

CONTINUITIES AND DIVERSITIES
A PROFESSIONAL AUTOBIOGRAPHY

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INTRODUCTION

As I drove the long road to the main building of the Paulist Fathers Novitiate in Oak Ridge, New Jersey, where I was to attend a reunion of my Catholic seminary class of 1966, I was aware mainly of the discontinuities in my life between 1966 and 1999. I was no longer a Catholic, let alone a Catholic seminarian intending to be a priest. As a Unitarian Universalist, my religious views fell outside of mainstream Christianity. I had married in 1971 and recently had launched two adult children. I work in a "secular" University teaching family social science and marriage and family therapy. When I first greeted my classmates in the dining hall of the novitiate, the distance between the man at age 21 and the man age 54 seemed great indeed.

The reunion reoriented me like an earthquake re-shuffling the tectonic plates. I came to see the closeness, not just the distance, between myself then and myself now--the continuities, not just the discontinuities. It was like meeting myself again in a time warp with people who knew me then and were eager to know me now. In addition to powerful personal and spiritual discoveries, I found a new sense of the weaving of the threads of my current academic and professional career back to my developmental years. It is those threads that I would like to share with you under several major headings, writing chronologically within each of six quite diverse themes that have characterized my professional life story.

THE WORLD OF THEORY

I have loved ideas since I was age 14, when I discovered philosophical questions through conversations with a 17-year-old friend. We would actually read St. Thomas Aquinas's proofs

for the existence of God and try to refute them! (This hubris has probably never left me, but I hope it is now tempered by a sense of humor.) Flash forward to the mid-1980s, when I wrote an article for Family Process titled "Quanta, Quarks, and Families: Implications of Quantum Physics for Family Research" (Doherty, 1986). This paper, which laid out a philosophical basis for post-positivist family science based on the theories behind quantum physics, had its roots in a single science class in seminary. I clearly remember the day when the physics instructor broke the news that light was both a wave and a particle, depending on how you measured it. During this course, we had re-conducted the experiments underlying the original debate about the wave theory versus the particle theory of light. First it was clear to me that light comes in waves, but then the particle experiments led me to reject wave theory in favor of particle theory. In the last class period of the semester, the instructor, Father Justin McCormick, pulled the intellectual floor out from under me by declaring that the "truth" in this case was both/and--both particle and wave, depending on how you chose to measure it. I was a 19-year-old Catholic lad who believed there was one right answer for every important question in life. I think I never recovered from the shock. My quantum physics paper, published 22 years later, allowed me to make some sense for my work of my first intellectual experience of non-sense.

In my college years in seminary, I did not take a single course in psychology or the social sciences. But I had a good dose of philosophy--medieval philosophy through the early 20th century--followed by two years of graduate work (and an M.A.) in theology. Even in theological studies, I was attracted to philosophers because they dealt with first principles. In 1969-70, I did my masters thesis on Alfred North Whitehead's philosophy of God, a pretty bold project since Whitehead was not even a Christian thinker. But the Catholic Church and the Paulist Fathers

were more far more open-minded in 1970, following the Vatican Council, than when I had entered seminary in 1963.

My study of Whitehead in seminary influenced my later theoretical work in family science, not only in the quantum physics article but also in the contextual approach of the first chapter of the Sourcebook of Family Theories and Methods: A Contextual Approach (Doherty, Boss, LaRossa, Schumm, Steinmetz, 1993). Whitehead stressed the interdependence of everything in the universe and the processual flow of these influences over time.

Conceptualizing anything outside of its process and context was to commit the "fallacy of misplaced concreteness." In my work on the Sourcebook, I was committed to exploring the sociohistorical and cultural forces that have shaped the family field, not for the purpose of debunking but for the purpose of understanding. Before the Sourcebook, most forays into the historical context of a theory in our field were aimed at showing how its flaws stemmed from its historical biases (as with Structural-Functional theory in the 1950's). The problem with this approach in practice is that it assumes that the critic does not also stand in a particular historical context that shapes the critique--a context that will be in turn be used to explain and critique the work of the critic!

Thus emerges an intellectual thread going back to my Catholic adolescence and young adulthood: ideas and theories are very important, to be taken fully seriously, but they are context-dependent. Hardly any family scholar would disagree with this in principle, but the contextual approach is quite difficult to make part of one's everyday work as a researcher and teacher. Mostly our writing reflects what I term the "Olympian perspective," that is, the author who proposes, explicates, and critiques from the mountain top without acknowledging the context out of which this work emerges--the mountain of personal, gendered, ethnic,

philosophical, theological, historical, cultural, and other contexts. For example, scholars criticize the structural-functionalists of the 1950s for their emphasis on social conformity but generally do not acknowledge how the social revolutions of the 1960s and 1970s have shaped the current generation's distrust of social conformity in favor of individuality. Another example: most scholars who write about religion and the family, or about spiritual issues in family therapy, do not mention their own religious context. Rarer still is the ability to not only acknowledge contextual factors in one's work but also to explore how these factors create lenses through which we ourselves see some family and other social phenomena, and how the same lenses may limit what we can see. I'm not sure I am very good at this myself, but I do hold it as a scholarly ideal in an era of complexity. In any event, I am a committed theoretician with a contextual twist.

THE WORLD OF PRACTICE

At the same time as I was a young teen pondering Aquinas' proofs for God's existence, I was doing volunteer work in the community. Through a Catholic organization called the Legion of Mary, I visited shut-ins and old people in nursing homes, among other activities. I wanted to be a priest not so much to be a scholar but to be a pastor. My Irish Catholic family (two parents, four siblings) supported my ideals quietly but without cheerleading or pressuring. It was clear to me that I was choosing a life that my parents would be proud of, but my parents also had a pragmatic Catholicism that was a bit skittish about too much overt piety. Wanting to serve people in my life, I felt I had a calling to the priesthood as my place to serve. I was attracted to the Paulist Fathers, a progressive American-born religious order, because of their history of innovative pastoral practice and outreach to the American culture, and their commitment to

fostering individual initiative among their priests. I wanted to serve, but I also wanted to make a difference by not following the traditional paths.

The thread of working with families started in 1967 when I began to do pastoral fieldwork as a seminarian at St. Martin's Church in a mostly African-American community in Washington, D.C. I did home visits to get to know the parents of the children I was working with, and I organized neighborhood groups of parents to meet with teachers. Looking back, I see how little I understood then, as a celibate young Catholic seminarian, about raising children, but I could offer my interest and support. For the first time I had glimpses inside families other than my own, and I was hooked on their fascinating relationships and dynamics. But beyond any intellectual interest, through my home visits, I received the gift of people opening their hearts and stories to me, especially their stories of pain and hope. For an intellectually oriented and fairly self-contained young man, these were powerful shaping experiences. I began to write poems about my experiences with these families. Following is one I saved. It is about an elderly African-American woman who opened up to me with her story. But it's also about the revelation that I could be a caring presence for someone who is hurting without having to interpose my own story or to share the airtime. Old Mrs. Brown helped propel me about of my 22-year-old self-centeredness.

Old Mrs. Brown

Old Mrs. Brown, don't be so sad,

and don't talk on so long, with wet eyes.

(Why can't you relate, equate

like strong people do?)

You say you've lost your husband and your sister and your son--in one year?

(Why can't you relate, equate?

Don't talk on so, you're not giving me a chance.)

You say your daughter deserted her infant son
and you've mothered and fathered him these nine years,
and you're old.

(It's my turn to talk, Mrs. Brown, can't you see?)

You say that your husband was adrift on a strange ocean those last six years,
a solitary senile stranger who you scarcely knew.

And you kept and cared for him because he always used to say,
in those happy years,

that he'd rather turn to ashes than finish his life in some foundation.

(Perhaps you'd be interested in an experience I had recently.)

And when he died at last, you collapsed with grief.

You went to your daughter's farm (doctor's orders)
and you wept when alone.

For, you said, even when his spirit was not with you,

You could still put your hand on him--your firm, creased, soft hand.

One day, you tell me, your daughter squeezed your arm and said

"I'm sadder than you, Ma. I've lost a father and a mother too."

And then your strength ebbed back.

Tell me more, Mrs. Brown, I am listening.

There have been many other teachers like Mrs. Brown in my life as a practitioner. Having discovered the world of families in seminary, I knew I wanted to be a family professional when I left seminary in 1970. But I had never heard of the field of family studies, and I thought marriage and family therapy was taught only in psychology and social work departments. Graduate school in psychology would have required me to take a year or more of undergraduate course work to be eligible, and I was unwilling. So I filled out application to social work masters programs in the New York City area, where my wife and I had moved after we married in 1971. By happenstance, I visited a friend who was in a Ph.D. program in the Department of Child Development and Family Studies at the University of Connecticut. Once I discovered that this kind of program existed, where I could study and learn to work with families as my main emphasis, I tore up the social work applications and applied to the Connecticut program. There I worked with and was mentored by Eleanore Lucky and Robert Ryder. From Eleanore I learned to see families humanistically, not just as systems. From Robert I learned a cool-eyed skepticism about inflated claims and covert value positions. And with two mentors who integrated and valued both research and practice in their careers, I never looked back from choosing a career doing the same.

My contributions to the world of practice have fallen in four areas, which I will describe briefly: the Family FIRO Model, medical family therapy, the Levels of Family Involvement Model, and my work on morality and therapy (which I address in a later section of this chapter). I came to the Family FIRO Model from my concurrent study in graduate school of family systems and small group development. Along with my colleague Nicholas Colangelo, I adapted Will Schutz's Fundamental Interpersonal Relations Orientation model of group develop to family development and family therapy (Doherty & Colangelo, 1984; Doherty, Colangelo, & Hovander,

1991; Doherty & Hovander, 1990; Horst & Doherty, 1995). The model includes three core dimension of family interaction--inclusion, control, and intimacy--and proposes that these three constitute a hierarchical, developmental sequence when families undergo structural and other major changes. In other words, the first developmental task of families is to reformulate inclusion processes such as role re-definition, boundary setting, everyday connecting, and creating shared meanings. The success of this inclusion work influences how they manage control issues that arise in family conflict. Lack of clarity about roles in a new stepfamily, for example, leads to non-resolvable family control problems. Intimacy interactions, defined as close emotional interactions involving mutual self-disclosure, in turn are compromised by negative control dynamics and facilitated by positive control dynamics. Besides this developmental proposition, the other major proposition of the Family FIRO Model is that the three sequential dimensions can be viewed as a priority sequence to guide clinical intervention: inclusion issues take first priority, followed by control issues, and then by intimacy issues. Facing a couple with uncertain commitment to the marriage (an inclusion issue), negative conflict patterns, and a lack of emotional intimacy, the therapist should focus first on the commitment issue to determine whether there is enough "glue" in the relationship to work on the control issues, which in turn would have to improve for the relationship to be safe enough to work directly on intimacy. This model, which seems to tap an implicit clinical decision-making used by many experienced therapists, has been useful in training family therapists who are dealing with a wide range of problems simultaneously at the beginning of therapy.

My second contribution to the practice of marriage and family therapy derived from my work as a faculty member in the Department of Family Practice (1979-83) at the University of Iowa and later the University of Oklahoma (1983-86). (My first two years as an academic, 1977-

79, were in the Department of Home Economics at the University of Iowa.) Working full time in a family practice medical residency program was another ground shifting experience. Prior to that position, my main contact with the medical world was through my wife, Leah, who is a nurse. In family medicine, I learned how limited my perspective on families had been to the psychosocial side, ignoring the biological, and how much I had focused on intra-familial dynamics to the exclusion of families' relations with broader systems such as health care systems. These experiences led to a series of collaborative books with physician and family therapist colleagues that helped to launch the field of family systems medicine and medical family therapy (in sequential order: Doherty & Baird, 1983; Doherty & Baird, 1987; Doherty, Christianson & Sussman, 1987; Doherty & Campbell, 1978; McDaniel, Hepworth & Doherty, 1992, 1997). I believe that the principal contributions of this work have been in two areas: theoretically, a biopsychosocial/family systems model that transcends the limitations of traditional family systems theory; and clinically, a collaborative, multidisciplinary way to work with families experiencing serious medical problems. It continues to be one of my passions.

The third area of contribution started in family medicine and extended to one of my original practice areas that I had strayed from: family life education. A core issue for professionals who work with families outside of therapy settings--providers such as physicians, nurses, medical social workers, and parent educators--is how far to wade into the personal and family problems of their clients or their clients' families. In the mid-1980s, my colleague Mac Baird and I developed a model of five levels of involvement with families, beginning with minimal involvement (level 1) and then moving hierarchically through collaboration and information (level 2), emotional support (level 3), brief focused intervention (level 4), and family therapy (level 5). This model has proved useful in the training of family physicians to do mid-

range work with families--a combination of level two information and collaboration with level three emotional support (Doherty & Baird, 1986, 1987). And it has led to a variety of research studies spearheaded by Kim Marvel documenting that the levels can be reliably and validly measured in everyday medical practice. (Marvel, Doherty & Weiner, 1998; Marvel, Schilling, Doherty & Baird, 1994) More recently, I have applied the levels model to the work of parent and family educators, where it has proved useful in helping these family professionals define what they do and do not do with families (Doherty, 1995a). Specifically, most parent educators aspire to level three competency, and some parent educators develop level seek four skills (brief focused intervention) under the supervision of a level five family therapist. The model has helped to address the decades old question of the difference between family education and therapy.

In reflecting on this varied body of work in the domain of practice with families and other professionals, I now can see more clearly the influence of my Catholic roots on my desire to be of service to others. Of particular importance has been the influence of the Paulist Fathers on my efforts to think creatively about serving in ways outside the mainstream of current practice. This has been modified somewhat by more recent influences of Unitarian-Universalism toward more open-mindedness and respect for human and professional diversities than I would have been able to accept earlier.

THE MORAL WORLD

Throughout the first three decades of my life, I was very interested in moral issues. This changed when I started my Ph.D. work in 1974, as I began to take on the value-neutral approach of social science and therapy. I came to reject both the traditional moral theologies of my Catholic past and developmental moral frameworks such as Kohlberg's, on which I had done a

masters thesis in 1973, (Doherty & Corsini, 1974). No longer a believing Catholic, and yet not deeply into Unitarian-Universalism, I became a moral relativist: because different people in different social and cultural conditions value some behaviors more than others, there is no clear way to decide what is right and wrong, and therefore people should be free to follow their own values unless their behavior clearly infringes on someone else's rights. I rejected Kohlberg's moral stage theory when Gilligan and others pointed out its bias towards rational, individualistic reasoning, and when I saw an arrogance in defining the "highest" moral stage to coincide with Kohlberg's own moral positions. I became a moral critic and skeptic who believed that the goal of social science and therapy were to be as a value-free as possible, and that the chief threats to family science and family therapy were covert values that encouraged conformity to traditional social values. Having ascended Mount Olympus, I was largely unaware of what I was bringing to the moral table. I stayed there for the next ten formative professional years.

I still remember where I was sitting, in the spring of 1985, as I started reading the book Habits of the Heart: Individualism and Commitment in American Life (Bellah et al., 1985). It was my first confrontation with how the skeptical, value free stance I had taken towards family science and family therapy was deeply flawed. I had assumed I had transcended most culturally-based values in favor of a scientific and clinical worldview, when I was actually swimming in the mainstream current of American individualism, with its emphasis on self-interest and avoidance, especially by professionals, of any language that smacked of moral discourse. The key chapter was the one presenting an interview with a California therapist who was asked why she was committed to her children. Her responses were entirely self-oriented: commitment was a personal value to her, and she would feel terrible guilty if she abandoned her children. Absent, despite probing questions, was any articulation that parental commitment is a broader ethical

principle than a strictly self-chosen value. The therapist made it clear that she could not speak for what anyone else's values should be, just her own idiosyncratic value stance. I was disturbed to acknowledge that, if I were the one interviewed, I would probably have demonstrated the same impoverished moral discourse. It was a wake up call.

What followed was another 10-year period of exploration of the moral domain in family science and in family therapy, culminating in my choice of the theme for the 1993 National Council on Family Relations Annual Conference, "Moral Discourse About Families," and then the 1995 book Soul Searching: Why Psychotherapy Must Promote Moral Responsibility (Doherty, 1995b). The principles themes of my work in this area are as follows: a) being value-free and morally-neutral about families and therapy is impossible; b) the so-called "value free" stance generally means that one embraces uncritically the mainstream cultural assumptions about values and morality--which in the case of the U.S. means an ethic of individual self-interest; and c) it is possible to engage in moral consultation in therapy that both reflects the therapist's moral sensibilities and respects the autonomy and the diversity of contemporary clients and families. For example, the decision to divorce or to stay married is, in part, a moral decision because it affects so many stakeholders in the marriage and family. Neither rational choice theory in social science nor therapists' attempts to be neutral and value free about this decision does adequate justice to the domain of moral responsibility in this often-torturous decision. Soul Searching brought together a critique of mainstream psychotherapy, an alternative view of the moral sense from symbolic-interactional theory, and a hands-on treatment of the craft of engaging in moral conversation with clients.

This interest in issues of moral responsibility in families led directly to my current work on fatherhood. The pivotal clinical case in my career, in 1987, was a recently-separated father

who was about to abandon his children. That case was where I translated, for the first time, the Habits of the Heart critique into my practice. And it sparked to an ongoing professional interest in fathers and father-child relations, not doubt also strongly influenced by the transforming personal experience of being a father to children born in 1973 and 1975. This early interest in fatherhood bore fruit in mid-1990s in a report on responsible fatherhood commissioned by the Department of Health and Human Services, which was later published by the Journal of Marriage and the Family (Doherty, Kouneski, & Erickson, 1998). In 1999, I became Principal Investigator on a federally funded research study to test the efficacy of a transition to fatherhood intervention in promoting closer father-child ties and better father-mother collaboration.

My work on the moral domain of families and therapy reflects the "both/and" stance I now try to integrate in my professional life. That is, it reflects an important element of Catholicism--that moral issues are highly important and must be taken seriously in private and professional life--and a dimension of Unitarian-Universalism--that moral sensibilities and values arise best from respectful dialogue among equal citizens and must continually be adapted over time. It also reflects an element common to both of these disparate religious traditions: that morality is not just a private matter but also a public one. Much of my current development is in the area of families and community.

My interest in community, combined with the both/and philosophy, leads me to seek ways of speaking and writing that emphasize points of convergence among rival positions rather than contributing to further polarization. I see writing as having similarities with therapy: language can be used to connect and open up possibilities for understanding, or it can be used to obfuscate and take one-up positions. I am particularly proud that two individuals with very

different perspectives have publicly endorsed Soul Searching: pioneering feminist family therapist Rachel Hare-Mustin and radio talk show host Laura Schlesinger!

THE RESEARCH WORLD

I went to graduate school to become a practitioner--first, a family life educator and then a marriage and family therapist. But after doing a masters theses, I was hooked on research. My first study was not in the family area but in the human development, with a thesis on intelligence and creativity as predictors of moral development in college women. Getting it published (Doherty & Corsini, 1976) was the reinforcement I needed to believe that I could write for publication and have an academic career.

As I look back at my research publications, I see several areas that interested me for a while, to be succeeded by new interests. No single topic has captured me for more than five years or so. I started out with dissertation and follow up work on personality and marriage (Doherty & Ryder, 1979). Then I became interested in the application of cognitive social psychology, especially attribution theory, to the study of the family (Doherty, 1981a,b,c). Once I moved to teaching at medical schools, my research interests turned to family and health topics, including the family dynamics of health behaviors such as smoking, obesity, and cooperation with medical regimens (Doherty & Allen, 1994; Doherty & Whitehead, 1986; Whitehead & Doherty, 1989; Doherty & Harkaway, 1990; Doherty, Schrott, Metcalf & Vailas, 1983).

One content thread connecting my pre-medical school and post-medical school research is divorce, which I have studied from both adult and child perspectives and which has connected with my interests in the moral underpinnings of marriage (Doherty, 1980, 1983; Doherty & Burge, 1989; Doherty & Needle, 1991). Another thread through the years has been an interest in what happens to families in the community when they are involved with family professionals

or family education programs. Back in graduate school, I became concerned about the cult-like features of Marriage Encounter weekends (Doherty, McCabe, & Ryder, 1978). This concern led to a series of studies documenting patterns of negative effects of these weekend experiences on certain couples (Doherty, Lester & Leigh, 1986; Lester & Doherty, 1983). In the 1990s, my "real world" research interests surfaced in work on the professional practice patterns of marriage and family therapists and the satisfaction and outcomes of their clients (Doherty & Simmons, 1995; Simmons & Doherty, 1998). This research was the first in the family field to reflect the new national emphasis on health services research in community settings, as distinguished from university or laboratory based studies with unknown generalizability to the community of practitioners and clients

My current research focus is on fathering. I got into this issue after being invited to head up a U.S. Department of Health and Human Services contract project to write an overview and conceptual framework on responsible fathering. I had been interested in fatherhood from a clinical perspective for many years (Doherty, 1981), and more recently from the perspective of their moral responsibilities to their children of fathers (Doherty, 1995b). But now I immersed myself in the research on fatherhood and first authored the HHS report and subsequent journal article (Doherty et al., 1998). This work in turn influenced the funding priorities of the federal grant agencies, and my colleagues Marti Erickson and Ralph LaRossa and I applied for, and won, a grant to test an educational intervention on the transition to fatherhood. This project began in the fall of 1999, and I expect to stay in the fatherhood research area, if my past record repeats itself, for about five years.

THE WORLD OF MAINSTREAM CULTURE

My interest in context, morality, practice, and community have moved me to become a student of mainstream U.S. culture and how it affects families and those of us who study and work with families. I now keep files with articles and clippings on contemporary popular culture and especially the market culture, which has come to dominate the U.S. and the rest of the Western World. I have been struck by how, in the family field's interest in cultural and ethnic factors affecting families, we have tended to focus appropriately on the issue of specific racial and ethnic groups, but then ignore the larger culture that sweeps along almost all families in its powerful current.

This interest in cultural movements spurred my fascination with the development of modernist culture in the early and mid-twentieth century and the more recent emergence of postmodernism, subjects I have written about for both family therapy (Doherty, 1991) and family science audiences (Doherty, 1999). The issues are too complex to explicate briefly here, but my view is that family science was born as a modernist social science with a belief in the pursuit of knowledge by methods that strive to be as objective as possible. Postmodernism, with its profound skepticism about professional knowledge, and even the Enlightenment idea of progress, has challenged the foundations of modernist assumptions in a way that the field is just beginning to come to grips with. But postmodernism itself embraces no explicit value system (implicitly the value seems to be one of liberation from oppressive systems), and is thus not capable of providing the kind of synthesis the family field now needs. We are increasingly caught between paradigms, not only modernism versus postmodernism, but the related polarity between positivism versus postpositivism. Established scholars feel the strain less acutely than graduate students and new scholars because we launched our careers in a single modernist, positivist tradition, where many of us succeeded and won tenure before the grand critiques

arrived on the scene. The next generation has absorbed both the earlier tradition and its critiques at the same time. Most cannot be the true believers we were in the old paradigm, but as yet there is no new consensus about how to operate with the new paradigm. Like it or not, they are the first generation of postmodern family scholars.

My most recent work in the area of culture has focused on the analysis of the consumer culture as it has invaded family life and the professions. I have been mentored in this area by Harry Boyte and Nancy Kari, from the Center For Democracy and Citizenship at the University of Minnesota (Boyte & Kari, 1996). Boyte, Kari, and their colleagues, coming mostly from political science and social activist perspectives, argue that Americans are increasingly becoming a nation of consumers as opposed to productive citizens. I have used this work to develop a critique of how therapists and other family professionals, through an allegiance to a top-down expert model, unintentionally perpetuate a professional versus consumer dichotomy with families. Knowledge and resources are centered in the professions whose job is to get out the word to families. Families' job is to listen well and practice what we preach. This approach is endemic in twentieth century professions, not just in the family field. I am beginning to write and speak about an alternative model for family/professional/community partnerships that aim to unleash the expertise of families in community, with professionals serving as consultants and catalysts instead of just service providers.

My second approach to consumer culture is reflected in a new book on the consumer culture of childhood and the therapeutic culture of parenthood (Doherty, 2000). Written for parents, this book argues that the consumer culture's invasion of family life has led many parents to see themselves mainly as providers of services to entitled children. Children's responsibilities as citizens of families and communities become invisible, and parents lose confidence in their

ability to set limits and create expectations for their children. Associated with the consumer model of childhood the trend for contemporary families to be hyperactive in filling children's schedules, which leads to a decrease in commitment to family rituals (Doherty, 1997). On top of these problems with the consumer model is the influence of a cultural therapeutic model of parenting that stresses the fragility of children and the importance of parents not showing anger or expecting social conformity. My most recent book on the theme of the consumer culture and the family deals with what I have termed "consumer marriage." (Doherty, 2001).

I am currently working on community activation around the theme of family time, which is threatened by the consumer culture, and leads families to lose their rituals and their mindfulness about family bonds (Doherty, 1997). Following is a statement I drafted with a community group working on a mission of taking back family time. It gives the flavor of this work that blends the themes of family, mainstream culture, social responsibility, and community. The title of the statement is "Families' Civic Work: Family Life First."

"Family Life First is a group of citizens in suburban Minneapolis who are committed to building a community in which family life has **first** priority in an over-busy and over-scheduled world. The group is committed to reversing the deleterious effects of the consumer culture on childhood. Today, parents see themselves as competitive providers of services to children, while children are overscheduled in a frantic pursuit of experiences and opportunities for personal enrichment and advantage over peers.

Family Life 1st was created out of a town meeting in Wayzata, Minnesota, attended by parents and community leaders concerned with this social problem that "has no name." It consists of parents, community leaders, clergy, teachers,

and other professionals. Family Life 1st is based on the premise that the family can only be a seedbed for current and future citizens if it has the central authority for raising children. This means achieving balance between internal bonds and external activities. It also highlights the fact that this balance has become gravely out of whack for many families of all social classes, and that strengthening family life requires a grass roots movement led by families themselves.

The exaggerated emphasis on athletics is a case in point for change. One participant in the town meeting reported that she feels "terrorized" by coaches who insist on practicing on Mother's Day and Thanksgiving Day. Another was told by the soccer coach that her family could take vacation only during a two-week period in August. Most social, educational, and religious programs are aimed at individuals who are pulled out of their families. In one town, the coaches and clergy met in a "summit meeting" to divide up families' times so as to avoid competition between church and sports. Ironically, despite the overabundance of community activities available (in one community there are 14 organized activities for three year olds), there are few chances for whole families to participate in common, intergenerational activities. There are even fewer opportunities for families to engage in citizenship activities that build the commonwealth. We are a hyper-individualistic, consumer-oriented society that values families as a political icon and marketing target, but does not take family seriously as a place for growing productive citizens.

"Family Life 1st" has generated a vision of a desired future for families. It has begun a series of stakeholder interviews to better understand the problem and

to solicit allies. We want to inspire a broad community discussion about an unspoken problem. We are committed to a "no-villains" approach that does not blame parents, coaches, clergy, or any others. But we aim to have political clout through publicly recognizing community activity groups that support families in making their time a priority, in part through generating media attention for public events. A specific work in progress is to develop along with community activity groups, youth, and families, a set of working policies that acknowledge, support and respect families' decisions to make family time a priority. One program director in a prominent agency has stated that a "Family Life 1st Seal of Approval" would give them the political leverage to make programmatic changes in his agency.

We are also thinking beyond Wayzata. We aim to stimulate a national movement of families taking back their lives through democratic public work. We are committed to reversing the encroachment of the consumer culture on the world's smallest democracy--the family.”

THE WORLD OF PROFESSIONAL ORGANIZATIONS

Being a Catholic seminarian made me an ultimate organization man. It has never left me. I see myself as a first-generation family scientist and marriage and family therapist who is committed to the future of the family field. I am first generation because my teachers and trainers came from the original disciplines of psychology and sociology, but I identify with the newer family field rather than these root disciplines. I have been committed to the professions of family scientist, family life educator, and marriage and family therapist. As mentioned before, my professionally-oriented research, funded by the American Association for Marriage and

Family Therapy, has focused on the practice patterns and client outcomes of marriage and family therapists across the country (Doherty & Simmons, 1996). The professional contribution of this work has been to promote the viability of marriage and family therapists in the health care system.

In NCFR, I have served in a number of organizational roles, including co-founder of the Families and Health Section, Program Vice-President for the conference on moral discourse on families, co-founder of the Men in Families focus group, and President in 1998-99. I suspect that my most lasting contribution to NCFR will be the leadership I provided (along with Greer Fox and Mary Jo Czaplewski) in shifting the NCFR Board's governance process from a stultifying, reactive non-model to the Carver Policy Governance model. The Carver model emphasizes that the Board's job is not to micro-manage the staff but to generate vision and set priorities for the association, based on input from members. Staying the course for this necessary change, while dealing constructively with the anxiety of many NCFR members about the change from a familiar but flawed governance model, was the most difficult professional leadership experience of my career. And the most satisfying.

THE WORLD OF TEACHING

Because every brief autobiography has to set limits in scope, I will confine myself to three pointed comments on my role as a teacher. Teaching is where my identities as scholar and practitioner come together as nowhere else. Teaching for me is a fusion of academic science and interpersonal art. And I have been blessed with outstanding students, some of whom have become cherished colleagues, friends, and teachers.

PARALLEL PATHS, CONTINUITIES, AND DIVERSITIES

One of the surprises of the Paulist novice reunion in June, 1999 was the discovery of a parallel path that I have been taking along with the Paulist community, despite little contact for many years. The Paulists also lost some of their moral and spiritual footing during the 1970s and early 1980s, leaning too strongly towards an individualistic model that lacked enough depth and accountability. In letting "a thousand flowers bloom," the Paulists, like the mainstream social science and therapy worlds that I occupied, had trouble articulating their moral and spiritual grounding as a community. Interestingly, the Unitarian-Universalist faith, where I settled after leaving the Catholic Church, is now facing the same dilemma: how to be true to a founding principle of individual freedom of belief and expression while creating a community of moral and spiritual depth and accountability. I take comfort in these parallel struggles and efforts to find a new synthesis between individual and community, between freedom of choice and responsibility for choices made, between family as a locus of self-interest and a domain of mutual accountability. My public philosophy is now an activist brand of communitarianism.

I continue to work at discovering and forging a coherent identity and a mission from the apparently discontinuous threads of my professional life. Here is my latest attempt: I am a Catholic-Paulist-Unitarian/Universalist-Family Scientist-Family Therapist who loves theory, practice, moral exploration, research, cultural exploration and democratic community building, organizational development, and working with students. Lots of diversity and lots of continuity --that sums it up for now.

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