina: CreateSpace Independent Publishing Platform.

In *The Forever Initiative*, SFL faculty member Alan J. Hawkins calls for more state-directed public support for a series of educational efforts to help individuals and couples form healthy relationships and enduring marriages. He outlines an integrated set of feasible and affordable educational initiatives across the early life course, beginning in youth, continuing in early adulthood, engagement, and through the early years of marriage. He reviews the early, encouraging evidence that these kinds of educational initiatives can help to strengthen relationships and increase family stability.

While the causes of family instability are many and deep, Hawkins argues that this public policy agenda of educational initiatives can make more young people today better drivers of their romantic relationships, more competent at avoiding destructive detours, and more capable of achieving their marital aspirations and destinations.



THE
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