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**The Multiple Meanings of Time Binds:  
Time as a Window on Solidarity  
in Five Jewish Families**

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## ABSTRACT

Most literature on family-work conflict assumes the centrality of work as a source of meaning, and critiques the *economic injustices of the market economy* (low wages and long work hours) while skirting the issue of the *cultural hegemony of the marketplace*. I argue that work-family conflict is best understood from the larger theoretical perspective of the hegemony of individualism and families' attempts to resist it. Using data from interviews with parents and teenagers in five upper- middle-class families of affiliated Jews in California, I argue that paid work is not the "master meaning maker" that we might expect, given our understanding of work, professions, and the marketplace as the new hegemonic ideology. Instead, time bind conflicts in families are a symptom of competing allegiances to four sources of identity — the *expressive self*, the *utilitarian self*, the *extended family*, and the *community of memory*. The utilitarian family expresses its identity through the cultivation of children's talents and through conflicts over the extent to which the children are realizing their potential. The expressive family builds solidarity around the emotional growth of children and fights about the timing and tone of self-expression. The familistic family finds intimacy and conflict in the fulfillment of obligations to fellow family members. The communal family comes together through Judaism and debates the extent to which it will participate in community life.

### **Time Binds and Conflicting Identities**

Work-family literature usually assumes that work is the central source of meaning. It critiques the *economic injustices of the market economy* (low wages and long work hours) but avoids addressing the *cultural hegemony of the marketplace*. Although work may take on characteristics of home, and home of work (Hochschild 1997), the categories of market-home, work-family, public-private sphere, or haven and heartless world, still dominate the discourse (Philipson 2000). Less visible in work-family research are the intermediate spheres, neither private nor public, of church and neighborhood, friends and extended family.

There are several possible reasons for this conspicuous absence in the literature. Perhaps there is no "there" there. Participation in community life may have become far more difficult to sustain among middle-class families in recent years because both spouses are forced to work long hours in order to keep their jobs in restructured corporate America or cover their expenses in an economy with a high cost of living. This is the case among a handful of fast-food restaurant managers who have moved up through the ranks of their companies (Camarota 1999). There is simply no time or energy left over after the obligations of work and family have been met. (Hochschild, 1997; Kaplan, 2000; Polatnick, 1999) Another possibility is that middle-class parents gravitate toward the workplace because it feels more compelling than other spheres of life (Philipson 2000) Or they feel the obligation, after the workday is over, to use much of their remaining time to train and manage their children for the cultivation of their talents. (Arendell 2000; Lareau 1999).

I argue in this paper that work-family conflict is best understood from the larger theoretical perspective of the hegemony of individualism (Bellah et al. 1996) and its relationship to family ideologies. I argue that time bind conflicts in families are a symptom of competing allegiances to four sources of identity: the *utilitarian-individualist self* who pursues rational self-interest; the *expressive-individualist self*, whose identity is found through understanding and expressing feelings; the *familistic self*, whose identity is enmeshed with the extended family of parents, children, and grandparents; and the *communal self*, whose identity is shaped primarily by a community of memory. Bellah et al. (1985) have described all but the familistic type of identity.

Perhaps work is overtaking the lives of only a select group of middle class families whose narratives celebrate the sacredness of the individual while sidelining the collective. We need to consider the possibility that corporate demands on employees are successful only to the extent that they resonate with biblical, expressive, and utilitarian-individualist ideologies of work as a virtuous "calling," an arena for achieving competence, or a place to make money. Families whose members work mostly so that they may live and celebrate together, or who find meaning in mutual caring or the pursuit of social justice, may prefer staying close to home and have little desire to venture out to what Arlie Hochschild has called the commodity frontier.<sup>1</sup>

Although families have multiple identities, one of these four types of solidarity — expressive, utilitarian, familistic, or communal — is usually the protagonist of the narrative the family tells about itself. The other solidarities are secondary players lurking in the shadows. The *desire* for care is virtually infinite (Tronto 1995) but the legitimacy that family members accord to one another's requests for care are shaped by the central narrative, which constitutes, in essence, an ideology of care and sets forth the appropriate ways to give and receive love. Ongoing family battles over where parents spend their time are, at bottom, conflicts over the meaning of family, over who cares for whom, when and in what way, and over the nature of the self the family is trying to create through mutual caring.

The four types of solidarity can be distinguished from one another by their different measures of the sacred, a concept whose definition I borrow from Durkheim (1995: 36-38): "the sacred and the profane are...conceived as separate genera, as two worlds with nothing in common...the sacred thing is par excellence, that which the profane must not and cannot touch with impunity...sacred things are things protected and isolated: profane things...must keep a distance from that which is sacred."

In *utilitarian-individualist families*, solidarity is built around an ideology of the sacredness of individual achievement. The family expresses its identity through the near-religious cultivation of children's talents and through fights over the extent to which children are realizing their potential. The *expressive-individualist family* sacralizes self-expression, and the common theme of family narratives is the emotional growth of children. The family fights about who is entitled to assert their individual desires and when. *Familistic families* make the family unit

itself into a sacred object. Parents and children unite around their obligations and allegiances to one another and to extended kin; their moments of intimacy and of conflict revolve around the fulfillment of these obligations. In *communal families*, which identify strongly as part of the Jewish people (or of some other community), Jewish symbols and rituals are more than pleasant and colorful; they enter the realm of the sacred. Parents have expectations of each other and of their children that marriages will be within the faith, and Jewish education will be pursued. Paid work in this sample of upper-middle-class Jews is not the "master meaning maker" that we might expect, given our understanding of work, professions, and the marketplace as the new hegemonic ideology. Rather, it is an instrument for the creation of identities that originate within the family.

This paper is based on case studies of 5 families drawn from a larger sample of 20 families. In 4 of the 5 families—the McCormicks, the Hellingers, the Hammers, and the Schwartzes—the time bind was an important source of contention. They were *not* representative of the larger sample of respondents, most of whom treated the time bind as a peripheral issue.<sup>2</sup> And for these 4 exceptional families, the time bind was not simply the result of parents' long working hours. Diane McCormick and Renée Schwartz were housewives, while Sue Hellinger and Sydney Hammer worked part-time. In all 4 cases, the conflict over time allocation was an expression of competing perspectives on the meaning of family. In the case of the Hellingers, the focal point of family conflict was Sue, the wife and mother, who worked part-time as a social worker and spent many of her nonpaid hours volunteering at the family synagogue. Her husband and daughters wanted her to spend more time with them and less as a volunteer outside the home.

The Hellingers, Hammers, McCormicks, and Schwartzes are exceptional for the powerful emotional impact of the time bind on family life. They perceive family time as an expression of love and time given too generously outside the family as a betrayal — whether it is offered in the workplace or somewhere else. My fifth case study, the Saltzman Lewises, did not perceive time as a scarce commodity. Instead, they measured care in terms of its authenticity: was an act of care really caring, or was it social control and self-gratification masked as care?

The time bind, therefore, may be a somewhat narrow theoretical lens through which to understand the sociology of family life. Rather, it is important to look in a broader sense at how

families construct meaning, what they define as sacred to their identities. In this paper I show the importance of knowing *what time at work means* in the context of a family ideology.

### **Methodology**

This paper draws on data from in-depth interviews with the McCormicks, the Schwartzes, the Hellingers, the Hammers and the Saltzman Lewises. Four of the families were notable for their time bind conflicts, but the Saltzman Lewises, who fought about the meaning of care rather than time, provide a highly evocative comparative case because they dealt with the same fundamental issues using different symbols. The interviews were part of a larger study I conducted with 20 middle- and upper-middle-class families of affiliated Jews in Los Angeles County and the San Francisco Bay Area. I interviewed a total of 28 teenagers and 36 adults, of whom 32 were parents, 2 were leaders of youth groups, and 2 were the grandparents in one of my families. Most of the interviews were conducted in respondents' homes.<sup>3</sup> I preferred to conduct interviews in homes because the comings and goings of family members during the interviews helped me to learn first-hand about family dynamics and see visible signs of sacred icons in the family.<sup>4</sup>

I used an open-ended interviewing technique. Rather than ask my respondents a series of specific questions, I allowed them to direct the conversation and bring up topics that were meaningful to them. The strategy was a risky one because I did not get parallel information from each family; my psychological portrait of the loquacious, self-revealing respondents is more complete than that of the restrained introverts. Nonetheless, the strategy paid off in the sense that many respondents proved passionate purveyors of information.

The premise of this paper is that emotional attunement, more than any other methodological tool, enables the researcher to understand the world from the perspective of the respondent. My goal in these interviews, therefore, was to tune into the respondents' emotions as best I could in the short time I had to spend with them. Although I am not trained in psychoanalysis, I tried to conduct interviews with a psychoanalytic eye. Psychoanalysis and research seem entirely different at first glance — the first aims to heal, the second to inform — yet there is considerable overlap in their methods, both of which require the collection and analysis of information about the unconscious and emotional life of the respondent/client. As an

interviewer, I did not have the opportunity to develop the deep relationship with respondents that is characteristic of therapists and clients, and the information I gathered, therefore, is less comprehensive and accurate than it might have been if I had returned several times to the same respondent for second interviews.

### **Sources of Solidarity**

Each of the four types of solidarity I found in my sample of families had its own tokens of love and objects of worship. To understand the primary source of meaning in the family, I looked for intimate moments in the narratives that my respondents described as markers of familial love and for moments of conflict whose resonance prompted a heated discussion and analysis in interviews.

#### **The McCormicks: Talent as Sacred**

The McCormicks were utilitarian individualists, and they treasured 15-year-old Ian, in part, for his creativity and skill as an artist. His mother, Diane, was a painter and sculptor who had taught artistic techniques to both her children and sewn clothes for her 12-year-old daughter; she had her own art room filled with her work. She sacralized Ian's artistic talent by singling it out for an exalted position vis-à-vis his other activities, such as computer programming, and described it as a special characteristic of his personality that deserved cultivation:

*Diane:* Ian is the one [in this family] that's artistic, [and] I would like him to get back into it. He [has started to do] more on computer stuff, and I wish he'd do more hands-on type stuff...He's so good at it and I don't want him to lose it. So I make him do things for me...Ian should be able to teach an art class. I think he could do it great.

According to Ian, his father, Bill, also wanted him to be "creative" and encouraged him to pursue a Jewish education because Diane had been raised Jewish and was a creative person. Bill thought that Jewish training would help him become creative like his mother.

*Ian:* I asked [my father] once, I said, "Would you have rather brought me up Catholic or Christian?" and he said, "No, I'm happy you're brought up Jewish." So he was happy about that...He said it was a unique religion, and you get a lot more benefits, I mean, he thinks I would learn a lot more. He thinks my mom is



unique, and he wanted me to be like my mom. Not unique like weird — I'm saying like, she's very creative, and he wanted me to do everything I could to be like my mother.

Because Ian's intellectual development was such a high priority for the family, his parents expressed their love for him by offering him opportunities to explore the world. When Ian's friend, Cameron, invited him to come on a trip to Italy to attend a wedding in Cameron's family, Ian's father did not hesitate for a second — he wanted the money he was earning to pay for his children to expand their horizons:

Cameron calls me up and says "Hey Ian, my mom and I are going to Italy for two weeks. Do you want to go?"... My parents were awesome; they wanted me to go... I went to my mom and she was like, "Uh, call your dad." My dad's like, "Of course, you have to go!" He wants me to travel, he wants me to get an open view and learn stuff, and it was the most amazing time I've ever had in my life.

Ian, in turn, brought his family's fascination with creativity into his relationship with Cameron, whom he admired for his artistic talents:

*I:* I have pictures [I can show you.] Cameron's a professional photographer, so I have a lot of pictures.

*Christopher:* Professional, you said?

*I:* Well, not professional. But he's been doing it for quite a long time. He's really good. All the stuff he does, it's amazing.

### **The Schwartzes: Emotional Development as Sacred**

As was the case for Ian and his sister, the Schwartzes placed the kids at the center of attention. But they were expressive individualists whose focus was on emotional rather than intellectual development and on self-expression rather than achievement. Thirteen-year-old Saul described himself and the way he interacted with his mother, Renée, in much the same terms that Renée described him to me. "He loves to argue," she explained. Saul, in listening to his mother talk to him about himself, learned to treat his own feelings as sacred by separating them from his everyday life. His emotions had a life of their own: "I'm just — it's funny, I'm horrible at letting things go, but I'm great at apologizing quickly and just totally forgetting it.

That's not a good thing; it should be the other way around probably, but..." [doesn't finish sentence].

He analyzed all of his motivations, observing his own developmental stage and critiquing his own behavior the way the ancient Greeks might have guessed at the motives of the Olympian gods. Although he had a remarkable capacity for introspection, Saul was also very self-conscious:

*Christopher:* Do you ever get mad at your parents?

*Saul:* Oh yeah — all the time. *Wouldn't be a teenager if I didn't* [author's italics].... I argue with them every day.... I don't even know why sometimes. In the morning sometimes, I'm already up, and I'm on the computer, and my mom comes in and she goes, " You have to take out the garbage." And I had to do it yesterday and I got really indignant. I'm like — "Hmm, why didn't you tell me yesterday, and I don't want to do it because you should have told me to do it yesterday!" See, just stupid things. [I get angry about stupid things] all the time.... I always apologize afterwards.

### **The Saltzman Lewises: Sacralization of the Family**

The Saltzman Lewises came together through familistic solidarity, which put the family as a whole, rather than the individual child, on a pedestal and found meaning in symbols of family togetherness. Brenda's parents, who were Holocaust survivors, died within a couple of months of each other a few years before the interview. When I asked fourteen-year-old Terry to share memories of her grandparents (Brenda's parents), she described the family's weekly Friday night dinners. Rather than list their interests or activities as Ian might have done, or analyze their personalities as Saul might have done, she painted this vivid portrait of a weekly ritual of family togetherness:

*Terry [fondly]:* My grandmother would always have us over and cook us food and do whatever we wanted. And my grandpa, he would always, like, help her, but she would mostly be in the kitchen making stuff.... She would cook food, and we would sit down, and she would tell everyone to sit down, but then she would be up doing something.... We would always tell her to sit down but she wouldn't because she was always cooking something!

Terry found the sacred at her grandparents' Shabbat dinner, but there were other examples of sacred family time. Before Brenda's parents died, they went on a trip with all four of the Saltzman Lewises to their hometown of Krakow, Poland.

*Brenda:* I had the good fortune of convincing my parents to take us to Poland before they passed on.... We got to see my mother's bedroom windows [because] Krakow had not been bombed. We were only there for eight days, but it was incredible.... And we went to Auschwitz, and it was a moving experience for everyone, especially our parents; it was wonderful.

Brenda's narrative described the family's journey to Poland as if it were a sacred pilgrimage; by seeing the bedroom window in Krakow and visiting the camps, the family recognized its historical link with her parents' pre-World War II life as Polish Jews and their experience of the Holocaust.

The Saltzman Lewises sacralized the family, in part, because Brenda's parents were Holocaust survivors who had lost an older son to the death camps. Brenda was their only surviving child; her birth and her creation of a new family seemed miraculous to them. After they had managed to survive Auschwitz, emigrate together to Los Angeles, and give birth to Brenda, they could not bear the idea of her leaving them. Although she found their constant vigilance oppressive, Brenda also inherited their worship of the family as the symbol of life renewed:

*Christopher:* How often were you seeing your parents before they died?

*Brenda:* Probably once a week. I would run over there even once a day, but we all saw them once a week.

C: So you never left them.

B [a bit surprised at the revelation]: You're right, I never left them. I never left them.... My kids were really lucky, they were close to all four grandparents....

We had a lot of family events.... Most of the time we'd be at each other's houses.

My parents actually became good friends with my in-laws [Bob's parents].

The presence of the grandparents was not taken for granted; her children were "lucky," as if they had been blessed by the unity of the family. And when Milan left for college on the East Coast, he did not simply take off with a couple of suitcases. His parents and sister accompanied him there, took a vacation together in Boston, and helped him move into his dormitory.

### **The Hammer and Hellinger Families: Judaism as Sacred**

The Hammers and the Hellingers found solidarity through activities that identified them as *Jewish* families. The Saltzman Lewises had sacralized Friday night with the grandparents because it was family time; the Hammers and the Hellingers made Friday night sacred because it was Shabbat. They lit candles, said blessings, and ate together. The Hellingers celebrated Shabbat at home "a good deal of the time," according to Sue's husband Nathan. If they were "all together on a Friday night we will light the candles and say the blessing." Although it was not sacred to the point that it happened every single week because "one or both of our kids might be elsewhere," they never forgot about it. "If it goes four weeks and we haven't had Shabbat together, we'll be, 'OK, let's really try.'" But Shabbat was not strictly a family affair; often the family spent Fridays with their *havurah* (a synagogue-based friendship group). The night before I interviewed the Hellingers "happened to be a Friday night, and the kids [their 13-year-old daughter Rachel, and her five girlfriends in the *havurah*] cooked dinner for us, so we all lit the candles together at the start and said the prayers." Rachel and the other girls were cooking because they had taken a *havurah*-sponsored cooking class, a solidarity-building project in itself. The fact that the *havurah* used the occasion to celebrate Shabbat suggests that their shared Judaism endowed the dinner with sacredness; when this Jewish group came together on Friday night, it became different from other nights.

The Hellingers were Reform Jews, and the Hammers were Orthodox Jews, although not as observant as they had been when their teenagers were young children. But for both families, even though they differed in the intensity of their religious observance, the family's social life was organized around the Jewish community, and the rituals they used to create solidarity were usually related to Jewish themes. For the Hammers, the entire day of Shabbat was sacred, from Friday sunset to Saturday sunset, and they followed the rules of Orthodox Judaism about Shabbat observance. Although they did not expect their teenagers to be as observant as they were — outside of the house, at least — they were strict with their ten-year-old daughter. On Shabbat, she could spend time only with other children who were willing to be as observant as she was:

Sydney[wife and mother]: [My daughter's friends] watch TV, get in the car, go to McDonalds, go to the mall.... So over the years, I just made a policy with my children. We had a rule that, on Shabbat, they can [spend time with] Shabbat observant families.... [My kids] can have their [nonobservant friends] to our house on Shabbat, and some kids can handle that and some can't. Some are used to having the TV on in their houses, and they've never played a board game in their lives. They've played computer games, they've played Nintendo, but they don't even know how to play board games [or even] cards. But since we're *shomer shabbos* [Shabbat observant], that's what we do in the afternoons.

Solidarity around Jewish themes extended beyond Shabbat. I interviewed Yehuda Hammer and his mother, Sydney, at the Jewish cooperative house where he lived at the end of his sophomore year at college. His brother, Aaron, had stayed with him at the co-op on several weekends, and during the school year, the entire Hammer family had driven an hour from their Southern California suburb to attend a "family night" dinner at the cooperative with all of Yehuda's housemates and their families. Sydney was at the house that day to help Yehuda pack boxes and move out of his room because he was on his way to Israel for six weeks to study Hebrew, work on a kibbutz, and visit his father's family; Barak, his father, had been born and raised in Israel.

Yehuda was thrilled to be visiting Israel because "It's the land of our people, man!" All of Yehuda's close friends were Jewish, and a number were Israeli Americans; he believed in God, went to services regularly at the Hillel (the Jewish student center), and had organized a party at his co-op in honor of the Jewish holiday of Purim. Yehuda had inherited a powerful sense of Jewish identity from his parents. He had grown up in an Orthodox Jewish world, in a family that turned on no lights and did no driving on Shabbat, but spent the afternoon playing board games and walking in the park instead. All his life, he had seen his mother cook kosher food for community dinners and serve on Jewish school committees. He had also heard Barak talk about the importance of keeping Judaism alive.

Not only Yehuda, but also 17-year-old Aaron, is interested in going to Israel; he is even considering service in the Israeli army. He has visited Israel on several occasions and has family there; moreover, since Israeli law requires most of the country's Jewish citizens to serve three years in the army, Aaron's military service would proclaim his identity as a Zionist, a Jew, and a committed citizen of Israel.

The Hellingers, like the Hammers, were a communal family that created solidarity through its observance of Jewish rituals and participation in Jewish events, but the *havurah* they participated in was also a social group that celebrated its unity through group ski trips and other family activities. Not only had the *havurah* sponsored a cooking class for the girls and asked one of its mothers, a "phenomenal cook and baker," to teach the class, but it came together for most Jewish holidays as well, from the Sukkot harvest festival to the Passover seder, and went on trips and excursions to ski slopes, theme parks, or to an annual community service day at the synagogue. The seamlessness between family and community was evident in the membership of the *havurah*, which was made up of the Hellingers and five other families. All of them had 13-year-old girls who had been classmates and best friends at the synagogue's day school.

### **The Importance of Conflict**

Families were highly creative and enterprising in their efforts to develop a shared purpose, yet every theme they invoked to affirm their solidarity had the potential to generate a corresponding conflict. In the Hellinger family, the *havurah* arrangement suited 13-year-old Rachel, but left 16-year-old Deborah somewhat out of the loop because none of her friends belonged to the *havurah*. She felt peripheral there and therefore less connected to the synagogue than the rest of her family although she had taught there for three years and attended the day school. Debbie had an ongoing conflict with her mother, who organized most of the *havurah* events, and her grievances stemmed from her marginal position. Why should she be more involved in temple if none of her friends were in the *havurah*? Why could she not enjoy being with the family alone without having to endure the company of lots of other families with whom she had less of a connection than her sister or her parents did?

The other four families also fought over the issues that brought them together. The McCormicks came together around the individual achievements of their children, so they fought when their children did not achieve appropriately. Diane expressed frustration that her son did not do artwork with her any more "because he is so good at it." She also described an abortive attempt by her husband, Bill, to have quality time with Ian by coming home early to help him with math homework: "[Last year], it got to the point where I couldn't help Ian with [his math]

at all. So Bill would have to do it all the time... He would come home and they would start fighting about tutoring. So I said, "you're getting a tutor."

The parents' anxiety about Ian's performance, and Ian's anxious response, led to fights over math homework. And even when there were no explosions, there was a low-level, chronic tension about schoolwork. Ian, sensing Diane and Bill's desire for him to perform well and fearful he could not please them, was defensive about the fact that he had been held back a year when he was in kindergarten. He pointed out that he was in advanced math, perhaps an oblique reference to his duels with mom and dad over math: "I went to an extra grade. I wasn't held back. I went to this extra grade... that they've now taken out, developmental kindergarten, and they said it was for special advanced kids. A lot of us are in high math, too." Although I did not ask him why he had been held back, Ian wanted to assure me that he was meeting his family's standards of high achievement despite an event in his history that implied a failure to achieve.

The Schwartz family created solidarity around self-expression: their conflicts were over the priority of needs. For whose emotional benefit should family decisions be made? Their fights, therefore, were over the relative priority of the needs of individual family members. The Saltzman Lewises viewed their family ties as sacred. Implicit in the idealization of family was a battle over how family oriented to be. They had disagreements over who should give and receive care, who should make decisions about care, and how much care each family member had the obligation to give. Milan got frustrated with his mother, Brenda, because she monitored his college application process so closely, and his parents got angry at him when he tried to give too much advice to his sister, Terry. "When a family spends so much time together," Milan explained, "it's inevitable that we are going to fight a lot." Finally, the Hammers — the most religious and most Jewish-identified family in my sample — had a battle of epic proportions over whether they should move to Israel, the ultimate expression of Jewish identity. Although the children stayed out of the fight, the issue pitted Israeli husband Barak against Sydney, his Southern Californian wife, and nearly led to their divorce. It is within the context of such conflicts over family identity that I analyze the "time bind" issue in these five cases.

### **The Utilitarian Individualist Time Bind: The McCormicks**

The McCormick family sacralized the utilitarian self. The husband and father, Bill, a Catholic tax attorney, was happiest working long hours, investing emotional energy into his work, and offering his support to younger associates. 16-year-old Ian spent his time working with computers—he had a job at a local city-run website for teenagers—and doing schoolwork. The mother and wife, Diane, a Jewish homemaker, volunteered for the city's arts council. The family ideology was "each according to his own," except for occasional moments of togetherness on weekends and vacations. The family did not put up a fight about Bill's time at work because his main obligation to his family, according to Diane's and Ian's accounts, was to provide for them economically. Yet Ian and his mother also wanted Bill to dedicate more time and energy to nurturing them, even though they both felt it was illegitimate to voice their desire.

Ian was my student in a workshop on community history at the Steven Wise religious school. He knew how to draw remarkable reproductions of the Simpsons cartoons. He helped put together a scrapbook for the temple's fiftieth anniversary. A resident of one of the Bay Area's wealthiest suburbs, Ian was talkative, charming, and solicitous of adults. He always made a point of asking me how I was progressing with my Ph.D. thesis. I asked him if he would like to be interviewed and he eagerly accepted, glad to have an audience.

Ian communicated a forceful, even relentless, good cheer during our interview. His family appeared to make him happy; he had nothing but the most effusive praise for them, and he did his best to empathize with their concerns. Unlike his peers who refused to talk to anyone in the older generation, "I'm very open with my parents. They tell me I'm a great kid, actually, all the time.... My parents know what's going on in my life, usually. I don't keep anything from them."

Ian's father worked long hours, but they had a good time together on weekends: "I love my dad with all my heart.... I make sure that we go do stuff, like we go to see movies...or he'll take me out driving." And Ian's sister, Lucille, who had recently turned 12, is "fun to hang out with [although] she can be really mean [because] she's that age... becoming a woman." And despite the difficulties of her age, she was "a very, very good student. She's one of the smartest kids I know [and] an amazing actress." For his mother, he had a good-humored tolerance: "My mom



doesn't like driving with me. I'm a good driver, but she's still freaked out that her little baby is driving."

Ian was also enthusiastic about computers. He seemed to love information technology and toyed with an incipient professional identity as the techie who knew how to make computers work in wondrous ways. His passion for computers could be seen as an embodiment of his utilitarian-individualist sense of self-as-doer, an appropriate identity for his family. He showed me the earphones he used to listen to his friends on the phone when they called asking for help with a technical problem. He had been hired by his city government to develop their teen website, and he was also volunteering as the manager of a fan website for his favorite rock band, "Third Eye Blind."

But there was an air of artificiality about Ian's good cheer. Ian's mother, Diane, an accomplished artist, seemed to need his attention. She wanted to sit in on my interview with him and left the room only after he said pointedly, "Mom, this is like a private interview between me and Christopher." She expressed a vehement wish in her interview that he would spend less time at the computer and continue to do visual artwork, as he had done with her when he was younger — "because he is good at it," she said. But artwork was also an activity that they had once engaged in together, and now Diane did her art alone because Lucille, Ian's younger sister, was not interested either.

Under the photographs of girls smiling and dressed up for a Purim carnival, which we had pasted into a scrapbook in honor of the temple's fiftieth anniversary, he wrote captions like "She must be really desperate [for sex]" and "I've gone crazy!" Moreover, his relations with peers were stormy. Ian phoned his friend, Zak Englander, from temple several times a week, had invited him over for a sleepover, and had gone with him to Third Eye Blind concerts. Yet in a private interview, Zak described Ian as a friend only after some hesitation. At the beginning of one of my class sessions, on a day when Ian was absent, Zak announced to the other kids in our class that Ian "has no friends." One girl whom Ian had known since they were in kindergarten together, is wary of him because he can be "very nasty." When they were sitting around the campfire at the last youth group weekend event they attended, he got upset for a reason she did not understand and walked off, calling all the girls "ugly bitches."

Ian's feelings about the temple as an institution were as ambivalent as his feelings about his peers. He ran for the youth group board, yet late in the semester, when the student leaders at the temple youth group were trying to organize a ski trip and called him a couple of times to see if he was interested in going, he complained to the youth director, Joshua, that he was being "harassed." When I asked Joshua about his outreach efforts with Ian, he expressed some frustration at the boy's behavior at temple:

*Joshua:* I went after him a bit when he was in seventh grade to try to get him involved in stuff because I think that he needed us. I think that he still does, but he's...we...he's beyond I think, our abilities to provide, I think, for his emotional well being. He needs help.

*Christopher:* Help, meaning....

*J:* He needs professional psychological help.

A close reading of my interview with Ian's mother, Diane, suggests that Ian's troubles at temple may have been a symptom of suppressed conflicts at home. As a partner in his firm, Bill might well have had the latitude to delegate more work and cut his hours but chose not to because he felt an obligation toward other employees. He preferred to work hard, and he liked making a lot of money. Furthermore, Diane did not particularly want to go back to work, which increased the pressure on Bill to earn well. Ian may have been acting out his frustration at Bill's absence through his behavior at synagogue, even though he only mentioned in passing during the interview that his father was always working.

Diane resented Bill's long work hours, but saw no alternatives. Because she was a housewife who enjoyed not working, she wanted his work to continue supporting the family. He demonstrated his love for his family with the lifestyle he bought for them from his hefty earnings. Although Bill would perhaps have preferred to teach high school rather than practice law, she said, "You can't support a family on a teacher's salary, at least if you live in this town." Recall how he had willingly sent Ian off on an impromptu European tour with his friend, happy to spend his hard-earned salary to pay for Ian's enriching experience.

*Diane:* Bill's that kind of person, where his parents never went on vacations, they never did anything, and he doesn't want to do that for his kids. He wants them to have vacations. He wants them to be able to say, OK, I want a pair of pants [and

I'm buying them], you know. He thinks it's important that they have what they need that he never had.

But if Bill showed his love through providing stylishly for his family, his day-to-day emotional involvement was with his job, and Diane was prepared for his love affair to continue. Her own description of his work life suggested that she viewed his job as sacred, immovable, and essential. Bill had to work as he did; the firm demanded it.

*Diane:* Nothing's giving. Right now, he does not have any choice [about his hours].... He's working a lot these days, a lot. He's starting to work more weekends.

*Christopher:* What would happen if he said, "I'm sorry; I'm leaving work at five or six?" Or, "I can't work this hard, no matter what you need as a company?"

*D:* See, *I don't think Bill would ever do that* [italics by author]— he just couldn't because he gets his work done when everybody leaves. The junior partners are always approaching him for advice.

She mentioned that they had discussed the possibility of his opening a private practice and save time because he could "get his work accomplished during the day without all those people coming at him." But they dismissed the possibility because "we need the [health] insurance." He would have to wait until the children "were a little older." It seemed as if private practice was a pipe dream, a reassuring fantasy that allowed for the possibility that a difficult work situation might one day change.

Bill's involvement with work seemed paradoxical because he always told Ian, "Don't become a lawyer." According to Diane, he would have preferred to become a high school history teacher, but could not do it because the salary would not be high enough to support the family. And yet, despite his distaste for the work he did, Bill felt obligations to his co-workers. As a partner at his firm, highly skilled in his specialty (estate law), Bill acted as a mentor to the younger associates, who depended a great deal on him to show them the ropes and go over cases with them. According to Diane, he spent much of his workday coaching associates and meeting with clients and had to stay late in order to do his "real work" of writing briefs, preparing for hearings, and so forth. He couldn't get out of the office earlier, and he could not change careers either because his salary paid for the children to have luxuries that he did not grow up with — his own father was a mid-level government employee with a low salary. Finally, Bill felt

happiest when there was a lot of work to do. During a period in the early 1990s when the firm was going through hard times, he was home every day at six o'clock, but constantly worried that the firm might go bankrupt because no work was coming in. Rather than rejoice in having him home, Diane said she was relieved when business picked up again and his hours increased because he felt much less anxious.

Bill's intense involvement with work may have been as much a result of his fear of intimacy at home as an expression of his sense of obligation to co-workers. He and Diane had unresolved conflicts in their marriage that dated back 25 years to when they first became lovers as high school students. Bill was a formerly religious Catholic who had attended parish schools, and he never converted to Judaism even though his children were raised Jewish. Diane and Bill first began to date in high school, against the will of her parents, who were Jewish war refugees from Hungary and furious that she was dating a Gentile. They would meet on the sly, under the protection of Bill's football teammates, who drove him to their dates and made sure the couple was protected during their trysts. Her devotion to him only increased in response to her parents' continued disapproval. The ordeal was painful, however, and she counsels her son against repeating his parents' history:

*Diane:* We tell [Ian] it would be easier on his life if he married somebody of the same faith. We do tell him that, though we'd be calling the kettle black [if we insisted]. But we do explain to him that we had our share of difficulties, too, and if you can find somebody in your own faith, obviously, it would be a little bit easier. Relationships are hard to begin with, and it's just one less thing to have to worry about in a relationship.

After he graduated from law school, Bill had become immersed in his career as an attorney. His identity was centered around work and providing for his family, while Diane believed her responsibility as a woman and wife was to do intensive mothering. She had been employed as a medical secretary before she and Bill had children, but stopped work when they were toddlers to devote herself to raising them. She explained that much of her salary had paid for high-turnover au pairs; she had felt she could do a better job herself. Because they believed the children should have religious education and realized that Diane's precarious relations with her parents

would depend on her children getting a Jewish education, the McCormicks joined Steven Wise and sent the children to its Sunday school program.

But the arrangement was never entirely satisfactory because Diane and her children also wanted more nurturance from Bill. For the McCormicks, a conflict over the father's allocation of time to work over family is symptomatic of deeper contradictions in the family's understanding of itself and of what it means to be a family. Are they close-knit, loyal to one another, mutually supportive kin who enjoy spending time together? Or are they hard driving individualists who pursue their callings in art (Diane), computers (Ian), and mentoring young colleagues at work (Bill)?

Bill and Diane also had longstanding disagreements about religious observance that boiled down to disputes over the allocation of time to family. Perhaps because of their relationship history, perhaps because of his own religious background, or perhaps simply because he views religion as less important than work, Bill was skittish about Judaism. His lack of enthusiasm undermined the potential of Temple Steven Wise to bring the family together under the ideological umbrella of shared Jewish identity. Diane expressed considerable ambivalence about getting involved in temple life, even though her son and daughter are both avid participants and she wants them to be involved. I asked her to elaborate on this apparent contradiction between her desires for herself and for her children, and she replied that her greatest misgivings about participating in services were related to her husband's long work hours and his lack of interest in synagogue:

When I do go to services...I enjoy it. But I'll tell you something. The fact that my husband is home so little at night, and when he's home just Friday night, I don't want to be out for another few hours at services [laughs nervously]. And so I think that's probably a lot to do with it. And if he would come with me, maybe I wouldn't mind; maybe I would do it more. But I don't want to have to do it by myself; I'd rather be with him, and when you see everybody there, it's all families. You don't see many single parents doing it.

A couple of years before the interview, Diane had suggested that the family have Shabbat dinner on Fridays. But she didn't pursue it because she knew she couldn't count on Bill coming home by 5:30 every Friday, and then Shabbat would be just one more obligation of hers and one

more occasion on which she was alone with the children: "We talked about having Shabbat dinners here Friday night. But you know what? Bill couldn't get home! And so why do it [if] it's just me again with the kids? That's more things for me to have to do."

The family members' ambivalence about their relationships to one another is evident in their conflicts. Diane appears to be understanding of her husband's predicament, yet she also harbors some hostility toward him that emerges in her comments about his interest in synagogue. She needs more nurturance from him than he makes available, and resents his absence from the house — particularly because she feels saddled with all the difficulties of raising adolescents alone. But she is afraid to press the issue with him, perhaps because they are both more comfortable, or at least familiar, with their traditional homemaker/provider roles. Moreover, all the goods and services the family can purchase with Bill's salary may be more reliable tokens of love, in her view, than affection or emotional support, which in her own past experience with her family of origin was not something to be counted on. But because Diane has unmet needs for nurturance and attention, she unconsciously relies on her son, Ian, wanting to be deeply involved in his life. Ian cannot pull back from her either because his father is not emotionally available. Nonetheless he is frustrated at being the object of anxious worship by his mother, and distant worship by his father, rather than the recipient of low-key caregiving by both. And thus, he acts out his ambivalence among peers at synagogue, leading Joshua, the teen program coordinator, to figuratively throw his hands up in the air, saying, "this kid has too many emotional problems."

This may appear to be an excessively dramatic interpretation of normal everyday events. The limitation of one-shot interviewing with families about their relationships is that conclusions must be drawn from sketchy data. Like mining for narratives in historical texts, using respondents' talk to excavate the psyche for contradictions between deeply felt needs and family narratives is a risky research enterprise. Yet my interpretation seems consistent with the data. Perhaps Bill was more available in reality than Diane suggested in the interview, but from her perspective, the time he was around the house was still not enough. What matters, in this context, is the power of the family narrative to overpower and delegitimize the need for care, even if that need is occasionally met.

## **The Expressive Individualist Time Bind: The Schwartzes**

If the McCormick family sought solidarity through a shared commitment to the pursuit of individual interests and the encouragement of achievement in the children, for the Schwartzes, the family focus was on self-expression and the emotional growth of the children. Diane McCormick wanted her son to share her passion for art, hoping perhaps to connect with him that way. Renée Schwartz wanted her 14-year-old son, Saul, to experience emotional connectedness in a way that had escaped her when she was a teenager — by belonging to a group that would accept and care for him.

Renée grew up in Los Angeles near her father's huge extended family of five brothers and sisters. When she was a young girl, they would spend every Sunday together with their spouses and families. By the time she was Saul's age, in the mid-1960s, her family had started to drift apart; an aunt who did all the baking for the family get-togethers began to get sick, an uncle moved away, and some of her cousins distanced themselves as well. "A lot of [my cousins] had problems. They joined cults and so on, and we're not really that closely in touch any more." Renée found this gradual family dissolution painful and wanted Saul's experience to be different. She hoped that Saul's participation in temple activities as a teenager would allow him to feel as connected as she had in her childhood and maintain the sense of connection that she had lost when her own family drifted apart.

What I hope for Saul...is that [he feels] a sense of community, [in the sense of] establishing friendships within a group with a common bond.... I really want my kids to have that sense, and I'm glad that they want to continue [with their Jewish education], and I'm glad that [Saul] wants to work at the Sunday school.

Yet Renée had contradictory impulses. She may have yearned for community, but her yearning went hand in hand with its opposite: a powerful desire, shared with her husband, to be free of obligations and of people who knew too much about her life:

I wish that there were more of a centralized Jewish community [in] the Bay Area..., [But] I have turned out to be an independent person, and I...don't like the small town feel of being swallowed up by everybody who knows all your business and everything you're doing and cares about how much money you have.

This desire for independence was the side of Harold and Renée's shared identity that had shaped the family's life course in recent years. They had lived together in Los Angeles for the first decade of their marriage, and their Judaism was an integral part of their experience of that city. When Benjamin and Saul were young children, the family had lit candles and said the blessing over the bread on Friday nights. But when Saul was nine years old, this family ritual had fallen by the wayside. The Schwartzes had embarked on a five-year travelling stint. They lived for two years in a suburb of New York and three years in a European capital city. Renée had been very involved in synagogue in Los Angeles, taking classes and volunteering, and she had even studied Hebrew at the synagogue they attended in Europe. But she was not involved here in California.

Partly as a result of the family's travels, Renée's youthful sense of disconnection from her own family and community was echoed in Saul's experience. His parents had a good time in Europe. "It was like being on vacation," Renée explained. But Saul had been miserable: his classmates at the international school in their adopted city had teased him relentlessly, and he had few friends. The Schwartzes had joined a local synagogue, but the other member families had not sought them out, as they might have in the United States:

[The locals] take a very long time to get to know, so you don't really become a part of life there unless — people say it takes about five years to make real good friends there. So, in our temple...the people were OK, but...there just wasn't a sense of being a part of it.... It would never occur to them to invite you over for a barbecue, and if you invite them for a barbecue, it would never occur to them to invite you back.

Because Harold and Renée were dedicated to their children's happiness as well as their own, they responded to Saul's sense of disconnection by moving him to the center of the radar screen and changing their plans to accommodate his needs. Harold, a human resources executive, agreed to break his four-year contract at the end of the third year in order to accept a new job in California, where Saul and his brother would both feel more at home. But Harold also asserted his own needs: although they had decided to return home, he wanted to move to the Bay Area instead of their native LA to take a new and exciting job as head of training and development for an oil and gas company. He was hired to create the company's first coherent training program.



Renée agreed, even though she would have preferred to move back to Los Angeles, where everyone in the family knew people and would have adjusted quickly. Harold wanted the opportunity to grow professionally, she explained. "Since he earns 100% of the living, I think it's important that he pick something that he enjoys doing."

But the Schwartzes' ambivalence about communal entanglements and obligations also characterized their new life in the Bay Area. Saul and Benjamin both attended religious education classes at a nearby temple, partly because Renée wanted them to have a sense of community. And yet neither Harold nor Renée was involved in synagogue activities and they attended services only on major holidays. Unlike the days when they had lived in Los Angeles and the boys were young, in the Bay Area Judaism became the domain almost exclusively of the two sons rather than a source of family solidarity.

For Saul, Judaism became a useful means for self-expression and the fulfillment of emotional needs once they were settled in their new home and joined the new temple. Saul had been bar-mitzvahed a few months before our interview, and as a result of the preparation process in the preceding year, he had become best friends with his bar-mitzvah study partner, another boy his age named Kevin. When I broadcast my need for research subjects to the students in Midrasha, an East Bay after-school program for Jewish teens, Saul and Kevin both came over to give me their phone numbers and sign up for interviews, willing and eager to talk about their Jewish identity. In the interview, Saul recounted with genuine enthusiasm a discussion he had had in class about the proper times and places to tell white lies; he enjoyed his Jewish education. He also told me about his friendship with Kevin. They had signed up together for Midrasha, went biking together, played computer games, and made movie spoofs with Saul's video camera.

But Saul was on his own at temple. Even though the temple ideology was family centered and staff encouraged families to attend services and activities together, Benjamin, at eight years old, was outside of his immediate field of vision and hardly appeared in his interview. And neither of the parents participated in temple life. The reasons for their absence seemed unrelated and idiosyncratic, but were in reality highly related. As expressive individualists, Harold and Renée did not consider it important, or perhaps even feasible, to search out an intergenerational friendship network or *havurah*. Instead, they outsourced the community support function to the

Jewish world. They hoped Saul could transcend the separation anxiety of adolescence by using the emotional support and friendship available to him through the teen program.

As with the McCormicks, Harold's work obligations conflicted with Shabbat, and he was working much longer hours than he ever had before. When I asked Renée if she thought I might interview him, she warned me that he was "way too busy" and would be busy even at lunch, working at the computer or meeting with colleagues. Although his new position had allowed the Schwartzes a smooth transition back from their sojourn overseas, they paid a pound of flesh in shared family time for Harold's high pay and high job satisfaction. Renée and Saul—I did not interview Benjamin—felt his absence very acutely; even though he had come home to California, he did not pay as much attention to the family as he once had. In their interviews, they expressed dissatisfaction with the situation. They both missed him and wanted him home more often. Nonetheless, given that Harold had taken the job to enable them to move back and meet Saul's needs it seemed as if, in exchange, Harold was entitled to his engrossing, high-powered job.

Synagogue activism was also out of step with Renée's priorities. Although she was a homemaker, and she did talk in a general way about the importance of community, she spent much of her time volunteering at Saul's school. Her work there consisted mostly of classroom assistance and one-on-one tutoring with children rather than networking with other local families. She was a former schoolteacher, so the classroom was where she felt comfortable because she could apply her teaching skills.

Both Harold's work and Renée's volunteering were individualist projects; neither parent was consciously building a community in which they and their kids could feel at home. Renée's focus as a mother was primarily on making it possible for her children to become more independent by staying on track at school and achieving their own emotional connections, entirely separate from hers; she was not trying to construct a social network which could contain the family and give them a shared sense of rootedness or belonging.

Saul had learned the lesson of individualism well. Now that he was 14, Renée believed that he had growing independence and was beyond her control:

I can really see that with Saul...when he feels really strongly about doing or not doing something, to me this is kind of the age where I'll have to drop off. He's such a strong-willed kid.... I mean, I still have influence, but I think you get to a point where, if you have really strong feelings about it, it's not negotiable.... When you get to that age [14] , you do have strong feelings, and some of them... should be respected.

She drew comfort from the fact that he was very "antidrug" and had friends whom she thought were "good kids." But she believed that her capabilities as a parent were limited to keeping him focused and out of trouble.

### **The Price of individualism**

Although emotions were freely expressed in the Schwartz family and there was a regular acknowledgement of conflict and differences of opinion, the family's individualist discourse lacked the power to give either Saul or Renée peace of mind or to spare them the sadness of Harold's frequent absence. Saul saw the family's failure to observe Shabbat together as a symbol of their lack of shared purpose. During their LA days, Saul says wistfully, they said prayers and ate together every Friday night. But because of "all the moving and dad working late a lot" and Benjamin having soccer practice sometimes on Friday, "it's been a lot harder to keep up with *hamotzi* [Friday night candlelighting] in the last few years." He hopes that if they start celebrating Shabbat again, his father will try to come home early on a regular basis, and they will see each other more often: "That's kind of why I want to start doing things again, the ceremonies again, because they just seem to be the one time of the week when I see him sometimes."

Renée notes that Harold has very little time either for her or for the children. Although they used to take all of their vacations together and helped to make their children "sophisticated travelers, " now they do very little together as a family:

He's just about the busiest he's been since we've been married.... He comes home from work and then he has, like, three or four hours of work to do on the computer.... I think we'd be doing more things with the family if he were more available. We're used to taking the kids everywhere [on vacation], which has been nice for the family.

Then without a break in her speech, Renée went on to say that "I had a hard time convincing Harold to join the temple" because he thought it was in a dangerous downtown neighborhood. He would have preferred Steven Wise, the McCormicks' temple, which was near their suburban home. She seemed to associate the crisis in family time that she just described—a result of Harold's job commitments—with his unwillingness to risk joining the downtown synagogue which she sees as a place of "real" community, unlike the local suburban temple a quick commute away. The urban temple "kind of seemed more like a community of people rather than a group of yuppies. You know, there's older people and younger people, it just seems like a real community." Renée associated Harold's involvement with work, and his resulting lack of time for family vacations and activities, with his rejection of a family commitment to a lively and multigenerational Jewish community of memory. She may have believed that the local suburban temple, with its yuppie membership, would appeal more to Harold than to her because the other fathers and husbands would share his individualist passion for work at the expense of family and community. Instead, their membership in the urban temple might keep alive the hope that they would find an alternative to their current centrifugal lives.

Thus, within this expressive-individualist discourse lie the kernels of a critique of individualism. Individualism cannot live up to its promise as a successful means for the pursuit of happiness because the family's commitment to the development of the individual cannot make every family member happy at the same time or in the same situations. The focus on individual needs is incompatible with a sustained sense of containment or care within the family.

As with the McCormicks, in the Schwartz family there is a contradiction between commitments to the self and the family. Harold wants to invest himself in his job, and Renée feels that he is entitled. After all, Renée and her sons have had their turns in getting their needs met — Renée had a long vacation overseas before moving back to the United States and Saul and Benjamin got to come home and make new friends. And yet Harold cannot immerse himself in his job without hurting his family. Saul wants more shared family time, but with father involved in work, it is hard to sustain the sense of community within the household. Renée, too, is vaguely dissatisfied with the life they are living now; it makes her feel isolated

and fragmented, although her children have made emotional connections. The symbol of her dissatisfaction is their new house, which is "too big":

I just don't like [this house]. I don't know why!... I'm hesitant, like I sense myself not wanting to hang up the pictures. I'm wondering — do I really want to stay here? .... And I realize I have to, because...we've been here for a year, so I either make this a home, or [we] move and make something else a home.... And we've moved like [counts one, two, three]—five or six times in the last six years, and I'm just tired. I'm just physically tired from all the physical moving. That's what I think part of it is. So that's why I'm saying we're not really [settled].

Renée seems to feel rootless, yet she lacks the language to articulate her quest for deeper roots. Like the respondents interviewed in Bellah et. al.'s *Habits of the Heart*, she uses an individualist discourse of friendship rather than a community oriented discourse about belonging to a community as both a pleasure and an obligation. Nonetheless, her narrative contains an unarticulated quest for membership in a community of memory, a desire that, like the McCormicks' submerged need for care and nurturance from the father, Bill, remains lurking in the shadows, unacknowledged.

### **The Communal Time Bind: The Hellingers**

The McCormicks were utilitarian individualists with an unacknowledged need for expressive-individualist nurturance, while the Schwartzes were expressive individualists with an unacknowledged need for a community of memory. The Hellingers were active members in a lively community of memory, an historic Los Angeles synagogue with several thousand members. But their oldest daughter, 17-year-old Deborah, wanted more strongly etched boundaries between her family and her community: she craved a more familistic solidarity.

Debbie's Jewish identity is a strong one, but at least from her 17-year-old's perspective, it does not deserve to be idealized or sacralized. She was a teaching assistant at her temple for three years and quit because "they didn't pay me enough." She has attended a few youth group events, "but I wasn't that impressed with them." And although her family belongs to the *havurah*, she is always "really bored" when she attends an event because there is no one else her age, so she goes only if she has nothing better to do or if she can bring a friend.<sup>5</sup>

Debbie's lack of enthusiasm about Judaism is somewhat paradoxical, given that her mother, Sue, now in her late forties, has volunteered for Jewish organizations since she was a teenager. An active member of the temple, Sue has sat on a dozen committees from education to fund-raising, planned events for her family *havurah*, and served on the temple board. Sue and Nathan have been active members of synagogue practically since they were married and moved to Los Angeles. Debbie has grown up immersed in Judaism.

Yet, if Judaism is part of Debbie's family, it is also a competitor for her family's affections. She resents Judaism's grip on her mother, who spends too much time "doing things for other people," and not enough time at home relaxing and "taking care of herself."

Christopher: How do you feel about your mom being so busy with temple and stuff?

Debbie: I hate it.... That's part of what makes me not want to be involved so much.... She spends...too much time there, and less time here. She...never really leaves time for herself.... She's just always either working or at the temple.... She's just really stressed out...[and] never knows how to say no.... She gets in way over her head, and you know... people just expect a lot of her.... I don't think they realize...she needs a break. So I don't really like it that she's so involved.

For the Hellingers, the time bind is not a result of the clash between family and paid work, but between family and community. Sue works only part-time, but spends a great deal of nonpaid time volunteering for the synagogue because her Judaism means a lot to her. Her deep commitment to the temple is a source of conflict because, from Deborah's perspective<sup>6</sup>, as well as Sue's parents, she does not give enough priority to the family. Debbie sees Sue's time at home as anxious and distracted, rather than loving. Sue and Debbie, therefore, are caught in a time bind conflict over Sue's competing responsibilities to the nuclear family and the temple-based fictive kin network.

The conflict between family and community is the silent partner in Debbie's anger at both parents. They are both "dorks" — especially her mother who says the "wrong thing at the wrong time" and has no idea of how to dress in style —and she does not appear to particularly enjoy spending time with them. Until recently, she went jogging with her father, but "he smells really bad when he runs," so now she goes by herself. Her anger appears at first glance to be directed

toward her mother. She views her father, unlike her mother, as a "friend" with whom she has a warm relationship, but explains to me that she and her 13-year-old sister, Rachel, agree that if their mother were their age, "we wouldn't want to be friends with her." A singer in an *a cappella* jazz group at her private school, Debbie shares with Nathan a love of music; he too sang in choirs as a teenager, and father and daughter have spent time together listening to old rock and roll records. Nathan is a "dork," yes, but "less of a dork than my mother."

Yet it is not only Sue who sidelines the family. Deborah feels that their home life suffers because of the encroachment of synagogue and is angry at Sue for neglecting the family. Yet she does not attribute the disjointedness of home life solely to Sue's commitments, but also to her father's unwillingness to take on more of the burdens of housework and family work. Although Nathan is home more than Sue and knows how to cook, he hardly ever cooks dinner. Instead he works out or watches TV. Like the teenagers interviewed by Elaine Kaplan (Kaplan 2000), Debbie sees food as a metaphor for care and views her father's unwillingness to cook as a sign that he doesn't want to spend time looking after the family.

Mostly my mom...and sometimes my sister and I do the cooking, but my dad never cooks. He just watches TV. I mean, he has cooked in the past, but usually if my mom...isn't home for dinner, then my dad won't even cook. He just orders takeout or something.... [But] he does know how to cook!... I mean, I just wish he did cook more; it kind of bothers me.

Deborah sympathizes with Sue even though she gets frustrated with her. Nathan, like the synagogue, takes advantage of Sue's inability to say no, so Deborah now drives Rachel to activities in order to relieve her mother of some responsibilities:

It seems like my mom works harder than [my dad] in some ways, and that really bugs me.... She works during the day, and — well, now that I drive, I drive my sister a lot. But [before I drove] my mom would do more of the driving, and...all my dad does is that he goes to work, like, during the day, and [that's it] for his responsibilities.... I think my mom has a lot more to deal with than my dad.... And my mom...goes along with that because...I think she feels that because my dad's job brings in more money that it's OK for her to be doing all this extra work.

Lurking in the background, giving added urgency to her criticism of her parents, is Debbie's sense of loss at the lack of intimacy inside her nuclear family. Her sadness may be particularly

acute at this point in her life because she will be leaving her family when she attends college. She copes with these feelings by cultivating a sacred alliance with her younger sister, Rachel, who has just completed the eighth grade at Debbie's school.

At the time I interviewed her, Debbie was about to apply to college and dreading it. She did not know where she wanted to live or how far she should go from home, and had doubts about whether the colleges she liked would accept her. She also expressed sadness at the prospect of leaving Rachel, with whom she has a powerful bond:

She, like, looks up to me so much, and...she's really not looking forward to me leaving for college. So that might be a reason why I might stay in California, just so I can see her a lot, because she's one of my closest friends. Yeah, we've gotten really close in the last few years. So that will...definitely be harder for me, to leave her than my parents.... She comes to me with all of her problems, and... whenever she needs advice...I don't know, we're just...really good friends as well as like sisters and everything. We watch out for each other. Now that she's started my school this past year...we even talk about the same people and stuff like that. It's something... I've never had before with her. So that's kind of cool.

The Hellingers are caught in a contradiction between two competing ideas about the meaning of family. If Deborah is the advocate for more family time and lobbies for a greater commitment by both of her parents towards each other and to their home, Sue is a devoted communalist. She takes care of herself by investing time at synagogue, because she enjoys volunteering. "If it weren't one thing, it would be another as far as enjoying the volunteer work, on projects that are really personally meaningful and fun to me." Sue perceives resentment from her family because she is taking time, attention and love away from them and giving it to her volunteer work. Her relationships with other women volunteers at the synagogue, or with the rabbi, are threatening to her family members because her other connections leave them in the lurch, with no one to care for them.

Nathan and the girls wish I'd be home and available to them all the time. It's much better if I can squeeze all my temple business, all my volunteering, and all my phone calls into times when they're not home, either when they're at school and at work or while they're having outings...before they come home. It's...like, competition for my time or my love or something like that.



There is more to the volunteering than Sue's personal satisfaction. In large part because of Sue's efforts, the Hellingers are deeply involved in a *havurah* and close to their neighbors; the girls' school life is well integrated with their family life because they have both attended day school at the temple and are now enrolled at the same private school. But the price that the Hellingers have paid for their heavy investment in the community is the comparative lack of intimacy within the nuclear family. Debbie's conflict with Sue is an expression of the submerged need for family care that gets overlooked when decision making is dominated by an ideology of communalism.

### **The Communal Time Bind: The Hammers**

The Hellingers' official family ideology was their communalism; but Deborah had an unofficial desire for a more familistic solidarity. The Hammers, too, were communalists. Husband Barak and wife Sydney had a long-term commitment to Orthodox Judaism, which led them to raise their children as Orthodox Jews and found the first Orthodox synagogue in their suburban hometown. But they were closet expressive individualists; a series of family crises brought this closet individualism into the open and revealed a deep-seated contradiction within the family's ideology. A conflict between Barak and Sydney over the family's core identity developed into a full-fledged family crisis and nearly resulted in a divorce.

In the end, Barak agreed to stay in Southern California with his wife and family because Sydney was absolutely determined not to move; she felt that the Israeli educational system would be less kind than the American system to their four children, three of whom had learning disabilities. But after Barak gave up his hopes of emigrating, he threw himself into his work as a physician because he wanted to open a private practice; he had never pursued it before because he was expecting to move. As a result, he spent long hours at work and very little time with his family, except on Shabbat. It was particularly clear in the case of the Hammers that the time bind conflict was a stand-in for a deeper battle over the family identity.

Barak Hammer, 47, is a child of Holocaust survivors who grew up as a secular Israeli on a kibbutz. When he was 15 his parents had uprooted him and emigrated to Toronto, where he finished his education. He has wanted to move back to Israel ever since, because he views it as the ultimate expression of Jewish identity. Sydney, Barak's wife, had converted to Judaism in

her early 20s, after a tumultuous and lonely adolescence in which her father and brother had moved out, her parents had divorced, and her mother had depended on her, a vulnerable teenager, as a confidante. Her conversion to Orthodox Judaism had been an attempt to gain access to a support network and put down roots in a community. She and Barak had married with the understanding that their children and their Jewish community would be the focus of the marriage, and they discussed moving to Israel. But during their early life as a married couple with young children, Barak, who had never reported for the draft after he emigrated from Israel, learned from the Israeli military that he would be thrown in jail for draft evasion upon his return. So the possibility of emigrating was put aside.

Instead of emigrating, Sydney and Barak became active in their local Jewish community. They decided with another Jewish couple in their town to found an Orthodox synagogue together. Sydney served on the first synagogue board, hosted Shabbat dinners for the community, and, during the early years before they had a permanent rabbi, hired rabbis to come from Los Angeles to lead services. She put them up in the Hammer household because they were the only family who observed all of the strict dietary guidelines followed by Orthodox Jews. Sydney also served ten years on the board of directors of the Jewish day school her children attended.

Although she was heavily involved in the Jewish community, Sydney also sacralized her children, cultivated their talents and shepherded them through school. She pushed them to take demanding classes even though three of the four were diagnosed with learning disabilities, enrolled all the children in visual art classes year after year because they were all talented artists, and decorated the house with their artwork. Jewish symbols adorn the house — a mezuzah<sup>7</sup> is on each bedroom door — but they compete for attention with the creative work of the Hammer children, symbols of the sacred individual that celebrate self-expression while the mezuzot are a tribute to Jewish tradition.

And despite their compromise, in which they stayed involved in the community while cultivating their children, Barak had not given up his dream of returning home. When Yehudi, the oldest son, was 11, Barak became too old to serve in the Israeli military and was cleared, so he brought up the possibility of moving to Israel, and Sydney refused; the children were well

situated here and she did not speak fluent Hebrew. Barak was bitterly disappointed and considered Sydney's refusal to even consider the possibility as a betrayal of the principles that had guided their marriage.

Yet Barak did not want to leave the children or the family in order to emigrate to Israel by himself. So he pulled back from his Israeli Jewish identity and became more of an American individualist devoted to his career as a physician. He began to build up a private medical practice. Because he had to continue working at a hospital emergency room, the new project meant more hours spent on the job. When I interviewed him, Barak was taking the day off after a routine 70-hour workweek, and he had kept up that rhythm for some years because he needed to be on call for his private patients.

It was not the experience of working in itself that he sacralized, but the service to the community that his practice of medicine made possible. If Bill McCormick found in work a means to give his family wealth, status, and exposure to new experience and Harold Schwartz found in work a satisfying personal challenge, Barak's immersion in his career as a physician could be seen as a manifestation of his communal identity; he claimed that his fierce dedication to the profession came out of an urge to help people:

I'm very happy with my career choice. Luckily I came to [it] at a very young age.... I feel passionate about my choice.... [As a physician in the Jewish community] you get to know a lot about [your patients' personal lives.... You feel like you're part of the community; you learn about the struggles that they are involved in, the issues they are going through in their families. You don't just meet them for holidays. So you know, if somebody comes in, and...they are looking for a job, I might network with them to say, 'Why don't you call this so and so and tell them that I sent you,' and make the call, make the connection for them.... I've had several families join the same school that my kids go to, because I recommended it for their children.

But Barak was a closet individualist, and his account of being a doctor was centered around the self as well as the community. He did not talk about medicine as an obligation or as a service to the community, although many of the patients in his private practice were members of the synagogue. Nor did he say, "I have to be a doctor; it's who I am." Rather, the subtext of his love for medicine was "I want to be a doctor because it makes me a good person."

Barak's family was not as enthusiastic about his career as he was because it had taken him away from the family. When I first met Sydney at Yehudi's Jewish co-op, I asked her what work her husband did. "He's a physician. He works very hard, " she replied with a nervous laugh. "And, surprise surprise, if you ask any of my four kids, none of them want to be doctors. Right Yehudi?" Her 19-year-old son nodded:

*Yehudi:* He'd be working in the emergency room, so he'd have weird hours. He'd sleep during the day and work at night sometimes and work sometimes over Shabbat. And he wouldn't be there for dinner...during the week. And then he started working ER and having a practice!... So now, he's working even more... I sort of wish we could have done more stuff together. I know he feels the same way. He used to take us all out individually, for what he called "special time." We'd go biking...or go for dinner or whatever, just so he had some time with us.

*Christopher:* And he stopped doing that.

*Y:* Yeah, I don't think he's had time lately.

Barak was explicitly committed to living a Jewish life, spending time with his children, and raising them Jewish. Like Sydney, he was a communalist. But as with the McCormicks and the Hellingers, all the Hammer family members had unexpressed needs for nurturance and affirmation lurking in the shadows that had for a long time remained unacknowledged by the family's official ideology. They came out into the open only when Aaron, Yehudi's younger brother, became addicted to drugs, and his addiction became the catalyst for a family crisis. He became the conduit for a long-brewing conflict between his parents, who were at odds about how Jewish the family should be. By using drugs, Aaron was acting out the unacknowledged family conflict.<sup>8</sup>

Barak wanted to straighten Aaron out by sending him to a military academy and started to pressure his wife Sydney constantly about Aaron's drug use, demanding that she take steps to solve the problem. Partly out of frustration with Barak, Sydney enrolled Aaron in a treatment program that required the attendance of teenagers and their entire family; the parents had to attend three nights a week.

I finally went to [the seven-month family program] because Barak was driving me nuts.... Every time Aaron got into trouble or had a problem, it was my fault. He was calling me every day like ten times: "What's Aaron doing now? Where's

Aaron?..." I mean he was driving me nuts. And then he [would say]... "you know, this is all your fault; you're too co-dependent," you know. I was going nuts...feeling verbally abused.

Barak complained that his job would not permit him to attend drug treatment program meetings three times a week, and Sydney told him he had no choice.

I said [to Barak], "You've got a hurting kid here... who doesn't feel good about himself and doesn't feel he fits in. We've got to get to the source of that hurt.... You're going to have to [commit to coming]! You're going to have to." And he did. He came twice, sometimes three times a week, and he quickly stopped attacking me and focusing on the real issue.

Until Aaron's crisis, the family had been focused outward and neglected that introspective dimension of family life that expressive individualism makes sacred. The treatment program forced the family to confront internal contradictions between a communal ideology and an unexpressed need for nurturance.

I may owe the richness of my data on the Hammers to their participation in the drug treatment program because their narratives in the interview appeared well rehearsed and coherent. As a result of participating in the program, Barak was drawn into the family treatment process and realized that he was not giving Sydney and Aaron the nurturance they needed. Aaron asked him why he had such a nurturing bedside manner with his patients, but acted harsh with his family, and Barak started to cry. Sydney began to remember the painful years of her own adolescence when her mother was relying on her for emotional support after getting divorced from her father and she herself was using and selling drugs. Week after week she would be crying throughout the session before her flabbergasted children, who were used to seeing her cheerful and energetic.

When I interviewed Aaron — tall, lanky, long-haired, and wearing a baggy pair of pants for which he had sewn the patches himself — he had been sober for some seven months and was attending weekly NA meetings. In his family, the rules of Orthodox Judaism had come to feel like a Band Aid over emotional wounds and the solidarity they had engendered of a thin and brittle sort. He had the air of a fiercely individualistic rebel, demonstrating with his clothes that he felt no constraints from the rules of Orthodox Judaism. In his family, those rules had come to

seem hollow. Aaron had learned during treatment that he viewed his father's passion for his work as a betrayal of his family — not only because of the hours he kept, but because Barak reserved his kindness for patients. Although Aaron had always felt close to his mother, he saw his father as "a lot more no nonsense.... He comes off...rough edged sometimes.... That was really hard for me because I always felt like he didn't love me or something...like he expected too much." As with the other three families, time bind conflicts in the Hammer family were more about care shortages than time shortages. Time was a symbol of care, not synonymous with it.

### **Communalism without Time Binds: The Saltzman Lewises**

The Saltzman Lewises were a family of caregivers and time givers; they defined their identity as a family through their support for one another and their shared commitments to community activism in the neighborhood and at the Workingmen's Circle, a secular Jewish congregation. I categorize the Saltzman Lewises as familistic, rather than communal, because the purpose of much of their activity seems to be to reaffirm their shared identity as a family.

Even though the Saltzman Lewises spent time together and gave it away freely, they also fought. Their fights were explicitly about care rather than time. They were more resistant to hegemonic individualism than the other four families and closer to organizing their family discourse around a core commitment to mutual caring and loyalty. They did not couch their quest for nurturance in a language of time scarcity.

Caregiving was a two-way street in this family. Seventeen-year-old Milan supported his parents almost as much as they supported him, and his 14-year-old sister, Theresa, although she did not run her parents' political campaigns, did participate willingly in household activities. She and Milan cooked dinner together while I was over at the house interviewing Brenda, as they did whenever their parents were at meetings. Terry came to classical concerts with Milan and their parents, just as he attended her sports events; and she was planning to follow in her mother's footsteps at the congregation by participating in a teen leadership group and was planning to help organize events there, just as her mother was coordinating the secular bar-mitzvah program.

The family ideology centered around mutual assistance — Brenda, the mother and wife, helped Milan with his college applications, and he helped her with her campaign for the local school board. Milan dispensed advice to his sister, Terry, about school and about the synagogue. He was also in close touch with Grandma Barbara, his father's mother and only surviving grandparent, following the lead of his mother who had visited her parents, both Holocaust survivors, once or twice a day before they died. Milan enjoyed talking with his grandmother and spending time with her, in keeping with the family tradition of close intergenerational relationships:

I talk to my grandmother more than anyone else in the house [does].... I used to try to call her at least once a week. Especially since I started driving, I go over there as often as I possibly can and see her, and I did the same with my mom's parents too when they were alive. We saw them very very regularly, and you know — it's nice to have family around. My grandmother is 83, but it's amazing. She lives in an apartment all by herself, and she cleans, she walks everywhere, she takes the bus, she goes out to see the friends on her block, and it's amazing to me that somebody that age can do everything she does. I love spending time with her. I call her not because I feel obligated to talk to her; I call her because I enjoy talking to her. Um, and it was to a lesser degree with my mom's parents. I don't necessarily think it was because I like Grandma Barbara better. I think it was because I was younger, and I didn't. But, um, I do...call Barbara as much as I possibly can. My parents...don't, [because] they're very busy people.

Because time was given generously in the family, it was not treated as a scarce commodity to be jealously treasured. Indeed, Milan said that he felt somewhat claustrophobic because of the sheer amount of time he spent with his family:

I'll tell you the truth that like with every family that it's very difficult to live for this much time in one house, and we're very close in terms of what we do. In other words, most families, as I understand it, kids say "Goodbye. I'll be gone and I'll come back later tonight. I'm going with my friends to do this." And it's not that we don't do that, but you know, when we go on vacation, we all go. Or if we go out to eat, most of the time, we all go. If we go to a concert or a play or whatever, we all go together. So we spend a good percentage of the time together, and when you spend that much time together, you know, there's bound to be problems and disagreements and all those kinds of things.

Milan was about to leave home in order to attend a prestigious East Coast university on a generous scholarship. Claustrophobia, then, was only part of the picture. He also talked about how close he felt to his family and how he would miss them. Milan may have been trying to separate emotionally from his family. His feelings of claustrophobia, I sensed, were the product of emotion work he was doing on his own psyche to make the move east seem more of a liberation than an event to be feared.

It was hard for Milan to leave his family because they were closely intertwined in numberless ways. First, they were all active in local progressive politics, and their shared progressivism was part of their identity as a family. Bob, an immigration lawyer, was active with the progressive Lawyers' Guild and had run for city council. Brenda, who worked as an adult educator, had been elected to the local school board. Milan had managed both of their campaigns, and came with them to political meetings; he also volunteered for the neighborhood association. Second, all of them visited frequently with the grandparents, who lived in adjoining neighborhoods of Los Angeles County within a ten-minute commute of the Saltzman Lewises' home. Brenda's parents, both Holocaust survivors, had died several years before the interview, but had taken European trips with the family before their deaths. Bob's parents and his sister also lived nearby.<sup>9</sup> Bob, Brenda, and the two children had seen the grandparents once or twice a week, gone over to their houses to swim in their pools, and celebrated Jewish holidays with them even though they were atheists.

The family was also active in the Workingmen's Circle. Since they were young children, both Milan and Terry had accompanied their mother there on Sundays. Brenda volunteered there, and the children studied Jewish history and culture. When Brenda was out of town one year during the Circle's secular Passover *seder*, Bob took the children to the event even though the congregation had never been as important to him as it was to Brenda and he never had spent as much time there. The family genuinely enjoyed being together, and the parents and children had equal say over how family time should be spent, such that all four family members would willingly attend an event that was of particular interest to one of them. Milan celebrated his family-centeredness as an integral part of his identity:



*Milan...* My sister and I both enjoy spending time with the family. Even if we're fighting, we still go out to dinner....But that's not all we do. Last weekend we went to Sea World [an amusement park].... And when the Shadow Convention was in downtown Los Angeles [during election year], we all just went.... We kind of do most things together... For instance, if you asked [my parents] how many times they went to see a classical [music] concert in their lives, a couple of years ago they would have said, "Zero." Over the summer we've gone to maybe three or four. [Milan is an accomplished classical violinist.] And since my sister really got into sports, we've gone to more sports events. So, it's not necessarily what they [my parents] want to do. We go to things that we all want to do.

Of the five families in this article, the Saltzman Lewises seemed to care the most about caring. Yet even for them, a shared ideology was often at odds with the family members' actual needs. The focus on togetherness, the amount of time lavished on the family, led to its own conflicts. Milan, unsurprisingly for an adolescent, was ambivalent about his relationship with his parents. On the one hand, he felt overprotected, even somewhat controlled by his mother. In his view, she did not grant him enough responsibility for his own decisions. Yet he was grateful to her for having helped him with his college applications, and seemed to believe that without her assistance, he would not have been admitted to the university he was planning to attend.

*Milan:* [Sometimes] the way they talk to me, the responsibilities they give me..., I just don't agree with....They're very — I mean — I hate to say that they're controlling, because a lot of the time I'm glad that they help me so much with those things... when I was doing college applications — my mom spent way too much time helping me fill things out, and as I said, going with me constantly over here and there and doing that thing and this thing, so they are constantly helping me out with things that I need, but then on the other hand, they have a tendency to want to control things that I'm doing.

*Christopher:* Did you tell your mom "Let me do this on my own?"

M: Well, no, I didn't, because I needed the help, and I had...friends who didn't get that kind of help, and didn't get to apply to all the schools they wanted... because of lack of time. So had she not helped me, it would have made it very difficult. But we just don't draw the same lines.... I said, "if you have the time, and you can help me fill out this application, wonderful. But you should let me be in charge of whether I should fill out the application, when I'm going to fill out the application, when I'm going to do my part of it.

The Saltzman-Lewis came together through a visible ideology, a *familistic* commitment to the welfare of every one in the extended family — grandparents, parents and children. But there

was also an unacknowledged *expressive individualism*, evident in the parents' commitment to supporting the development of their children's interests and in Milan's desire for autonomy. Milan was annoyed because his whole nuclear family was accompanying him to Boston to witness him starting college. He would have preferred to travel alone with his mother, who had helped him apply and was well informed about where to go and whom to speak to when he arrived. However, Bob wanted to visit Boston for the first time, and because he was coming, Terry would accompany them as well.

Although this plan for a family vacation made sense within the context of a familistic ideology, Milan wanted his parents to pay more attention to his individual needs. They had told him that if they had had enough money, they would have paid for his entire college education instead of expecting him to work, yet they were spending thousands of dollars on a family vacation to Boston.

*Christopher:* So you have the whole family taking you to college.... [*Milan frowns.*] I guess you're not too thrilled about it.

*Milan:* I don't mind. I guess it's just a money thing, and the truth is it costs money for everyone to come to Boston.

*C:* Why is the money something you would worry about?

*M:* It's not necessarily, and it's their money and they can do whatever they want with it, they're paying for it, but the truth is that I'm paying for a good part of my schooling, and you know, my personal opinion is that if they really had the money to bring us all there [to Boston], they could take their money...out of what I'm paying.... Their big thing is "you know, we just don't have the money to pay for more; if you want to go to school you can pay for part of it." But if they're going to take the money and spend it on these things I say, "Wait a second. This may not be the best place to be spending your money."

Milan had contradictory feelings. On the one hand, he felt a keen desire for more autonomy as he was moving East. Although he was unwilling to openly reject his parents' affections and undermine the family's emotional connections with one another, he wanted space to make his own choices without their constant monitoring. His desire was not consistent with the family's emphasis on mutual assistance. At the end of the interview, when I was about to say goodbye, Milan said he was looking forward to college because he wanted to establish his own independent sense of identity rather than walk in the shadow of his parents.

The anxiety about his parents' money appeared to be the tip of the emotional iceberg and could be understood on multiple levels. On the surface, Milan was taking the more expressive-individualist position, arguing that his parents should make his education a priority while his parents were more family-centered by opting for a shared vacation. Perhaps he would have liked to use the money to pay his tuition. Yet his annoyance about money also served to cover up more unconscious anxieties about the family following him to Boston and trying to extend its control over him in what he hoped would be a new realm of independence.

On the other hand, Milan was a familist. Like his parents, he alternated between the language of individualism and of collective obligations. In another family dispute, over his desire to give advice to his sister Terry, he took a familist position while his parents had a more individualist approach. They were annoyed with him for acting *in loco parentis* by attempting to steer Terry's decision making about what school to attend and how to spend time with her friends. He urged her to take on the family commitment to secular Judaism and progressive politics. He gave her advice about navigating the local middle school she was still attending, and told her he thought she would get a better education if she applied to his magnet high school, where there was a lot of individualized attention to students, than she would at the local public high school, which had lower ratings. Often his parents seemed to get angrier with him for voicing his opinion than Terry did. He stressed to me, in his interview, that he was taking positions in line with his parents' philosophy and that he was a competent caretaker who was trying to protect and support his sister.

*Christopher:* Have you...looked after Terry?

*Milan:* Oh, I've tried. I actually get a lot of criticism from my parents. One of the things that bothers me is that when I do try to help, they make it seem like I'm overstepping my boundaries.... [If] I ever try to help out by saying "This is a crazy idea, Terry, I wouldn't do that if I were you," I get so much of, "Why are you doing this? This is none of your business..." Not necessarily from my sister, which is the weirdest part, but from my parents.

*C:* When do you feel that you've been helpful?

*M:* I'll give you an example. A couple of weeks ago, maybe a month ago, she got an invitation from a friend to go to...an overnight event at a church, and my parents weren't sure if they were going to let her go or not. And this was the last day [to enroll], and I looked at this thing.... What really stuck out at me was that the advertisement made it sound like a whole recruiting thing.... I did think they

were going to sit and lecture to her about Christianity and about their church and how they should become members, and I just didn't think it was appropriate for her to go. And so I made my opinions very well known, to my parents and to her, that I thought it was a bad idea, that if she really wanted to see her friend, she should do it tomorrow for goodness sake.... My parents ended up agreeing with me and not letting her go, but boy, was it a fight! You know, she was not too happy that I was disagreeing with her, and my parents were not happy at all that I was voicing my opinion, but I felt that maybe they didn't catch that and I wanted to make sure that they understood what I thought was obvious in the thing. That's an example of how I try to help, and whether it helps or not I don't know.

Was it appropriate for Milan to be acting in his parents' stead and advising Terry, or was this solely the domain of Bob and Brenda? It was unclear because the family had two competing ideologies of care, an official familism and an unofficial culture of individualism, which manifested itself in both generations. For Milan, individualism made an appearance in his anger about the family vacation in Boston; his parents found it upsetting that Milan would voice his opinion about what was good for Terry without allowing her to make her own decision. But in his view, Terry's participation in a Catholic ritual was not good for the family, because of their shared commitment to Judaism and atheism. For the Saltzman Lewises, the fights that family members remembered were not about the violation of the sacred self, as was the case for the McCormicks and the Schwartzes. Instead, they were about the violation of sacred bonds within the family, about the proper lines of authority and control.

### **Conclusion**

A leading psychoanalytic feminist (Benjamin 1988; Benjamin 1995) has shown that identity is constructed through a dialogue of intimacy and separation and that mental health is associated with the capacity to sustain a creative tension between the individual psyche and the collective consciousness. Benjamin's argument is consistent with the data from this sample of five families, in which solidarity and conflict seem to be inseparable and both fighting and connecting appear to be essential elements in the construction of a shared identity. The family acts out its commitment to mutual care through moments of intense solidarity—dialogues about care—and shared rituals—collective representations of care. Yet, perhaps because the children are teenagers, family members are also constantly jockeying for tactical advantage, arguing their cases to one another, airing or acting out their hurt feelings, and asserting their individual

rights. If acts of caring reinforce collective identity, I would argue, conflict is a way to reassert individual identity within the family, and is therefore inherent to families, in an explicit or a subconscious way.<sup>10</sup>

The families in this study connected through acts of caring. They also fought over when and how to care for each other and how to assert their individuality. But their fighting was not random; it took place in the context of the families' responses to hegemonic individualism. Even when they were still childless couples, the parents in each family had constructed a joint narrative about themselves as a couple or a family and about the principles they believed were important in their relationships. These narratives all had to take individualism into account. Were they unambiguously dedicated to the children's achievement or to their emotional growth and interested in community participation to the extent that it served these goals? Or did they try to temper the excesses of individualism, because of the idiosyncrasies of their backgrounds, through a commitment to the extended family or a community of memory?

As the children in these five families grew older, they too became part of the narrative about the family and its relationship to the world. This narrative evolved into an official discourse that shaped relationships among family members by defining the parameters of appropriate demands for care. The four time bind families had collective identities suffused with individualism, so they struggled over the amount of caring that was appropriate to claim and offer. Sue Hellinger had decided to work part-time, so she had the hours between school and dinner for her family; but she still felt guilty about her commitment to volunteer work because it meant less time devoted to the emotional development of her children. Harold Schwartz had been a family man, but his new high-stakes job had upset the balance of care in the family. Renée complained about his busy schedule and spoke wistfully about all the family vacations they used to take, and Saul wished they could spend Shabbat together again. But they did not demand more time and energy from Harold, because in their family ideology, care of the self took precedence over mutual caring.

For the Saltzman Lewises, unlike the other four families, mutual caring was sacralized and made central to the family identity through participation in community life, rather than being held hostage to work-family conflicts. Time binds were not part of the emotional landscape.

This was not simply because they had less to do, but also because they were busy *together* rather than *separately*. Work, family, and community seemed to form a seamless whole.<sup>11</sup> The result was that most of the family's emotional energies were invested in one another rather than individual members turning to their own realms from which spouses and children were excluded, as was the case with the four other families. Thus, the main topic of discussion and conflict in the Saltzman Lewis family was not how much time was devoted to care, but whether the ample time they spent together, and the talk they engaged in, was always an expression of caring.

But if the Saltzman Lewises talked about care, and the other four families about time, in none of the families was it possible to discuss all topics openly. Each family ideology produced blind spots about family members' needs because it was impossible for a family to accommodate everyone's needs all the time. The Saltzman Lewises tended to overlook their children's need for greater autonomy; thus, Brenda walked Milan through every step of the college application process and the whole family accompanied him to Boston. Renée and Saul Schwartz, who treasured individual self-expression, had the opposite problem. They were hard pressed to explain their need for membership in a community of memory based at synagogue or for a more cohesive family in which Harold had a responsibility to be home for Shabbat dinner no matter what his work obligations were.

In the Hellinger family, the need for intimacy was overlooked because individualism and communalism reinforced one another and created a family culture focused more on the outside world than on internal family relationships. Sue Hellinger expressed who she was through her community activism, and Rachel, through her close relations with her *havurah* girlfriends. The older daughter, Debbie, like Saul Schwartz, had a submerged desire for a more inward looking, familistic sense of shared identity, protected from the outside world; but she could not put her yearning into words because caring for each other in the privacy of the home was not part of the family culture.

Except in the case of the Saltzman Lewises, nurturance was the main victim of family ideologies, perhaps because the desire for care is infinite, (see Tronto 1995) and conflicts were inevitable over whose needs for nurturance would get met first. For different reasons, neither Ian McCormick nor Aaron Hammer could express his desire for more loving attention from the

father. Care in Ian's family was expressed through his father's utilitarian-individualist gifts of European vacations or a new pair of pants. If Ian had complained to his father, he might have seemed ungrateful. And Barak Hammer was, in the estimation of his son Aaron, "a great man," an honorable citizen of his community, who had survived difficult challenges and become an emergency room physician with lots of patients to care for. Aaron did not believe in his right to claim more of his father's attention because it would have been too selfish, so he was learning to ignore him instead.

Even if they created considerable unhappiness, family cultures tended toward stability over time. The Hammers were the only family whose culture had dramatically changed as a result of conflict. This was because the contradiction between their two conflicting sources of solidarity, especially visible in the battle between Sydney and Barak over emigrating to Israel, had led to a major family crisis and propelled them into rewriting the family narrative. The Hammers had deep roots in an Orthodox Jewish community of memory, and for many years, they had set aside their other shared discourse, which celebrated self-expression, because it was incompatible with Orthodoxy. If Ian McCormick felt the pressure of an identity that was too individualist, Aaron Hammer had suffered from his membership in a community that did not give him enough space to show his individuality. As they participated, the family began to openly discuss their needs for nurturance from one another, revising the family narrative to recognize one another's vulnerability. This process strengthened the expressive-individualist side of the family culture and weakened its commitment to Orthodoxy.

This paper highlights an essential point for the sociology of work and family. Time bind conflicts are frequent in American households, and they are undoubtedly signs of the increasing power of capitalism to disrupt traditional relationships and institutions. There is certainly a commodity frontier<sup>12</sup>, an undefined terrain in which goods and services once provided within the household have become products to be bought and sold on the market. But time bind conflicts emerge in the specific context of a familial culture of solidarity that shapes to a large extent how family members will interact with the work world. It is just as important to ask who is travelling to the frontier, when and why, as it is to study the frontier itself or analyze the conduct of its transactions.

Three of the time bind families in this study were swept up by the seduction of work: the McCormicks, the Schwartzes, and the Hammers. They had visions of the purpose of work that were highly compatible with capitalism. According to his wife, Diane, Bill McCormick was above all a provider; he liked the income and the status that his job gave him and his family. The Schwartzes believed in self-expression; according to Renée, her husband was entitled to a job he likes, since he made "100% of the income" and her own project was not a moneymaker — she wanted to help Saul and Benjamin grow up. Although I did not interview Harold Schwartz, the evidence suggests that he sought in work the chance to achieve his true self, to become more competent and self-fulfilled. Finally, Barak Hammer saw his medicine as a calling; his 60-hour workweeks fulfilled a mission to heal the sick.

The Hellingers and the Saltzman Lewises were not travelling to the commodity frontier because they were involved heavily in the community. Busy as they were, they evaded to a large extent the cultural hegemony of the marketplace.<sup>13</sup> Thus, even in this hardworking country, members of middle-class families who set the parameters for policy discussions are not all in love with their jobs. Family narratives may contain within them emergent and ill-articulated cultures of resistance to the hegemony of individualism and work.



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## NOTES

<sup>1</sup> In a lecture given at the Center for Working Families in December 2000, Arlie Hochschild defined the "commodity frontier" as an arena where the goods and services being exchanged replace goods and services formerly provided inside the household or kin network, and outside the market economy.

<sup>2</sup> In the larger sample, "time bind" conflicts were rare, but not because my respondents worked short hours. All but two of the fathers worked full-time. The two exceptions were the Diamond family, where the father was on disability and slowly dying of cancer, and the Silversteins. John and Lisa Silverstein had retired young and moved to California after working 18 years on the East Coast and saving up the profits from John's real estate business. Among the mothers, there was much more variation. 6 mothers did not work for pay at all, 5 mothers worked part-time, and 9 mothers worked full-time. There did not seem to be any clear relationship between the number of hours parents worked and the types of conflicts common in their families. The extent of parents' control over their work environment seemed to be more important. One reason for the lack of conflict over the time bind in most of my sample may have been the preponderance of entrepreneurship and self-employment among parents. Among the 20 fathers and mothers in my sample, 10 fathers and 4 mothers -- more than a third -- were self-employed consultants, entrepreneurs, or professionals with private practices. Saul Bruder had a bookselling business, Oscar Englander was a former teacher who owned a small firm that offered tutoring and test preparation to teenagers, Don Wexler was a dentist with a private practice, Spencer Friedman, Bob Lewis, and Rick Greenberg were attorneys in private practice, Michael Rodman was a psychiatrist with a private practice, Barak Hammer and Dan Robbins were doctors who worked part-time at hospitals and ran their own private practices, and John Silverstein had been a partner in his family's real estate concern before retiring at age 47. Also, Lois Levinson and Simone Friedman had private practices as therapists, and Sarah Englander and Claudia Wexler worked in their husbands' businesses. The adults in these families controlled their time and energy, and were not developing emotional attachments to companies.

<sup>3</sup> I spoke to one father at his medical office and two teenage boys and one mother in semipublic settings at synagogue. A third boy met me at the public library in his town, and his mother met me at a coffeeshop. In the three families I interviewed outside of their homes, their decision to keep me out of the house proved to be significant. All three considered their homes sacred places, and saw me as an outsider.

<sup>4</sup> In the Hammer household, for example, the walls were decorated with the artwork of all four children in the family. In the McCormick household, 16-year-old Ian spent hours sitting at the family computer, which sat in full public view in the living room.

<sup>5</sup> Debbie and her best friend had become acquainted, along with their families, when the Hellingers belonged to an earlier *havurah* which they dropped out of because Sue "couldn't stand the bitterness some of the people... expressed.... It wasn't worth it." Debbie's friend and her family were still close to the Hellingers, but did not belong to their *havurah*.

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<sup>6</sup> Deborah was not the only one to complain about her mother's synagogue time. Sue's parents were visiting from Chicago, so I interviewed them as well, and Sue's mother said vehemently that she thought Sue was neglecting her family and allowing the synagogue and its rabbi to put unreasonable demands on her.

<sup>7</sup> Mezuzot are hung by the doorways of every house, and they hold miniature Torah scrolls.

<sup>8</sup> There were several other possible reasons for Aaron's addiction. Some element of it may have been a genetic predisposition to addictive behavior, since Sydney and her brother had both used and sold drugs a great deal as teenagers and her brother became an alcoholic. Perhaps Aaron wanted his father, the doctor, to pay more attention to him and thought unconsciously that, if he became sick enough from drug use, Barak would come home and take care of him. He also felt like an outcast in his school because he had been raised more orthodox than most of his Jewish classmates. However, my main point is that his addiction became the focal point of family conflict.

<sup>9</sup> The proximity of Bob's sister to her parents and her brother may have been a matter more of necessity than of choice because she had a serious mental illness, an anxiety disorder so severe that she had difficulty doing anything on her own.

<sup>10</sup> The importance of individuation through conflict is not only a characteristic of individualist Americans. Briggs (1998) has shown how even a three-year-old Inuit girl in an Arctic village, far removed from Western influences, has a highly individualized style of negotiating group norms.

<sup>11</sup> Bob Lewis, an immigration lawyer with a private practice, viewed his legal work within the context of a broader commitment to social change that he had carried on since college, shared with his wife and was enthusiastically passing on to his kids.

<sup>12</sup> See note 1 about Hochschild's definition of the "Commodity Frontier."

<sup>13</sup> Although Sue was still rushed and her daughter felt the effects of her peculiar community-based time bind, Debbie did not say in her interview that she wanted Sue to work more for pay. She endorsed the family's collectivism, but wished that some of their time would be diverted away from the community and more toward the household.

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