1. What experiences, questions and aims have led you to make the demanding commitment to seek a Ph.D. in Organization Studies? (circa 2 pages)

For the last several years, I have kept a small, framed photograph just within reach of my desk at home. On the left is my father, joyful, looking somewhere just off camera. I stand to the right, age thirteen, smiling up at him even though we are the same height. Both of us are wearing t-shirts that say "I Care." The picture was taken at a senior citizens' home, to which my father brought the staff of his company, Jay Medical, for an afternoon of learning and community service. They had just launched the Jay Care product, a cushion that relieved the distinctive posture and pressure problems faced by geriatric patients confined to wheelchairs. The "I Care" program helped engage the employees more deeply in the mission and real-world results of their efforts.

In a very tangible way, Jay Medical's products made people's lives better. But it was clear to me, even as a grade school student helping out in the factory, that "I Care" applied to more than just the company's customers. I remember bringing clothes, toys, and school supplies to the families of factory workers during the holiday season. I remember a costly recall required not by legal responsibility but a sense of duty to our market. I remember working with the head engineer to reduce the waste and environmental impact of our research and development efforts. Of course, Jay Medical was not without its conflicts; with my father as president, my mother as vice president, and my brother as marketing director, I found many of the organization's dilemmas erupting during my morning sleep and our family dinners. But there was a kind of organizational wholeness, a coherent purpose that survived and held these conflicts. This spirit generated and yet superseded the company's commercial success as the predominant global player in the wheelchair seating market.

Eventually, however, the success of Jay Medical caused it to outgrow its early structures and leadership style. My father found himself increasingly distant from the excitement of product development, burdened with administrative duties. The dilemmas and conflicts that we had taken in stride as a family became more frequent, and grew in complexity and intensity. When a major player in the wheelchair market offered to buy Jay Medical, my parents took the offer, deciding to spin off a new startup in the hopes of recapturing the entrepreneurial spirit. Although the company's sale brought my family a new prosperity, it also brought a certain fading of vitality. Jay Medical has not expanded beyond its original product line since the acquisition, stalling the innovation for which it had been known. My family's spin-off business grew to a modest fruition and then sold to a competitor, but did not reach the same level of holistic caring or business success.

These early experiences have shaped my lifelong inquiry in to the nature of holistic success in organizations. What enables a company to not only succeed in the market but demonstrate a caring that extends to employees and broader environmental and societal stakeholders? Do family-managed businesses, with loving relationships at the core of the power structure, have an advantage in producing that kind of holistic success? When such companies reach the kind of developmental transition that Jay Medical did, how can they sustain the spirit with which they were founded?

Following my early experience with Jay Medical, I have pursued three interwoven threads of inquiry that have led me to greater understanding of these topics, and that I wish to continue through doctoral study and an academic career.

The first thread relates to the practice of business management. Upon graduation from college I secured a job at a Knowledge Universe company that managed private preschools around the United States. There I participated in a process re-engineering effort that mapped critical flows of money and information – a task that provided insight into the "physiology" of the business and methods of organizational analysis. The other component of my job was to explore the role of information technology in supporting our educational offerings. In doing so I developed a concept for a web-based curriculum and assessment system that would support parent-teacher collaboration in preschools. I secured funding from Knowledge Universe to spin off "Little Engine" as a startup company, and built a team of eight people to develop a prototype of the tool. At age 22, I soon found myself in over my head as the company president, and we were not able to weather the capital markets crash of winter, 2000-01. Still, the experience exposed me to the challenges of managing a socially-minded organization and incited further inquiry.

The second thread focuses on the psychological underpinnings of holistic leadership in complex social systems. As an undergraduate at Harvard I majored in psychology and treaded the line between cognitive neuroscience and social psychology, studying the biological systems through which human beings make meaning in the world. From that foundation I worked in the field of early childhood education for several years, deepening my academic knowledge through practice. Driven by an interest in teachers' professional development, I then returned to Harvard and studied with Robert Kegan, a renowned expert in adult developmental psychology. Kegan's research focuses on the conflicts that people face when their meaning-making capacities are mismatched with the complexity of their social environments, a topic directly connected to the issue of organizational development. It was through Dr. William Isaacs' guest appearance in Kegan's class that I then found my way to Dialogos International, a consulting firm where I have gained further perspective on adult leadership development. By directly engaging with clients through coaching, leadership training, and dialogic process consultation, Dialogos simultaneously studies and participates in people's growth. As facilitators of dialogue and team capacity building, we also look at the integration of individual capacities into collective intelligence and collective leadership. My work at Dialogos has helped me see some of the critical capacities that leaders can develop in order to achieve balanced success amid complex systems of stakeholders.

My third thread of inquiry has been to examine another layer of social organization – group process and technologies for collaborative learning. This work began with an undergraduate internship at Synectics, a consulting firm that combines live facilitation with groupware technology to foster creative problem solving in teams. It came to full fruition four years later through my M.Ed. degree in Technology in Education (TiE) at Harvard's Graduate School of Education. With Chris Dede, Catalina Laserna, and others in TiE, I focused my studies on technology in social context, steeping myself in theories of situated learning, collaborative knowledge building, and social structuration. I also engaged in an experiential course on leadership and group dynamics at the Kennedy School, which gave me both powerful theoretical tools and an opportunity for direct practice in leading collective inquiry. Now, at Dialogos, my work as an assistant facilitator with global organizations such as BP and the World Bank has been a watershed in my understanding of group process and dialogue.

Weaving together these three threads, my studies and research at Carroll would closely examine organizations that operate holistically, successfully delivering value to multiple stakeholders. In particular, I wish to understand the developmental dynamics of responsible organizations, and how their core sense of commitment and purpose sustains them through crisis and transition. In so doing, I hope to generate useful insights that help managers cultivate and sustain the caring spirit with which Jay Medical was founded.

2.Why have you selected our Ph.D.Program at the Carroll School of Management at Boston College? How do you think our academic program is related to your scholarly and academic career objectives?
(circa 1-2 pages)

To me the most tangible reason for choosing the Carroll Ph.D. program is the resonance I feel with the faculty and their research. Bill Torbert, for example, is unique in the academic world, bridging developmental psychology, action science, and management studies. His work on developmental action inquiry provides profound insight into the psychology of holistic leadership in complex social systems. I would be interested in building upon this work, examining the relationship between action-logic development and the capacity to balance the competing concerns of profitability, employee work-life integration, social justice, and environmental sustainability. Professor Torbert's career also demonstrates the possibility of academic inquiry interwoven with direct involvement in business management and consulting. These can be difficult territories to navigate, and I hope to learn from his successes and challenges.

I am also deeply inspired by Jean Bartunek's work on the place of management scholarship in the life of organizations. The theory/practice integration challenge that faces management scholars is familiar to me from having studied education. And it is clear that Professor Bartunek asks some of the most fundamental reflective questions: Who are the stakeholders of management research? What are the dynamics of business schools as organizations? What individual relationships actually exist between researchers and practitioners? I do not see these questions as separate from her research and teaching about organizational change; first, they inquire into the role of academia in stimulating change, and second, they promote inquiry and change in the organizations of management academia themselves. There is an authenticity and courage to this integrated inquiry that is rare in academia and I would greatly value the opportunity to study with Professor Bartunek.

Richard Nielsen is the third professor whose work has captured my attention. His research has deeply engaged the question of ethical behavior in organizations, tackling the structural and economic as well as psychological and philosophical underpinnings of responsible management. The breadth and depth of his approach, which is not only descriptive but deeply practice-oriented, is truly inspiring. As with Professor Torbert, I would like to learn from Nielsen's interweaving of university professorship with teaching and consulting in real-world organizations.

The second aspect of BC that attracts me is the emphasis on collaboration and community among graduate students and faculty, even across disciplinary lines. Brad Harrington's Center for Work and Family is an exciting example of this possibility, integrating scholars from the schools of management and education. My hope at BC is to contribute to a similar community of inquiry, engaging questions about organizational wholeness from the perspectives of management, human development, economics, and sociology. In fact, given my interests in the phenomena of dialogue, collaboration, and mutuality in organizational life, I could not imagine working in any other kind of environment.

Finally, underlying each of these professors' engaged work and this philosophy of collaboration is BC's deep, evident commitment to academic inquiry in service of social change. It is this basic feature of the school's culture that inspires me even more than the contribution of any one professor, and that I believe derives from BC's Jesuit heritage. To me, spiritual practice and faith are not separable from intellectual inquiry, nor from one's service and impact in the world. My desire to research the dynamics of leadership and sustainability emerge directly from an intention to bring about a better world. It is also deeply connected to my own reflective and contemplative practice – how can I be in the world such that I embody the kind of holistic approach and leadership I wish to study? This question seems to underlie the history of Boston College and the Carroll School of Management, and my wish is to help continue that tradition.

3. The focus of the Ph.D. program at Boston College is research. Describe a research question that you would like to explore. Make sure to explain what you are trying to find out, why it is important, and what approach you might like to take in answering the question.(circa 3 pages)

One basic research question I would like to pursue is the following: what makes for the development of a healthy and responsible family-managed organization? By "family-managed" I mean an organization where multiple members of the same nuclear family are on the senior management team of the organization. By "healthy and responsible" I mean an organization that attends to the needs and aspirations of all of its stakeholders – customers, employees, investors, suppliers, the physical environment, and the communities and society surrounding the organization. By "what makes for" the development of such an organization, I mean the critical factors and system dynamics, whether at the level of individual leadership, management practice, organizational structure, or cultural values. In what way can family relationships among management promote broader social responsibility? In what ways can they inhibit it? How do these dynamics change as an organization grows?

Admittedly, this question poses a program or domain of research, enough to fill an academic career. More specific questions emerge from inspecting the particular challenges and tensions in the life of family-managed organizations. In my answer to Question 1, for example, I described the story of Jay Medical, a company in which my father was founding president, my mother was founding vice-president, and my brother became the director of marketing. As I recounted, the company became quite successful and grew to the point where the nature of my father's work shifted from entrepreneurship and invention to maintenance and management, and he grew discontent. When family-managed organizations reach a developmental transition like this one, how can their leaders adapt? What are their options, and how are they constrained by the family relationships that overlay with the business relationships?

I believe that this question quickly dives into the very heart of human social organization. If my father had hired a new president, and stepped into a product development role of some kind, how would that have affected his working relationships? Would he cease to be the alpha male and thereby lose the respect of his wife and colleagues? Would the family lose a sense of ownership from having someone else at the helm? What would it take for someone from the outside to win the trust of the family to manage something they had created together? If my parents had hired a president but stayed on, what is the likelihood that the company's spirit of caring and responsibility would have remained?

Although these questions derive from my own personal experience, they have relevance in the wider sphere of multinational corporations. Benetton, an international corporation managed by a group of brothers, has expanded from a boutique clothing company to a global textile manufacturer and the management company for the Italian freeway system. Schlumberger, the world's largest oil services company, is founded and managed by two brothers. Particularly in European and Asian countries where family relationships are closely connected to social status and power, the ties between family and business are critical, and the dynamics of the family system and organization system can be deeply interwoven.

Given the level of social and psychological complexity in this territory, I believe that a strategic, multidimensional method of research is required. My approach would be to follow Professor Torbert's model of integrating 1st, 2nd, and 3rd person forms of action inquiry. Ideally the following methods would be applied to two different family-managed organizations going through similar developmental transitions, yielding a comparative study. It would, however, be valuable even to do a single rich case study.

Initially I would work to make contact and build relationships with two or more sponsors in the management of the organization, including at least one person from the managing family and one outside. These sponsors would provide me with necessary access to the organization; they would also serve as a working group with me to pose inquiry questions, help strategize the research, and reflect on emerging results.

Once this social contract had been established, I would begin the research by spending time in the organization as a participant-observer, interviewing employees and sitting in on company meetings to get a sense of the people, culture, habits, and relevant challenges faced by the organization. In this phase I would also read and interview outside observers and regulators of the organization to document its history of employee, legal, social, and environmental responsibility.

To test and refine my understanding of the social dynamics I would then conduct a social network analysis, using a combination of surveys and interviews to produce the data. This analysis would have several objectives: to precisely discern the structurally significant individuals; to understand the quality of ties within and across family lines in the organization; and to understand the connections between different stakeholder groups, including advocates for the community and physical environment.

Finally I would conduct a developmental assessment of structurally significant individuals, using either the Loevinger sentence completion test or Robert Kegan's Subject-Object Interview to gather data about leadership capacity and people's aspirations for individual and organizational development.

This assessment would conclude the first phase of research, which would allow me to produce a thick description of the organization's developmental transition, its system of stakeholder relationships, the capacity of leaders to manage that complexity, and the challenges presented therein.

The second phase of research would move from a 3rd person emphasis to a more engaged 2nd and 1st person form of inquiry. I would begin by presenting my findings to the sponsoring work group and facilitating a reflective dialogue about the results. Given that the work group would include both family members and non-family members, this conversation would provide a valuable microcosm of the larger organizational system dynamics. The dialogue would therefore be recorded and coded both for content and process – how the participants responded to the research findings as well as their patterns of interaction as they made sense of it. For this analysis I would engage with an outside research partner from among my Carroll School colleagues, who could provide objective feedback on my own biases and behavior patterns in the dialogue. This would help me bring a more reflective and aware stance to further interactions with the organization.

The next step would be to broaden the conversation from my initial working group to a fuller complement of the organization's management. Ideally I would use a full-day or multi-day retreat format to present the earlier findings, provide space for individual and small-group reflection, and facilitate large-group dialogue. As before, coding and analysis of this situation would occur with a reflective partner who could provide perspective on my own role in the process.

Following this retreat, the progression of the research could go in different directions depending on the interests and decisions of the management team. I might be invited to conduct further interviews and dialogues as a researcher. I might be permitted to simply observe as the organizational leadership continued the inquiry and change process themselves. Or I might be asked to conclude my interaction while the organization either continued the reflection and inquiry process or continued business as usual. In any of these scenarios I would add my remaining observations to the earlier thick description and dialogue analyses, generating a reflective, analytic case study of an interactive inquiry process. From this case study I would articulate the critical variables that seemed to underpin the organization's successes and failures as a healthy and responsible family-managed organization. With sufficient time, access, and resources, I could strengthen this analysis through an identical inquiry process with a second organization for comparison.

Once this qualitative, in-depth research study had been completed, I could use its outcomes as hypotheses for a broader quantitative and comparative study. For example, let us suppose that a critical factor of organizational health was the quality of relationship between the most senior non-family employee and the in-family managers. I could then look at correlations between a measure of that variable and measures of employee satisfaction, financial health, philanthropic activity, and legal history in a population of organizations. This analysis would help me identify whether that factor was limited to the particular case studies I had accessed or whether it identified a broader dynamic of family-managed organizations.

I should say that coming into this territory of research, my bias is to look for a particular tension. On the one hand, family-managed businesses hold at their core a system of caring personal relationships, which could be the foundation of a caring and socially responsible enterprise. On the other hand, family relationships can be insular, with clear boundaries that can create glass ceilings for other employees and conflicted dynamics that can prevent people from seeing a wider view of organizational responsibility. It is only through the kind of disciplined, in-depth inquiry I have described, however, that I can come to understand how this tension works, whether it is relevant at all, and what other dimensions exist for families looking to produce financial and social value.

4. Discuss your career objectives following graduation from a Ph.D. program.
(Circa 1-2 pages)

Having worked at the intersection of academia, business, and education, my dreams have taken different form and texture at different moments in my career. I have always, however, held three underlying career objectives. The first is to achieve stature as a teacher or guide – I aspire to help people refine their self-awareness and their understanding of the world so that they can know and manifest their dreams. My second objective is to create an institution of learning and inquiry in which I can carry out that teaching. The third is to achieve, through this work, a broader impact on the health of my society and natural environment. What follows here is my best guess at a path for achieving these objectives.

Immediately following graduation from a Ph.D. program, I will secure a professorship in Organization Studies at a school of business management. This position will allow me to begin teaching MBA students before they head out into the world as business leaders, and continue my program of research into health and responsibility in organizational leadership.

As I become more fluid as a teacher and researcher, I will expand my visibility through speaking and consulting, providing clients with a combination of expertise and action inquiry. Pursuing the research question about family-managed businesses that I described in Question 3 would quite naturally allow this expansion, as it provides a niche of expertise relevant in a variety of cultural settings.

Thus bridging the worlds of academia and consulting practice, I will be exquisitely positioned to develop new action-oriented theories of leadership for social responsibility. The models and tools I develop might be specific to management practice in family controlled enterprises. They might also be more generally applicable, deriving unique power from their development in environments of high relational complexity. In either case I will publish my work in the form of a fieldbook for use by managers and consulting practitioners.

Eventually, by holding a professorship at a university, sustaining an ongoing program of organizational research, and serving a portfolio of consulting clients, I will have the necessary clout and visibility to secure extended grant funding. I will also have cultivated a community of colleagues interested in similar questions of leadership for organizational health and responsibility. Combining these, I will create an institute for holistic leadership, ideally one that is autonomous but connected to a university. The institute will sponsor research fellows and consulting practitioners in-house, and hold regular seminars and dialogues for management teams, entrepreneurs, and families engaging in organizational development.

These goals, while ambitious, feel eminently attainable, particularly with the powerful intellectual foundation that a Ph.D. from the Carroll School would provide. I sincerely hope that the admissions committee offers me the opportunity to take my next step forward.