Family Education and Family Therapy: Tools for Relational Change

In this paper, I wish to outline the substantive base for family education and family therapy in the necessary interaction of family members to secure uniquely human needs –to create a secure and safe base, to belong, to communicate, to have choices within an ethical, relational framework, to grow, to interact, to care for others and to love. Family interaction, if it is successful, creates the context for human development and human care of vulnerable persons –all of us. I will use these reflections on the substance of family interaction briefly to discuss family therapy and family education and raise questions for further work in this area.

Keywords: family education, family therapy, relational tasks, relational change.

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Educación familiar y terapia familiar: guía para el cambio en las relaciones

En este artículo me gustaría destacar la importancia de la educación familiar y de la terapia familiar como medio para que en la interacción familiar queden garantizadas unas necesidades características del ser humano, tales como crear un ambiente familiar estable y seguro, desarrollar el sentido de pertenencia a la familia, la comunicación entre sus miembros, tomar decisiones dentro de un marco de relaciones ético, crecer dentro del núcleo familiar, interactuar en él, preocuparse de los otros miembros y, por supuesto, amarlos. La interacción familiar, siempre que sea satisfactoria, crea el contexto idóneo para el desarrollo y el cuidado humano de todas las personas vulnerables, es decir, de todos nosotros. A partir de estas reflexiones sobre el sentido de la

interacción en la familia se puede debatir sobre la terapia familiar y la educación familiar y plantear nuevas cuestiones para futuros estudios.

Palabras clave: educación familiar, terapia familiar, funciones en las relaciones, cambio en las relaciones.

AS A PART OF OTHER work I have done over forty years; family therapist, professor, author, and family life educator, I work as a marital and family therapist in a Catholic parish in Chicago. I work with couples wanting to be married, where there is a question of their understanding of marriage and their ability to make a real commitment to the *communio personarum* that marriage is. I work with young married couples whose relationship is in deep trouble, and with older couples facing relational burnout. These couples have quite severe problems. Were it not for their religious commitment, they would have broken up long ago. They want a personal relationship. Tragically, the more they seek this relationship as their *entitlement*, the more it eludes them. There are so many marriages today, faithful to the institution, but with very little idea of how to have a personal relationship. I also have forty years experience doing family work of a very different sort in my own family. From our marriage I have learned friendship, progressively deepening through seven children who grew up, many now with their own families, and now a deepening friendship with my wife again.

1. The Nature and Dynamics of Marriage

What is marriage? From the perspective of canon law, marriage and family comprise a nexus of relational obligations and rights: fidelity, permanence, openness to children, obligations to children and of children to parents (Hervada, 1987, p. 40). It is a common life project progressively realized through continual repeated acts. These acts are expressions of permanent reciprocal duties and responsibilities. They become habits or virtues, the basis of an effective conjugal relationship (Viladrich, 1998, p. 30). The law is a great teacher, carrying with it the distilled experience of many generations. However the legal perspective provides only a hint of what actually takes place in families. What habits or virtues, inevitably personal, are necessary to create a *communio personarum*? The communion of persons is not so much an mechanical being and acting together as persons in common, but doing such in a way that family members mutually confirm and affirm each other as *persons* (Shivananden, 1999, p. 81; Shivananden, 2001, pp. 251-274; Rousseau, 1995, pp. 151-165). Justice for a person is to be treated as an object of love, not an object of use (Wojtyla, 1981). This relational *justice* requires a special type of family *work*, and a special type of family intervention for professionals who may assist family members, in order that this relational work not fail.

Family relational work demands personal responsiveness to the other, mutual respect and developed communication skills. John Gottmann's research found a strong relation between marital breakdown and certain habits of communication which denigrated, deflected, ignored or showed contempt for the other as a person. Unlike romantic beliefs and media images, happy marriages had constant and continuing differences. However happily married couples were able to *repair* these differences. There was a 5-1 ratio of positive to negative communication. The research suggests that, if marriage is to endure in the 21st Century, it must accommodate the *persons* who comprise it. Couples can learn this accommodation. In contrast to the romantic search for one's self, one's desires, one's

preconceptions in the other, love, (while fueled by romantic beliefs), nevertheless becomes an ongoing discovery and appreciation of the other *as other*. This discovery is a never-ending process, which will gradually unfold over a lifetime. In this sense the virtue of fidelity is not simply the avoidance of infidelity. It is an openness to the reality of the other, a reality which never can be known in advance (Grisez, undated). Sometimes we hardly know ourselves. We can be surprised at our relational deficits, but also with what can emerge from us in the presence of the non-critical acceptance and care of the other. Fidelity is the will to accept the true self of the other as it emerges. Fidelity is not static. It takes for granted that both persons are changing, discovering who they really are, letting go of false selves, but that each is faithful to the changes in the other. The "us" which emerges transcends each proper self (Hargrave, 2000). This flexibility to adapt to the other and to change, as well as this transcendence, is deeply connected with the spiritual side of our nature. We are recognizing our reflective spirituality more and more, and this is discussed in greater detail in our most recent book (Constable and Lee, 2003). Transcending some of our limits, the relationship, the "us", allows us to come to be more than what we are, while remaining what we are (Rousseau, 1995, p. 152). In this narrow sense we can be agents of our own development (Shivananden, 2001).

Successful relationships assume faithfulness through all the personal and environmental changes, which are inevitable in life and in the family life cycle and necessary for growth. The learning process we will discuss today proceeds from the personal relationship of fidelity. Fidelity is a continual choice *of this person* in preference to any other. It is the will to accept the other in loving kindness. It is the *will to become* the person one will have to become if communion is to last and to flourish. This process of becoming takes place so that false selves, no longer appropriate to the relationship as it is becoming, may have to pass away (Grisez, undated). The definition can also be applied to the parent-child relationship. No child is simply an extension of the parent, and good parenting recognizes the difference between our images of the child and the real child who emerges. Each child has self-possession, and this grows in the nourishing soil of interpersonal relationships (Stern, 1985; Galatzer-Levy and Cohler, 1993). Whether in family therapy or in family education, the teaching/learning process can be reduced to personal and relational tasks –tasks which emerge in the gradual learning of fidelity to each other as persons.

2. Tasks in the Learning of Fidelity

Family work will be the most important work we ever do. The following tasks, placed in the context of learning, emerge if the couple is to develop a relationship faithful to the authenticity of the other. These are tasks for the self (personal tasks), while at the same time they depend in the establishment of mutual patterns with the other (relational tasks). These do not necessarily emerge immediately and in the same way for each couple. Not all couples can accomplish these tasks. Some will never accomplish them. Nevertheless present-day couples seek these relational goods, even if they have no idea of how to find them, even if they seek them without personal involvement of themselves with the other, as entitlements, rather than as relational goods. In inevitable difficulties, where there is need for relational and personal change, they must seek them. Firmly based in the nature of a relationship, these tasks are important for persons, who comprise a family, and thus important to family therapy and family education:

1) To learn to communicate as a couple, to listen, to succeed at least partially in understanding the thoughts and feelings of the other, and to express one's thoughts and feelings in a way that can be understood by the other;

2) To learn to make decisions and mutual commitments as a couple, so that both freely assent and take ownership in the decision;

3) To learn to give to each other as a couple, to receive and to manage the goods of the family;

4) To develop the goods of mutual safety, belonging, communication and appropriate freedom in the midst of family interaction;

5) To learn to develop common and compatible life patterns;

6) To learn to adapt as a couple to external relationships, family of origin, friends, social institutions; employment, leisure time;

7) To learn to orient one's personal capacities, needs and life tasks to the needs of the larger communion of persons.

In a world where each person essentially is both different and changing, this is the work of a lifetime. It is different from romantic beliefs about relationships. So much of the work of family education and family therapy is helping couples to affirm that their experience of each other, often messy and unromantic, is the real thing. Other concepts will need to pass away. Nor can spouses fall back on the concept of role they have learned and expect the other to adapt to it. Spouses construct their roles together. They need to engage with each other actively as persons to construct their relationship. They have married a person, not simply an institution or a role. These tasks demand reflective, responsive and spiritual parts of ourselves and for many this is unexpected and difficult work. Many would prefer the more concrete and certain realities of family as they have known it, and this is in many ways the problem. Thus the demands and uncertainty of active engagement with another person in themselves can generate an existential crisis. When can we allow ourselves to accept the other *as other*?

The reconstruction of family life cannot be reduced to something, which takes place mechanically, or to the cure of a medical disorder. It cannot be reduced to its social, psychological and legal components. The delicate and elaborate relational architecture of the intentions and meanings of family interaction cannot easily be described and analyzed. However there are ways of describing family interaction, and thus a scientific base for family education and family therapy. It demands a systematic way of understanding and dealing with the validity of human subjective experience without reducing it to something else. Social psychology and relational sociology (Cooley, 1922; Mead, 1934; Shibutani, 1962; Blumer, 1969; Turner, 1970; Burr, Hill, Nye and Reiss, 1979; Donati, 1989) made some progress in developing an understanding of mutual communication, intentionality, and mutual action in families. Social relationships are created out of human experience and interaction. There are relations between the way people perceive reality, the way people act, their patterns of action, and the structures of relationships which they create. These structures in turn stabilize personal patterns and perceptions in a dense, complex recursive relationship. The relation between people's patterns of behavior and their constructions of their world does not necessarily make behavior predictable in any linear or mechanical way. On the contrary when we allow for people's differing perceptions, behavior becomes somewhat indeterminate. An intentional social world is an indeterminate social world. It is open to reconstruction through *mutual* communication, *mutual* commitments and *mutual* action. Dependent on human volition, on human capabilities, such

as communication, and on human circumstances, it is created by human beings according to unchanging realities of human nature, as well as the variability of culture and the times.

3. The Work of Family: Constructing Appropriate Relational Units

The tasks of communication and interaction take place in the context of stages of family relational development. The dance of development takes place between two or three generations of family members, moving through their own life cycles. At different life cycle stages there are different structures and relational tasks for the members to accomplish and the transition between one and the other stage can be difficult. Beginning with the couple, who gradually form their family unit from two different families, family members interact with other members to carry out personal and relational tasks. Each new family developmental stage, the couple forming its own unit, the arrival of the first child, the family with young children, the family with adolescent children, etc. becomes a set of personal and relational challenges and tasks. The skills learned in the previous stage are necessary but insufficient to successfully manage the latest stage.

Each developmental stage superimposes a demand for a new relational structure on the normal personal struggles of each family member. These developmental stages are illustrated in Table 1.

Table 1.
The Stages of the Family Life Cycle[1]

Family life cycle stage	Emotional process of transition: key principles	Second-order changes in family status required to proceed developmentally
Leaving home: single young adults	Accepting emotional and financial responsibility for self	a. Differentiation of self in relation to family of origin b. Development of intimate peer relationships c. Establishment of self in respect to work and financial independence
The joining of families through marriage: the new couple	Commitment to new system	a. Formation of marital system b. Realignment of relationships with extended families and frieds to include spouse
Families with young children	Accepting new members into the system	a. Adjusting marital system to make space for children b. Joining in child rearing, financial and household tasks c. Realignment of relationships with extended family to include parenting and grandparenting roles

Table 1. (continued)
The Stages of the Family Life Cycle[1]

Family life cycle stage	Emotional process of transition: key principles	Second-order changes in family status required to proceed developmentally
Families with adolescents	Increasing flexibility of family boundaries to permit children's independence and grandparents' frailties	a. Shifting of parent/child relationships to permit adolescent to move into and out of system b. Refocus on midlife marital and career issues c. Beginning shift toward caring for older generation
Launching children and moving on	Accepting a multitude of exits from and entries into the family system	a. Renegotiation of marital system as a dyad b. Development of adult-to-adult relationships between grown children and their parents c. Realignment of relationships to include in-laws and grandchildren d. Dealing with disabilities and death of parents (grandparents)
Families in later life	Accepting the shifting generational roles	a. Maintaining own and/or couple functioning and interests in face of physiological decline: exploration of new familial and social role options b. Support for more central role of middle generation c. Making room in the system for the wisdom and experience of the elderly, supporting the older generation without overfunctioning for them d. Dealing with loss of spouse, siblings, and other peers and preparation for death

[1] From E. Carter and M. McGoldrick. 1999. *The Expanded Life Cycle: Individual, Family and Social Perspectives.* Third edition. Boston: Allyn & Bacon.

These tasks involve developing *a new relational structure* at each family life cycle stage to cope with relational needs. The tasks of environmental coping, of development, of creation of this new relational structure, become even more difficult when family communication is ineffective, when the previous relational structure is not working well, when there are discontinuities and lack of support between generations and in the *living environment*, and when there are severe stresses such as war, unemployment, illness and loss of family members, refugee status, etc.

Social institutions, that is: health care, the educational system, the courts and the justice system, the child welfare system, the labor and employment systems in a globalized economic system, all include family members during vulnerable periods of their life course. Although these social institutions do not often have a family orientation, they need to have one, if they are to succeed in their functions. They often need to find ways to help their families arrange problems encountered in relation to these systems. In the spirit of *subsidiarity* they can assist families to carry out their proper functions, but they risk absolute failure when they try to override family functions or substitute for them. There is need for the highest level of professional education and development of knowledge if the transactions between vulnerable families and these institutions are to be helpful, and not harmful. The importance of the professional work of these institutions as they encounter families is often discounted in modern society. It is no accident that, as social workers develop professionally, they work in each institutional area (Constable, McDonald and Flynn, 2002).

This picture of the *work* of family members at different stages, encountering different conditions, meeting different needs, and the work of social institutions, provides the basis for family education, family therapy and social work. Family interaction and family work are the same, whether a family therapist, a social worker, or a trained family educator is the protagonist. These fields have been developing over the last century. Furthermore, with the diversity of methods now employed by education, therapy, and social work, the three are less easily differentiated. The heart of our discussion is the question of whether families can learn and change, whether things can be better, whether there is something to teach and whether there are proven and effective ways to teach it. In a more settled society families did as families did and the broader community was expected to assist in one way or another. Spouses, parents and children had relatively well defined roles. One married well or poorly. There was little expectation of change. The spheres of family and education remained quite separate. These beliefs are becoming more and more dysfunctional in the light of societal expectations that families accommodate persons. At this time however there is enormous confusion surrounding the family. Families face challenges from society for which they feel unprepared. At times society routinely undercuts the values of families. On the other hand family members are looking for and finding ways to improve their situation. People are in situations where they have to relearn new skills in accommodating what has long been taken for granted.

When we let go of a romantic ideology of family relationships, it may seem obvious that family relationships involve hard work. This would scarcely be a popular view if it were not confirmed by family education, by family therapy, by our own experience of relationships.

Recently it has been confirmed by the findings of social psychological research on couple relationships, particularly that of John Gottman. What is this relational work? Gottman's twenty-five year span of research, describing and analyzing the dynamics of actual couples' relationships, shifts the focus from treating differences as a problem to the question of how couples process their

differences and whether there is enough positive regard to override differences. He found that a certain level of persistent difference and conflict is quite normal in a relationship (1999). The majority (69%) of couples in his studies experience and deal with major issues with no resolution over many years. From Gottmann's perspective whatever the context of the problem immediately experienced, it will also include a) basic differences in the partners' personalities, and b) basic differences in needs that are central to their concepts of who they are as people. These "perpetual problems" did not mean that the couple was unhappy. Happily married couples and unhappily married couples had about the same number of differences. What distinguished them was their ability to repair these differences satisfactorily. Romance however does have its place in this.

Happily married couples had positive feelings about each other, and these overrode incidents of negative interaction. Even where there were few incidents of negative interaction, the absence of positive feelings about the other person predicted divorce within a North American context (Gottmann and Levenson, 2000). Gottmann concluded from his research that for marital quality and stability the positive communication (listening and expressing) behaviors had to outweigh the negative by five to one. When negative behaviors and memories prevailed, new communications and behaviors tended to be interpreted negatively. A "cascade" of increasing distance and isolation is established, and the marriage would move to a split (Gottmann, 1999). These positive behaviors are not accidental. If they are to be effective, they have to be the creations of a free and continuing mutual commitment. They must be gifts.

Gottmann's research and consequent therapeutic model focuses on the ability of couples to develop positive regard for each other and to repair differences. He points out that four negative patterns of communication, *criticism, defensiveness, contempt and stonewalling* (which he calls the four horsemen of the Apocalypse), if prolonged, almost unfailingly predict marital split in the North American context. They interfere with the couple's ability to construct together the delicate relational and intentional architecture of a family. *Criticism* is any statement that implies that there is something globally wrong with the other, something that is probably a lasting aspect of the partner's character. *Defensiveness* is an attempt to defend oneself from a perceived attack. In marital interaction it often takes the form of the innocent victim posture. The message is, "What are you picking on me for? I didn't do anything wrong". The antidote to defensiveness is to go back to the original communication and repair it.

The third horseman, *contempt*, is any statement of nonverbal behavior that puts oneself on a higher plane than one's partner. It often sounds like mockery with a contemptuous facial expression. It stops positive communication completely because it is directly aimed at the other. He considers contempt the "sulphuric acid" of a marriage. From Gottmann's research the amount of contempt in stable, happy marriages is essentially zero (Gottmann, 1999, p. 47). It is difficult to move back from contempt and repair it except through a long period of positive work of both partners on a greatly revised relationship. The fourth horseman, *stonewalling*, occurs when the listener withdraws from the interaction, shuts down, and is chronically unwilling to return to interact with the partner. Stonewalling is difficult to rectify. Generally stonewalling is such an embedded pattern that the stonewaller is hardly aware of what he or she is doing (Gottmann, 1999, pp. 41-47). Women tend to use criticism in a conflict; men tend to use defensiveness and stonewalling. In this connection, Gottmann found that in happy marriages men to listen to women. Repairs are more important than

the original problem. Everything is fueled by the positive feelings about the other that we identify as love. Couples can learn to change negative communication patterns. Among newlyweds, even with high negativity, if they were able to learn to make effective repairs, 85% experienced happy, stable marriages six years later (Gottmann, Driver and Tabares, 2002).

4. What do families seek?

We need to begin by a reflection on the substance of family in action. What relational goods are sought (and often found) through the interaction of family members? How do family members act to achieve these goods? How may these actions be optimized? What is the role of the living, human environment, the context of informal social relations, social institutions, which surround the family and could assist it? What possible assistance could be provided by education and by therapy? The reflection on the substance of family is important. Since what is missing in a focus on family interaction, on methodologies of helping families, is the focus on what families seek and how they might best seek these goods. Such a focus can assist family educators and family therapists to work in the context of change with the strengths and functions of families. This is an educational, rather than medical, focus, working *with persons*, rather than *on* human change processes. The focus on what families seek provides a context for the changes sought by family education and family therapy. It places the families in charge of their experiences. It places a body of research and professional experience at the service of the family so that *these persons* can achieve these elusive goals.

Why would persons form families? Or conversely why would families be essential for persons to grow and develop as persons? Despite all of the problems of living in families, people have preferred to live in them. Rather than seeking a more collectivized existence, like bees or ants, or the solitude of hermits, they struggle with each other and complain mightily about the challenges and human injustices of their situations. All the extrafamilial experiments of the past century, whether kubbutz, collective or commune, have scarcely endured. When they have succeeded at all, it was only through things we would normally attribute to families –relationships of permanence and trust, through connecting their most vulnerable and developing persons– that is, children, the aged, the handicapped, and then all of us –with those others and ourselves too, who would provide the relational goods universally expected in families, particularly the created safety of personal attachment and belonging.

In this sense, not the welfare state, but family is the first social welfare institution. As such, its good functioning is essential to the broader society and the common good. The role of the community is the support of its functioning. Community social institutions supplant it only when one family cannot care for the welfare of its young members, and another is possible, as in adoption or foster care. Much of the content of social work and other helping professions is found in processes of helping families carry out their functions, helping them to do the relational work they do best, dealing with substitute families and dealing with the surrounding complex of social institutions. Social workers in my country have a century-old tradition of doing this. They work within a constant field of families, social institutions, agencies and communities, including the political system. The social worker assists family members to construct their relationships with each other, develop personal capacities for membership and ultimately modify the family structure. The social worker responds to the family members he or she has chosen to work with, and simultaneously to the family as a whole.

The social worker's choice of where in the family to work is based on an assessment of family functioning, structure and tasks in a systems framework. And so the basis for intervention is a developed understanding of the family unit and the personal and relational tasks of its members during different family life cycle transitions and in different circumstances (Constable and Lee, 2003).

5. A Frame of Reference for Family Change

We develop our approach on the constant reality that family members (and families as collective units) *act* within recursive and naturally occurring social realities of family interaction and family structure. These interactions take place in each family though developmental *processes* which are shaped by *communication* and are essential to the development of *persons*. Communication (Isaacs, 1986) shapes the shared *meanings* and *goals* of family life and the particular personal and familial *story* or narrative which results from the process (Constable, 1984).

Persons take part in families to realize basic, uniquely personal needs. Among the basic needs and human capacities which persons seek to realize in a family are:

- *The Need for Safety*. Where there is safety and discretion, the persons and fragile identities of others in the family are protected and belonging is possible.
- *The Need for Belonging*. Where there is belonging, family can be a secure base for action and there can be communication. Family is the place to which one returns (Alvira, 1998).
- *The Capacity for Communication*. Where there is communication, one is free to respond and value the feelings and thoughts of others in the family, express one's own feelings and thoughts, and there can be the capacity for appropriate choice.
- *The Capacity to Choose In an Ethical, Relational Framework*, in a relational framework of concern for the worth and dignity of self and others. Where there is the capacity to choose, respecting one's own dignity and others', there can be the capacity to grow as a person, and to some extent to change patterns, to be an agent of one's own development.
- *The Capacity to Grow, to Interact, to Care and to Love as a Person*. Growth as a person takes place in a context of interaction, communication, care for the needs of self and others, and role differentiation. Where there is the capacity to grow as a person, to interact with others, there can also be the capacity to care appropriately for the needs of self and others and ultimately to love.

None of these goods can found apart from an unique and particular context of unsubstitutable, personal relationships, created mutually by family members. Since these goods can be and are profoundly violated within certain families, there are expectations placed on all families. These expectations support the development of professional services for families in trouble.

6. Family Interaction

Families construct environments to meet these needs. The experience of various approaches to family therapy has found at least six points of effective intervention with families:

1) Working with individual family members on personal and relational tasks;
2) Working to change family communication and meanings;
3) Working to reframe the family's interpersonal narratives and stories of their experience;
4) Working to assist families with family life cycle developmental tasks where they have gotten "stuck";

5) Working to change the family's relational structure and from this their experience of each other;

6) Working to change the family's relationship with environmental systems.

From the family's perspective each of these levels addresses and constructs in different ways the goods which can emerge from family interaction. The most recent developments in family therapy theory have sought to combine these approaches and adapt them to the needs of a particular situation (Pinsof, 1995; Bruenlin, Schwartz and Machune-Karrer, 1992). While theory in family education has not developed exactly in this way, there is no doubt that the emergent educational process of some of the most recent work relates to all of these levels (Halford and Moore, 2002). It demands a broad concept of education (Naval, Rodríguez, Bernal, Sampedro and Rodríguez, 2001, p. 25) and of pedagogy.

7. Common Questions and Processes in Family Therapy and Family Education

How would family therapy and family education assist families in these relational tasks? In the world of family therapy practice, therapists intervene in people's interchanges and interactions: in the patterns and sequences, in communication, in the way relations with others are construed, in what people are accustomed to doing. Through these guided interventions in human interaction the phenomenal world is altered. Assisting family members to communicate appropriately and creatively and make effective mutual commitments is the key to helping them to preserve relationships and restructure their worlds, how they respond to each other and what they do with each other. This body of knowledge about family relationships and interaction becomes a basis for family intervention (Constable, 1984). It is based on the work of family members with each other to create family –an institution, which is suitable and adaptable to persons, to human nature and human needs.

Although many questions remain, the general effectiveness of various forms of family education (Fagan, Patterson and Rector, 2002; Halford and Moore, 2002) and family therapy (Bray and Jouriles, 1995; Pinsof and Wynne, 1995) is already well documented. When we are looking for change in the fabric of family relations, the major questions are what combinations of approaches would be most effective with particular situations and what theory could integrate these approaches (Bray and Jouriles, 1995; Pinsof, 1995; Halford and Moore, 2002). However the field is just beginning. Rather than providing an inventory of all the possibilities of family education and family therapy, it would seem best to look at the prior questions of what the family *is*, what it seeks and how it operates, and from that perspective at questions of whether and how change could occur.

Table 2.
Needs of Persons in Families, Response of the Social Worker and
Ethical-Technical Practice Principles[2]

First Direction: Persons interacting at individual and family life-cycle stages establish family structure & satisfy human needs:	**Second Direction:** Response of the Social Worker	**Third Direction:** The Awareness and Response of Persons in the Family	**Fourth Direction:** Ethical-technical Practice Principle (To Assist the Family Unit To...)
I Safety To Maintain Safety and Discretion, Protecting the Dignity and Fragile Identities of Others	The Social Worker Responds to These Needs, the Family's Personal and Relational Tasks by Assisting Family Members, Individually and with Each Other To Communicate, to Respond to Each Other's Needs, to Accomplish Developmental Tasks, and to Create a Network of Understandings (Family Structure)	The Family Members Respond to the Social Worker's Sensitivity, Understanding, and Response to Them, and the Identification of Personal and Relational Tasks in the Sessions; They Begin to Learn to Respond Appropriately to Each Other and Develop a Climate of Understanding and Support With Each Other Where These Tasks Can be Accomplished.	Develop Confidentiality, Discretion and Trust
II Belonging To Be Treated as an Unique Person of Worth; To Respond to Others in This Way; To Withhold Negative Judgments of Worth			Support the Worth, Dignity and Uniqueness of Each Person
III Communication To Respond Accurately to the Feelings and Thoughts			Develop Purposeful, Skillful and Constructive Communication
IV Capacity to Choose, To Be Concerned for Self and Others To Grow Into Making Choices and Decisions in an ethical-relational framework; To Respect Others' Similar Freedom			Support Self Determination; Principled Choices; Altruistic Beliefs
V Capacity to Grow, to Interact and to Take Care of Self and Others To Carry Out Developmental Tasks With Family Support: To Care Appropriately for the Needs of Self and the Others			Support Differentiation of Self and Care for Others in Revised Family Structure

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[2] From R. Constable & D. Lee. 2003. *Content and Process of Social Work with Families: a Transcultural Perspective.* Chicago: Lyceum.

The most important part of all of this is that the family is inevitably in action seeking these goods in one way or another. The social worker is a skilled coach or mentor for family members in their work of achieving these goods. Members of families seek certain goods through family membership and through work with the social worker. These –safety, belonging, communication, capacity to choose in an ethical, relational framework, capacity to grow, to interact, and to care– are illustrated in the first row of the chart. These are basic human goods necessary for development of every person. If they are goods for one, they are goods for everyone, which each person must help secure. The work of constructing a family, whether as family member or social worker-coach, is inherently moral and normative. The values do not need to be imposed from the outside. They are already present in what the protagonists are seeking each in their own way from the situation, and in the issues and choices with which the family and the social worker are dealing. Each family member, within the limitations of development and personal capacity, seeks the good of *family*, as illustrated on the chart, in his or her own way. However these goods cannot be sought though a mechanical unity, but through *difference*. The reality of family coexists with the constant human reality of difference. It is in the nature of families to have different patterns of seeking the same values, which come from gender, role, personality and from the dance of human development. Similarly, there can be conflicting visions within families of the ways these goods might be sought.

8. Family Education

Family education began over the last century as marriage preparation, frequently sponsored by churches and later moved into education with couples after marriage and with parents. In my country by the middle of the century nonsectarian agencies were developing "family life education" programs of all sorts with populations of families and children which might be at risk or which wanted an educational approach. By the late 1960's well developed and very popular programs were emerging in areas such as couple communication and relationships with one's children. For me in those days as a social worker in a family agency, family life education and work with couples and families were the most important parts of my responsibilities. The trend has accelerated so that by 1985, the time of the first major evaluation of family education (Giblin, Sprenkle and Sheehan, 1985), there was a tremendous diversity of programs using different formats to help family members with different problems. The most developed area has been work with couples contemplating marriage. By the late 1990's between one-quarter and one third of marrying couples in the United States, Australia and Britain were attending some form of relationship education. Halford and Moore (2002) classified three major approaches to relationship education with couples. The most popular approach aims at *information and awareness*. This approach emphasizes the transmission of information about relationships and marriage, assisting the couple to clarify expectations, and increasing awareness of key relationship processes that influence outcomes. There may be a demonstration of relationship skills, but there is little training in these skills (Halford and Moore, 2002, p. 400). In another approach the prospective partners complete *self-report inventories* which assess a broad range of dimensions of couple functioning and the couple is then provided with systematic feedback about the results of these inventories (Halford and Moore, 2002, p. 401). These results lead to a discussion, but there is no systematic training in skills, such as communication or conflict management. A third broad category

involves *skill training*: communication, solving problems, managing negative expressions of feeling, development of commitment to the relationship, dealing with the family of origin of the couple, etc. (Halford and Moore, 2002, pp 401-402). In any case the concept of learning moves from information to analysis, to a rich and deep sharing of experience with the goal of change. At the same time the expected involvement of couple varies from one session (information) to three months (15 sessions) of work, together with between-session work. It is an open question whether this intensity of adult educational involvement in a semi-public forum, so popular in Anglo-Saxon countries, is equally workable in other cultures.

While it is useful for the purposes of our analysis to review these three different emphases, the most popular emerging approaches are longer-term (more than one session) combinations of all three emphases. For example an engaged couples' group will work on learning to communicate appropriately and resolve problems, dealing with issues coming from their own families of origin, personal and shared goals, money, discerning their degree of commitment to a permanent relationship, discussing differences and similarities, etc. Group leaders and members of the groups often become mentors for the group members. These combined approaches, often lasting as many as 15 sessions, utilize group discussion, individual couple role plays and exercises, use of inventories, with individual participants' keeping journals on particular themes and participants and leaders acting as mentors for individual couples as they go through the exercises. In some ways they combine aspects of education and therapy. When I have done family life education, depending on the nature of the group and its objectives, I have tended to combine approaches, even within one session. In any case the distinction between family education and family therapy becomes all the more fluid.

The same general approach can be employed at every stage of the family life cycle: with newly married couples, with parents with young children, with parents with adolescents, with couples dealing with their aging parents, or with particular problem situations, such as death, widows groups, families facing divorce, illness, stepfamilies and families with children with disabilities or women who have had abortions. Group methodologies are powerful. The support of the larger group helps individual family participants to put their situation into perspective, make assessments of their situations, develop their own resources, reach out to each other for help, etc. Once one defines the learning tasks appropriately, there are a variety of group learning and sharing processes, which can be employed (LeCroy and Wooten, 2002; Pawlak, Wozniak and McGowan, 2002).

There have been a variety of studies of the effectiveness of family education in a North American context. Despite the already discussed diversity, these programs have generally proved to be quite effective among participants who complete the program and the evaluation research instrument. All of the approaches have shown promise (Fagan et. al., 2002). A study of 20 different marriage preparation programs found an average effect size of .44 (Giblin et. al., 1985). This would mean that an average couple completing any one of the programs would be better off than 2/3rds of other couples who did not participate. Later evaluation studies have replicated these results or found an even stronger effect size (Hahlweg and Markman, 1988; Hahlweg, Markman, Thurmair, Engel and Eckert, 1998). On the other hand the two populations of those who complete these programs and those who didn't even try may be quite different. In the face of the popularity of these programs and the enormous emphasis on family in North America, couples who choose not to go to these groups may be different. The current direction, as witnessed by our example of the couples' group, is to

combine methodologies, and extend the time and personal involvement expected. More recently these groups have been extended also to families of soldiers, to unmarried couples receiving public welfare and others in high-risk categories, apparently with some success. The question is whether the same results could be found in other parts of the world. Family life education is highly accepted in North America, where there is often a great cultural readiness to trust the group process enough to talk with strangers about personal issues and problems. On the other hand family education has been tried all over the world. Polish parishes have long developed very popular programs where slightly older couples serve as mentors for younger couples. Some dear friends of mine have developed Marriage Encounter in Post-Soviet Lithuania, a country where secrecy and mistrust continue to affect social relations, and direct, honest communication is not the custom. As this methodology grows throughout the world, the question of the applicability and direction of family education in different countries will demand a good deal of attention.

Despite its medicalized name, I would consider family therapy an individualized approach to family education. Conducted by specially trained psychologists, social workers, educators and psychiatrists, the field has been growing for the past half century. In social work its roots go back a century. The field has been methodologically diverse and only gradually moving toward approaches which integrate this diversity into a picture of family interaction (Nichols and Schwartz, 2001; Goldenburg and Goldenberg, 1996). Most practitioners integrate different theoretical bases. Newer, integrative models are emerging in family therapy (Gottmann, 1999; Breunlin et. al., 1992; Pinsof, 1995) and in social work (Constable and Lee, 2003). Despite this diversity of the field, family therapy is generally considered to be effective for most couples or families who complete a sequence of family therapy according to a particular theoretical perspective (Pinsof and Wynne, 1995). Nonetheless, as with family education, I would recommend some caution in evaluating these positive results. Families who think change is possible, who want help, who initiate a helping process, who continue the process through the evaluation phase, are already a select group. Families who do make improvements may relapse (Jacobson and Addis, 1993). Finally, real family change is not something mechanical, but personal and transactional, and thus inherently uncertain and dependent on a multitude of personal and transactional factors. The therapist or educator must first of all have a sufficiently deep practice preparation to deal with these factors.

There is preparation for family therapy in special programs for psychologists, social workers, psychiatrists and some educators. There are many places where education for family life takes place, but to my knowledge there is very little formal, professional preparation for this. Virtually everyone working with people in some professional way works with families, but few acknowledge its centrality to their work. If there were professional preparation, I believe it would be profoundly in the province of education or social pedagogy, although education may be unwilling to stretch itself to accommodate it.

The purpose of this paper has been to establish a frame of reference for questions, which may be pursued further in different contexts. Mindful that descriptive work is necessary prior to inference, the following questions are among many, which would merit further research across national and cultural lines:

1) What are differences and similarities in family education and family therapy?

2) What family education and/or family therapy may work best in different contexts?

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3) What different approaches may be more effective for different family life cycle concerns and needs?

4) What is the role of social institutions, including religion, in sponsoring family therapy and family education? How would these methodologies change in relation to institutional concerns?

5) What may be the role of different professions in provision of family education and family therapy?

6) What training for these methodologies would be most effective?

7) How may the social psychological foundations for these methodologies be developed?

9. Conclusions

There are five major points I would like the reader to draw from this paper:

1) Of all the work we do, our work as family members creating a human environment for each other is probably the most important;

2) Family education and family therapy can begin to prepare people to do this work;

3) Professional work can take place with members of the family, with the family as a whole, and at the juncture of families and institutions; with health care, with education, with the social welfare system, and with the justice system;

4) Professional preparation for work with families involves a scientific foundation in social psychology, in human development, in methods of intervention and a carefully supervised experience working with a wide range of families. There needs to be an ongoing professional tradition of service. Standards and expectations of professional development and a tradition of service are beginning to be developed;

5) The beginnings of the field generate more questions than easily available answers. ■

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