

María Elena García Jiménez*

Pontifical John Paul II for Studies on Marriage and Family, Mexico (Mexico)

“FAMILY – POLITICS – GLOBALIZATION” FAMILY INTIMACY

Summary: Intimacy is a key component of relational bonds, associated not only with sex but with every aspect of what each member of a family expresses in the way he or she can do so. How does it take place? What are the existing approaches towards the family to weigh intimacy? How is intimacy construed, and how can it be widely understood? Intimacy is not static: it changes over time and is different throughout the family life cycle, as well as through the various stages of each of the family members. Why is intimacy relevant? Intimacy is a value, and its nature goes beyond what is often expected: it constructs or deconstructs the family. Because it is deeply connected to feelings, thoughts, beliefs, traditions, and culture, working with intimacy in each member may lead to the armor-plating of the family. Now, the construction of each person as a human individual does not just happen; it requires time, techniques, love, respect, and intimacy, which directly leads to self-fidelity. In turn, self-fidelity in each member of the family can produce what is known as a family coat of arms. While broken intimacy can destroy a person’s self-esteem and, consequently, meaningful, long-lasting relationships, armor-plating intimacy can develop deeply enriched human individuals who bring who they are and what they possess to ultimately weave a strong society. As a result, a society that protects and fosters intimacy not only pays attention to what damages exist and should be prevented but to what makes people live in generous self-donation. Intimacy lets a person know his/her value; therefore, intimacy is the strongest value and technique to assess what we are, what we need, and what we want.

Keywords: family intimacy, coat of arms, armor-plating, self-donation, deconstruction.

Introduction

What is family intimacy? How is family intimacy created? Who creates it? Even at the most basic level, we all can talk about it (its presence or absence) from our personal experience, identifying ourselves with its different forms: physical, related to touch – from a kind caress to sexual intercourse – emotional, experienced with sensations, feelings, and emotions; mental, which involves the

* Address: Prof. María Elena García Jiménez, ORCID: 0000-0002-6599-3002; e-mail: consultoria-fam@gmail.com

meeting of minds; and spiritual, found in the sharing of values, and ethics. All of these expressions of intimacy are inevitably manifested and/or received; that is, communicated. Therefore, we could say: “One cannot *not* communicate”. This axiom suggests that everything one does constitutes a message. In the words of Watzlawick, Beavin Bavelas, et al. (1967, p.1): “Activity or inactivity, words or silence, all have message value: they influence others and these others, in turn, cannot *not* respond to these communications and are thus themselves communicating”.

Now, we can think of fecundation as the starting point of communication. In this context, we consider that communication is driven by self-donation since a human being that has been recently fecundated does not know who will receive him/her, how, where, or why; the only known fact is that such a human is on his/her way and, in that process, is communicating; and while communicating, is giving the couple the ability to co-create. That is self-donation; and, with it, family intimacy begins.

Everything that is to be given requires someone to receive it, and the need to generate attachments is installed. What is attachment? A long-standing connection or bond with others. In this case, with the first immediate *other*: “An affectional bond or tie that an infant forms with the mother”. (Bowlby, 1969) While this attachment is established, the human being passes through a development cycle (Erikson, 1950) consisting of eight (8) different stages: trust, autonomy, initiative, industriousness, identity (no role confusion), intimacy (no isolation), generativity (no stagnation) and integrity (no despair); all of which are building blocks crucial to maturation and produce self-possession.

A person’s development cycle is involved in several systems. Derived from Bronfenbrenner’s (cf. Bronfenbrenner, 1987) ecological system theory, the ecomap – a tool used to gather data about an individual’s environment – shows meaningful interactions and experiences, taking into account the microsystem (immediate environment), i.e. the family; the mesosystem, connecting with the child’s classroom, peers, teachers, neighbors (parks, sports clubs, etc.) with whom the family starts to establish relations and making decisions regarding what, where, and how to share what has been shared in their own family intimacy; the exosystem, which includes school directors; and the macrosystem, represented by the city and state where the family lives.

In turn, the individual’s life cycle is simultaneously intersected with the life cycle of the mother, the father and the parents; with the stages of the life cycle of his/her brothers and sisters; with the systems that each member of the family has, and with those they all construct together during the family life cycle – and after it.

Anything felt, needed, possessed, and/or thought by each member of the family is self-donated, both deliberately and unconsciously. Self-donation takes place for that immanence of the human being, and it goes beyond an emotional attachment, becoming a “fingerprint” on the other; because everything expressed – by any means – is important no matter what it is and is searched to be received and kept.

Family life cycle and intimacy

Family – considered as an octopus with “slippery but enveloping tentacles of intimacy...”, as well as a system of dyadic relationships and a single social unit (Foley – Duck, 2006), overrides the same concept of family intimacy as something manipulative, with an on-purpose direction where the human being is overshadowed; where the human being in his/her same nature acts and reacts no matter what is done to him/her, while the family is being built.

Parents start acting with what they have been constructing by themselves when they were not engaged and with their implicit and explicit marriage contracts. The whole history of each parent starts to guide, trying to establish a route, and this dyadic relationship changes into a triad and more: The first child generates a triple intimacy, for example.

In many countries, most families continue to be biparental, and single-parent families acknowledge the importance of having the corresponding counterpart: a mother figure – when a mother is missing – or a father figure – when a father is missing. However, regardless of how many members are in a family, the development of family intimacy starts and never stops. Generation after generation construct intimacy and inherit certain values of intimacy that others do not, in addition to the new intimacy generated by each new member of a new family. Through the life stages, we can again perceive the changes in the life cycle of each member of the family and in that of the family (as a whole). In other words, we can observe the point at which a certain family is in its life cycle, according to Estrada’s (cf. Estrada, 2014) six (6) stages: detachment, union, children, adolescence, re-union and old age. Since intimacy is developed in each of these stages, the biological, psychological, social, and transcendental dimensions are to be considered as well. In addition, another set of stages comes into play by defining a family unit as: without children, with children, with school-age children, with adolescents, in a re-union or empty nest, and in old age (Estrada, 2014) with grandchildren. A couple that cannot have children, for example, shares an intimacy that is different from that of a family that already has one child. The same is true for families with sick

member, financial problems, or political issues surrounding them, depending on their country of residence. The types of beliefs, traditions, and rituals of the family also imply intimacy.

Family intimacy and values

Family intimacy offers many aspects to read and assess, as it is within the family intimacy where each member can freely be, see, hear and feel. When intimacy is seen as the core of the family, and parents understand what it is: its dimensions, weight, and meaning, they guide their family towards intimacy. Family intimacy incorporates joy and pain regarding the experiences the family is going through, and with that, parents start valuing what they have had: that which has led them to who they are, what they have, and what they want. Values than start being seen as the path that leads them to act, feel, think and talk. Values acquire meaning when they are put into action as operative habits that help the family – especially the children – to understand what those desired virtues bring. Each virtue is specially introduced in life in a certain way and according to a certain age, as stated by David Isaacs Jones. (Cf. Jones, 2015)

Virtues work deeply inside humans in such a way that can stay forever. For example, justice, the strength of spirit, temperance, and prudence will be well understood by 7-year-olds, 8–12-year-olds, 13–15-year-olds, and 16–18-year-olds, respectively; plus, explaining each, playing games, talking about sad and happy experiences related to them, and acting them out, will cause individuals to introject them. Each virtue starts adding on to another, which results in concatenation, and a virtuous life begins.

Are human beings designed to decide between good or bad? Of course not. They are designed only to choose the greater good and to have “trouble” choosing which is the greater good. Virtuous lives guard and give their attention to the greater good; virtuous lives choose the greater good as a matter of detecting a greater love: they want others to feel what they have experienced (self-donation), yet not risk their lives (self-fidelity). This is intimacy.

When each member of a family appeals to his/her consciousness to select the greater good, family intimacy becomes armor-plated, and his/her coat of arms reminds him/her what is required to be kept, guarded, and defended.

It is safe to say that each family identifies more with certain values, traditions, rituals, beliefs, and experiences than others; also, everything each family introduces, and introjects (which means unconsciously incorporating attitudes or ideas into one’s personality), makes up the family intimacy. The sum of all the members generates a specific family intimacy.

Dangers facing family intimacy

When a family unit fails to consider its personal and family intimacy as a value, its members – and the family itself – tend to weaken, leaving open space for others to come in and introduce whatever other ideas, values, rituals, or beliefs they choose.

Now, families who have ended up changing their traditions and/or values may not have noticed the change at the beginning; but once it has happened, it is usually the parents who start to feel how vulnerable the family has become (as it can be moved by anyone towards anything), and to realize that their family is no longer “in their hands”. All of this results in stress, anxiety, and helplessness – often defined as a kind of permanent feeling. It so happens that while the construction of intimacy was being carried out without consciousness, without a *Life Program*, the family was still being a *Life Program* – a representation – of others. While it is true that a *Life Program* needs to be started by the parents, it is also a reality that it can be adapted, enriched, and incorporated with the family members, and if not careful, foreign ideologies may enter the equation and become a sword that severs the links, the bonds, the intimacy of the family.

Technology, with the Internet everywhere, and the impotence of the parents (their unresponsive situation) have become a danger, leading to providing opportunities for the space to be used by others. In some cases, families have even broken their limits, frames, and patterns, allowing themselves to be enticed by the phenomenon of technology. As a result, family homeostasis has somehow become regulated by external factors, such as ideologies, without any scientific support. Even some scientists have bought into this lack of science in their practices.

We can also observe that laws have been changing, turning the family into something radically different from what we would have ever considered being probable, where parents are allowing their children to be educated primarily by “others” – understanding “others” as any external factor that is introduced into the family intimacy, thus generating a different intimacy; one without identity. The concern is evident since we know that family intimacy provides identity – personal and family identity – and that it is inside the person where intimacy is directly tied to a deep sense of value.

Lastly, insiders or privileged people who possess information that they know could paralyze the family may introduce themselves into the family unit and begin to model and change the stem education, the corpus of their family and their family intimacy, allowed by the same parents and members of the family. The lack of a defensive response to protect family intimacy also

transforms family intimacy itself, so the original homeostasis of the family is now being controlled by insiders and remains in their hands.

Intimacy and Fidelity

At the beginning of this paper, we talked about self-donation and how it is directly related to self-fidelity. Whenever a family works on what it means to take care of the individual's four dimensions, to cause them to develop, together with values and good operative habits or virtues, loving each member for the very fact that they are persons to be loved, and because of this, feeling and evidencing that they are valuable and that they take care of themselves and then of others, self-fidelity becomes family fidelity. This way, by also considering the times that they are living in, and the ways in which they are required to act, intimacy can be armor-plated. An armor-plated intimacy is directly linked to self-donation, and self-donation is directly linked to self-fidelity.

The most basic entity of our society: the family, must defend its own intimacy; it must stop being weakened. Families must stop losing their identity, merely being and acting as inert pieces of a "manufacturing company".

The deconstruction of family intimacy starts with a *feelings approach* by generating immediate emotions to immediately attach to what is considered desirable; then, whatever is not being needed starts being developed as what needs to turn out to be wanted, required, or needed. In this context, whoever provides arguments that do not appeal to feelings, is not accepted.

According to Bauman (cf. Bauman, 2015), globalization has driven human beings towards a liquid society, in a detached culture, which means that they stay away from what was a solidly united society. In addition, the recent pandemic has intensified because of this idea: even though help is required, bodies are being left outside of their houses and on the streets. People are acting for gratification and then leaving; there is no continuity. And this is being initiated when we look at babies, we see that their attention is anchored to a device, and the same is true for adolescents, who are becoming part of this liquid. Without being able to think of what is happening, they also get attached to what is being attacked, destroying society. Adults accept what everybody does as something to be accepted, and old people, if sick, find themselves in the hands of those who get the food and their source of sustenance.

Human intimacy deconstructs, deconstructing everybody, everywhere. Intimacy is woven daily with daily words, moments, glances, and love – as defined by Gary Chapman's five love languages: touch, quality time, service, gifts, and words of affirmation. So, when we truly know which so-called love

language is preferred, when we know ourselves better, and we care for ourselves with what and who we are, respecting ourselves and honoring others’ vulnerability (Gottman, 2013), self-fidelity and self-donation leave no room available for others to get inside.

By respecting others – what they mainly need and feel – seeking their greater good, and honoring it, we recognize their own existence; we weigh their nature, connect with others’ feelings, and stop others who generate intentional pain by displaying good actions obtained from good thoughts and creativity connected to joy and hope. The latter (joy and hope) are virtues – motors installed in our being – that we certainly need; in fact, our body reacts to their absence by getting ill, so we can assure that human beings have not been designed to be without them.

Conclusion: coat of arms

In view of the foregoing, an intimacy-based family model would be understood as a *coat of arms*. When we look at a coat of arms and describe it, we find symbols and images such as swords, columns, animals, bars and stars, among others; we see certain colors, with certain shapes of various types and sizes, which are made of different materials such as stone, metal, wood, leather. Coats of arms are representations that have been used for many generations. They display a family’s pride regarding what they have been keeping, protecting, guarding, flanking, and, consequently, fighting against and struggling for.

Time, techniques, love, strategies, creativity and values are virtues needed to armor-plate family intimacy; this concerns the family and takes society into consideration. In turn, society, weighing what a family is, may decide to either destroy it by confusing, threatening, or isolating or strengthening it by investing in it and caring for it to weave a better world.

Now, in realistic terms, society, and its different sectors: public, private, and science, require a specific budget to operate. At first glance, this could be perceived as an obstacle to development, but it does not have to be so.

With regards to the public sector, even though governmental institutions that develop public policies aimed at the family may generally count on a very low budget (or no budget at all) for these purposes, they can still make a difference in each neighborhood, town, province, municipality, county, state and country in our world, once they fully understand that self-donation has no limit. Moreover, sectors need to prosecute the greater good related to human beings and where they start to obtain the best in a concatenation of many greater goods (and not reduce them).

When it comes to the private sector, investing in family intimacy generates, at the very least, confident, upright, just, and prudent individuals, which results in solid companies and strong legal entities. Again, this shows that once society decides to cooperate with the family, the latter produces even more than what it receives because of its self-fidelity and self-donation.

Regarding science in all its multiple disciplines, and searching for what science truly is, an investment in the family would lead to obtaining greater benefits in each field of study and, at the same time, it would gather us back at the same point of origin: the human being.

Now, part of the issue we are faced with today has to do with ideologies that somehow have taken the best – i.e. the family – from society. These ideologies see the greatest aspect of the family, its intimacy, and charge against it. Why? Because weakening the family's intimacy allows them to conquer pretty much anything they want since the most valuable weight of any person's being is found in it. They tend to use uncontrollable, unmeasurable techniques, information and means that permeate everywhere. Initially, they hide the face of those responsible; subsequently, it really does not matter whose face is behind the deconstructing actions. Even later, they focus on memory with boredom, as with weariness, people do not remember who is deconstructing. Once no one detects who is behind, or what to do and how to do it, will is “bought” without being paid fairly.

Now, although it may seem that with this “loss” of the will – and the sum of everything that weakens us as humans – there is no way to return family intimacy because of its characteristic self-fidelity and self-donation (its good nature), will bring human beings back to life. This means much more than what we know today, and even if there is no point of return, and chaos – the previous stage of order – takes place, we are still close to being where we need to be.

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„Rodzina – Polityka – Globalizacja” Intymność rodzinna

Streszczenie: Intymność jest kluczowym składnikiem więzi relacyjnych, kojarzonych nie tylko z pożyciem seksualnym, ale z każdym sposobem wyrażenia siebie przez członka rodziny. Jak to się dzieje? Jakie są istniejące podejścia do kwestii rodzinnych, aby ocenić intymność? Jak rozumiana jest intymność i jak można ją szeroko rozumieć? Intymność nie jest statyczna: zmienia się w czasie i jest inna w całym cyklu życia rodziny, a także na różnych etapach każdego z członków rodziny. Dlaczego intymność jest istotna? Intymność jest wartością, a jej natura wykracza poza to, czego często się oczekuje: konstruuje lub dekonstruuje rodzinę. Ponieważ jest głęboko związana z uczuciami, myślami, przekonaniem, tradycjami, kulturą, praca z intymnością u każdego członka może prowadzić do wytworzenia czegoś w rodzaju zbroi w kontaktach rodzinnych. Konstrukcja każdej osoby jako jednostki ludzkiej nie powstaje tak po prostu; wymaga czasu, technik, miłości, szacunku i intymności, co bezpośrednio prowadzi do wierności sobie. Z kolei wierność własna u każdego członka rodziny może wytworzyć tzw. herb rodzinny. Podczas gdy zerwana intymność może zniszczyć poczucie własnej wartości osoby, a co za tym idzie, znaczące, długotrwałe relacje, intymność poszycia pancerza może rozwinąć głęboko wzbogacone jednostki ludzkie, które wnoszą to, kim są i co mają, aby ostatecznie utkać silne społeczeństwo. W rezultacie społeczeństwo, które chroni i sprzyja intymności, nie tylko zwraca uwagę na to, jakie szkody istnieją i którym należy zapobiegać, ale także na to, co sprawia, że ludzie żyją w hojnej darowiźnie. Intymność pozwala osobie poznać swoją wartość; intymność jest najsilniejszą wartością i techniką oceny tego, kim jesteśmy, czego potrzebujemy, czego chcemy.

Słowa kluczowe: intymność rodzinna, herb, pancerność, samozaparcie, dekonstrukcja.

