

Developmental Tasks of the NCFR— 1963-1988*

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Reuben Hill has indicated the disagreement which exists among family-field professionals regarding premarital sex morality and the function of constructive conflict in marriage; he has also called attention to discontinuities between individual versus marriage and family goals. Other problems include the presumption, despite an emphasis on preventive mate selection, that marriage is the best design-for-living for everyone; the misconceived nature of sexuality in women; and the idolization of reproduction. Particularly important problems are the neglect of lower socio-economic families, especially of Negroes; and the apparent inadequacy of value foundations fostering family stability, such as the Protestant Ethic which has previously served middle-class families. The latter concerns suggest major developmental tasks for NCFR during the next 25 years.

INTRODUCTION: THE ASSIGNMENT

REUBEN HILL has succinctly summarized what has taken place in the family in the past as reflected in major statistical and generational trends and has revealed the implicit goals professionals in the family field hold for the family as reflected in their writing, teaching, and research. The problem now is how to match these two trends, not by attempting to impose objectives on the family, but rather by shaping these objectives to the task Hill has assigned, namely, to suggest national policies which might deal with America's millions of families as a precious national resource in social organization.

The specific question raised in this paper is: what are the developmental tasks of the National Council on Family Relations during the next 25 years of its existence; how does the organization fit into the trends now emerging; how can it use its members' talents and its facilities to best advantage; and what can it do, again to quote Hill, as a "concerted effort to help *all families* in a program of *family development*, which in a democratic society can be seen as a progressive upgrading of families comparable to urban development, economic development, and community development."

WHAT NCFR IS AND WHAT IT IS NOT AS DETERMINANTS OF WHAT IT CAN AND/OR SHOULD DO

In attempting to see where NCFR fits into any plan or program for the future of the American family, it seems essential to face squarely exactly what its limits as an organization are. It is *not* an action group. Not that it could not be, but so far it has not been. It is

not equipped to serve as a pressure group attempting to exert political pressure. This, in the writer's opinion, is as it should be. Schorr has pointed out that although "all groups hold the family to be of primary importance . . . in the market place of political decision-making . . . it becomes clear how diverse are the definitions of family and how different the goals for it."¹

Nor is NCFR a professional association. It is not therefore involved in the onerous tasks involved in licensing recruits or fighting for professional prerogatives. Nor does it invidiously strive to control a professional "establishment." It is an association of professionals but not a professional association.

NCFR is, in contrast to an action group or a professional association, a council. The essential thing about a council is that it is educational, advisory in nature. Its members come together to think about problems, to teach one another, to learn from one another. Let no one underestimate the importance of this function. In connection with a study of academic women, the writer had occasion recently to review the literature on informal communication among scientists, including interpersonal contacts at professional meetings, and it is remarkable how much stimulation and learning is attributed to such contacts by scientists.

NCFR is national. This means that no matter how absorbed its members may become in the problem of local councils, they cannot turn their backs on one another's problems. For the next 25 years at least, one of the major national

¹ Alvin L. Schorr, "Family Policy in the United States," *International Social Science Journal*, 14 (1962), p. 455. Schorr suggests that it may not be a good thing to seek a national family policy as yet, highlighting as it may family workers' differences. He believes that it may be preferable at this time to gain permission for local experimentation.

problems is going to center in the "acculturation" of families in the low-income brackets, especially Negro families. NCFR cannot shut its eyes to this fact. It must extend its horizons to include Negro families. It must, it seems, go out of its way to establish local councils in areas where "acculturation" problems are acute. Members should urge Negroes to become members of existing councils where there are many Negroes. More research ought to be oriented toward the family problems of Negroes. Counseling techniques suitable for the special problems of Negro parents and children ought to be learned.

NCFR is concerned with family relations. This means that almost nothing human can be alien. A review of studies in which the family was the independent variable would be an endless assignment, for there is scarcely any study of anything in the social realm that does not use marital status as one of the variables.² But increasingly, both points of view must be included. What the family does to other institutions and to society as a whole as well as to the family itself seems to be an unavoidable question.³ This paper will touch on this point only briefly in connection with the reproduction trends of recent years.

Briefly, then, members of a national council on family relations must teach and learn from one another, must not only integrate but go out of their way to include Negroes in their fellowship, and must view family relations in their widest perspective, including what they do to this society as well as what it does to them.

ORGANIZATIONAL ASSETS: THE FOUR-PRONGED ORIENTATION

The NCFR has both assets and liabilities insofar as making a contribution to the American family in the next 25 years is concerned. The four-pronged approach—counseling, education, research, and special projects—is definitely an asset. It is through these activities that family workers can make themselves felt. As Hill says, family specialists are "active agents in shaping

the future of the American family by their writing, teaching, and counseling"—and, more recently, by their social projects.⁴

NCFR's many-pronged orientation gives it many special functions. Those members who are interested in education should be, in effect, scouts looking for trouble. Especially those who are teaching youth are on the front line as far as many family problems are concerned. It takes a long time before anyone actually knows what is going on in this society. Often by the time a situation is discovered, it is either too late or all over. Substantial research takes years to plan, execute, and publish. Family workers therefore sometimes depend on the journalists to tell them what is happening. This is not enough. The reports of teachers and their needling are needed. For the next 25 years, one thing they can do is expose, muckrake, force others in the field to see what is going on. They will have to be warriors, too. Since family professionals are really very avant-garde in their thinking, they will always have to fight for innovations. There will always be taxpayers complaining that their money is being wasted. The front line is not a comfortable spot.

In addition, as Hill points out, family workers do not limit their concern to education of the unmarried, but rather "openly advocate family-life education and marriage counseling on behalf of couples." They are therefore squarely in the field of adult or continuing education. A Welcome Wagon approach might be used here, a program for making available to newly married couples who could use them, educational and counseling facilities designed precisely for their needs.

Those NCFR members who are teachers at the college level also have the task of relaying back to potential consumers the results of research. Betty Friedan, in her recent book *The Feminine Mystique*, pointed her finger directly at these teachers, accusing them of teaching women that they must adjust to things as they are. Teachers go about their daily business of teaching and wonder what effect, if any, they are having. And then, suddenly, they find that they are accused of having helped transform a generation of women. They never realized that they were that powerful. It is flattering, if true. This suggests that perhaps one of the most important things family workers do is teaching and that a major contribution in the next 25 years may continue to be precisely that.

Those NCFR members who are counseling are also in a strategic position. They have to

² Schorr has commented on the fact that the United States has constituted a vast experiment in which there have been two variables, the economy and the family, and "the family has been the dependent variable" (*ibid.*, p. 454). He used this fact, in part, to explain why family goals have been subordinated in the national ethos. Mirra Komarowsky, in her panel comments at the 1963 NCFR Conference, made the interesting point that the prestige of family sociology rose when it came to be viewed as an independent variable.

³ This point is elaborated at some length by W. J. Goode in a paper entitled "The Family As an Element in the World Revolution," presented December 11, 1962, at the annual meeting of the Institute of Life Insurance.

⁴ See footnote two.

keep flares ready to send up the signals. They see the casualties. They see what the costs are. They should keep the rest of the family field informed. They should never hesitate to send out the SOS. They should always be complaining about the defects in the social system that produce the casualties. Nagging and scolding should continue to be their job.

The research-oriented members, who are usually somewhat more remote from the front line, must be idea men. They should be ready with all kinds of ideas. They should be less bound than other people by the limits of conventional thinking. They should be inventive, innovative. Let the action people decide whether or not the ideas are feasible, let alone useful. But let the research people bubble over with ideas. Hill asserts that "more options are probably open to families today to experiment, invent, and innovate than in any previous epoch." If NCFR is to rise to this challenge, a major developmental task of the next 25 years will be the encouragement of new, rash ideas.

Having ideas is an extremely difficult and often even a dangerous occupation. Ideas do not come easily. People are in effect locked into the system they live in and find it extremely difficult to think in innovative terms.⁵ In addition, it is difficult to get a hearing for innovative ideas. Family specialists' ideas often seem radical if not dangerous to others. Still, despite the difficulties and the costs, it is essential that NCFR become a factory of new ideas. Since it is not an action group, these ideas do not always have to be immediately practical. At a so-called brain-storming session, *any* idea is welcomed, regardless of its immediate practicality, because it can suggest to someone else an idea that is practical. Among NCFR members, innovative ideas should be not only welcomed but even stimulated, sought after.

The fourth prong, special projects, must also continue to come up with new ideas. So far these have been as diverse as family camping and help for low-income families. Let those interested in such projects continue to explore new avenues.

To summarize NCFR's developmental tasks: Teachers must scout for trouble and deficiencies in school programs in family-life education, fight for new ideas, extend the educational proc-

⁵ In the writer's course on the family, when the students are asked to develop an optimum set of marriage and divorce laws, they rarely come up with anything but some minor modification of present laws. When they are asked to imagine other ways of performing certain societal functions than those Americans use, almost never does a new idea emerge. Indeed, there is often hostility as well as mere resistance to innovations when they are suggested.

ess throughout the life cycle, and relay back to the consuming public the products of research. Counselors must advertise the defects which produce the casualties in family life which must be dealt with. Researchers must be innovative and inventive. Special project people must explore and pilot new ventures.

SO WHAT?

After all of these ideas are submitted, what is NCFR to do about them? This is not an easy question, and this paper will propose only one answer. But it does seem that, with the concentration of talent that the organization represents, it is in a position to be especially useful in the next 25 years.

Although NCFR is not a pressure group, this does not mean that governmental agencies cannot use its talents. Congress is greatly concerned about the family and is generous in its support of family-oriented programs. There is, therefore, money available for both demonstrations and research. The need and the desire to research and demonstrate are present. What is in short supply is ideas and ways of putting ideas to work.

The Department of Health, Education, and Welfare has several offices which are eager for new ideas. The Commissioner of Public Welfare, Dr. Ellen Winston, has just established a research staff which will be happy to consider promising projects. The Children's Bureau also has funds for research and demonstration. So also does the Office of Education and, of course, the several health institutes. The problem is to think up good projects, both for researching and for demonstrating. Many NCFR members are very close to the grass roots. They know where they lack information; they know what kinds of demonstrations ought to be undertaken. Many members are research specialists. They know how to state research problems in operational terms; they know how to design projects; they know how to administer them. Many members are writers. They know how to interpret, to wring significance out of research and demonstration findings.

This writer does not know how the talents of NCFR can best be mobilized for these tasks. Perhaps all its members have to do is continue to think freshly about problems, letting the chips fall where they may. Perhaps some kind of organizational structure is needed, in the form, perhaps, of a liaison person between NCFR and the Department of Health, Education, and Welfare, someone who could keep NCFR informed of the kinds of projects its members

would be interested in. Perhaps this could be a concern of the special project people.

DISSENSUS

Hill reveals two areas in which family specialists have not yet arrived at a consensus, namely, premarital sex morality and the function of constructive conflict in marriage. This lack of consensus is not necessarily a cause for alarm or a developmental task.

Premarital Sex Morality. According to Hill, this much consensus exists: "exploitation in sex relations and in dating is deplored, and mutuality and companionship in dating and courtship are favored." This in itself shows opposition to promiscuity, casual contacts, and, in general, irresponsible relationships. Hill's statement is not wholly correct when he speaks of a conflict between "a single code of high premarital sex morality or of permissiveness." Would anyone be permissive of just any kind of relationship?

It seems that the critical word is "premarital." Those who are permissive would make the nature of the relationship the criterion of the acceptability of sex relations; those who are not permissive would make the criterion the strength and firmness of the commitment of the partners to one another. The permissive philosophy argues that only when the relationship, in addition to reflecting a genuine bond between the partners, is based on a long-time commitment to one another should sexual intercourse be permitted. Not only that, but the commitment should be public and binding. The promise or commitment must be official, impossible to renege on.

A consensus here will probably be achieved, if at all, by the elimination of one side or the other by time. NCFR members' positions have been undergoing change over the last 25 years, as anyone who has participated in their discussions over the years can testify. There was a time when those arguing for premarital virginity could be assured of a comfortable margin of support in the group. This is no longer always true. Especially the younger members no longer accept this code. A more permissive position is emerging in which the quality of the relationship between the partners rather than the firmness of the commitment to one another is the criterion for acceptability of sex relations.

The Function of Constructive Conflict in Marriage. The writer gets the feeling from much of the discussion in this area that those involved are often talking past one another rather than with one another. Hill reports that the youngest of his three-generational families "were both most likely to experience conflict

and to express hostility, but they were also most likely to conclude with consensus and gestures of affection." But the present writer is certain that not *all* couples can achieve this goal. There are some couples for whom silence and acceptance of a situation are better than discussion and resistance, and there are some areas in the life of all couples where it is better not to talk than to talk.

Within the next 25 years a new generation will mature to whom the ability to carry on what Hill and Duvall call constructive conflict will come naturally, but there probably always will be couples in any generation who would do well to let well enough alone. The writer's personal preference is for rather than against constructive conflict, but all NCFR members do not agree. At any rate, the achievement of consensus on this point does not seem to be a developmental task for NCFR.

DISCONTINUITIES

Hill does assign family professionals an enormous developmental task, namely, to analyze two sets of conflicts or, in his terminology, "incompatibilities and incongruities." One such conflict is between implied goals for individuals on one side and for marriage and the family on the other. "Are the goals of individuals, unvoiced in . . . researches," he asks, "compatible with the goals for marriage and the family?" The other is between (1) premarital pairs and (2) married pairs and families and family-kin relations. "Are there," he asks in connection with the second conflict, "discontinuities in implied goals from one stage of development to the next?"

Individual Goals versus Marriage and Family Goals. Schorr has touched on this major problem. He notes that:

The primacy of the individual became evident as early industrialization freed him from locality and kin. . . . The subsequent emancipation of women and the securing of the rights of children were further evidence of prime interest in the individual; in their turn, these developments tended further to subordinate the interests of families. Individual achievement, development, or happiness is, in implicit American tradition, the desired end; the family is regarded by the country, and by the individual, as a private venture for the sake of personal satisfaction.⁶

This emancipation of the individual from the family was related to the demands of industrialization. It is, as Goode notes, an aspect of the type of family emerging everywhere throughout the world.⁷ How can freedom for

⁶ Schorr, *op. cit.*, p. 453.

the individual be reconciled with the subordination of individual goals to those of the family? Thinking through this problem is an important developmental task for the next 25 years, not only NCFR but for all those concerned with both individuals and families.

Premarital and Marriage Stages. Margaret Mead has stated the major discontinuity here in the form of the girl's dilemma. Before marriage, her role is to control sexual contacts to keep them short of consummation. After marriage, she is supposed to do an about-face and become an enthusiastic and responsive partner. The older literature tended to attribute frigidity of women in marriage to the cultural insistence on virginity until marriage.

This is a cruel paradox. Although marriage as a process takes time, it is not something that happens instantaneously; whereas conception does not take time, it is instantaneous. The greatest discontinuity in a woman's life is that between pre- and post-conception. If conception were the end result of a fairly long, cumulative process, perhaps the psychological, social, and biological processes could be synchronized so that conception could not happen until marriage itself had happened. As with the conflict between individual and family goals, it is a developmental task of NCFR in the next 25 years to think hard about discontinuities in the several stages of the life cycle.

NCFR OBJECTIVES AS REFLECTED IN TEXTBOOKS THEN AND NOW

One of the most brilliant revelations Hill's analysis of textbooks offers is the progress the family field has made over the last generation. In 1934, over half of the textbook was devoted to such matters as sex, reproduction, communicable diseases, and inherited disabilities. By 1963, concern with these matters was minimal. This in itself represents an enormous forward stride. A great deal can be taken for granted that was of concern a generation ago.

Companionship in Marriage. By 1963, more companionable marriages were a major concern, occupying about a third of the textbooks, more than twice as much as in 1934. Is it recognized how avant-garde, indeed how revolutionary, the emphasis on companionship in marriage is? It is a measure of how far progress has gone in one generation that so much emphasis can be laid on companionship in marriage. As in all other areas of living, standards have risen enormously. Items that would once have been viewed as luxuries are now de-

manded as necessities. It has always been felt that "good adjustment" between spouses was desirable although it could not be built into the formal institutional structure of any system as a moral norm since there was no way to enforce it or to punish failure.⁸ But to make it a major concern, as is now being done, takes it out of the realm of luxury and places it in the realm of the standard.

Those in teaching point out how new the emphasis on happiness or, as it is now called, "the affectional function" in marriage is. The Burgess contrast between "institution" and "companionship" may be rejected since companionship is merely another way of institutionalizing the relationship between spouses, by crevice rather than by enacted norms, perhaps, but institutionalized nevertheless; but the validity of the point he was making by the contrast is recognized. Hill has shown how this change is reflected in the textbooks.

The writer is presently preparing a book with a colleague on communication between the sexes. A review of the research literature and reports on husband-wife relationships has turned up the interesting and salient fact that conversation, "just plain talk" between husbands and wives almost never happens. A general social apartheid between the sexes has also shown up. Lack of conversation between husbands and wives was reported in Middletown, and in succeeding years it has been reported again and again with monotonous regularity, the latest reports being John Cuber's to the Groves Conference in 1962 and Mirra Komarowsky's to NCFR in 1962 on her study of 58 working-class marriages.

There have been, in effect, only two alternatives the sexes have had: either they hopped into bed or they turned their backs on one another. The only times there has been good talk between the sexes socially were when a determined effort was made to achieve it, as in the Renaissance or in the 18th-century salons. The sexes have loved one another but not, as David Cohn suggests, liked one another.⁹ Companionship requires people to like one another.

Marital companionship cannot, therefore, be taken for granted.¹⁰ It is not something that just naturally happens, the "natural" outcome of

⁸ William J. Goode, "Marital Satisfaction and Instability: A Cross-Cultural Class Analysis of Divorce Rates," *International Social Science Journal*, 14 (1962), p. 511.

⁹ David Cohn, *Love in America*, New York: Harper and Bros., 1945.

¹⁰ Marital companionship seems to be a luxury item of the higher socio-economic classes. See Robert O. Blood and Donald M. Wolfe, *Husbands and Wives: The Dynamics of Married Living*, Glencoe: Free Press, 1960, Chapter 6.

¹ Goode, *op. cit.*

marriage. For many if not most marriages, the "natural" course of events leads away from companionship; after the intense relationship based on love and sex has tapered off, it is not companionship that takes its place but a parallelism in which each goes his or her own way with a minimum of communication. Study after study has shown this, of higher (Cuber) as well as lower (Komarowsky) socio-economic levels. People become habituated to one another, but this is a far cry from companionship. The objective of companionship between husbands and wives in addition to sexual compatibility is surely brand new, a luxury item. That husbands and wives like as well as love one another, enjoy one another's company—this is a very exalted conception of marriage.

Is it possible to prepare people for this kind of marriage? Is it something that can even be taught? Is it a learnable skill? If the answer to these questions is affirmative, how, where, when, and by whom should it be taught? Will further courses on marriage preparation include teaching young people what fun it can be to talk to one another, not merely about pedestrian household problems, but about ideas, books, television programs, moving pictures, baseball games? And even if the aim is not to make scintillating conversationalists out of everyone, will it be to help people to achieve a pattern that is satisfying, especially to women?

As has been noted earlier, NCFR is extremely avant-garde, and this objective is one example. It also was said that teachers should be warriors. They will have to be to implement this goal. The novelty will lead many to reject it as absurd. Who ever heard of making good talk between husbands and wives an important criterion of marriage? What could be sillier than trying to teach young people this skill? One can imagine the loud guffaws, the raucous laughter that will greet such an idea. The indignant protests of "taxpayer." And the deadly shafts from Admiral Rickover, who will prove that this goal makes no contribution to America's space program. . . .

Still, within the next 25 years this writer predicts that precisely this point of view will have been incorporated. In a few years the textbooks on preparation for marriage will include it, or at any rate, perhaps speech courses will. Boys and girls, young men and young women, will be helped to develop skills in expressing themselves, in listening, in hearing, in sharing ideas, viewpoints, opinions.

The author recognizes that preparation for marital companionship is still a luxury item, but

so was preparation for the sexual aspects of marriage a generation ago. In the next 25 years the avant-garde will be concerned with the *social* side of the relations of the sexes in addition to the sexual side. This goal for marriage is surely a mark of progress. If achieved, it will mark a kind of marriage quite new in human history.

Mate Selection. At the present time, the approach to successful marriage in the textbooks is preventive, that is, an approach which emphasizes the prevention of marital failure by stressing appropriate mate selection in the first place. Twice as much emphasis is given to this concern at the present time as in the past.

Hill says in this connection that family professionals are for longer and more effective courtships and engagements, for mutuality and companionship in dating and courtship, and—though not unequivocally—for timing of marriage after schooling. They are opposed to exploitation in sex relations and in dating.

These are not the kinds of objectives which lend themselves to formal programs. They cannot be required by law. They have to be implemented by informal programs. Young people themselves wholly reject any help in mate selection from adults. They insist on a do-it-yourself philosophy. Any program or policy has to recognize this fact.

There is a large and growing literature on the developmental stages through which young people pass in mate selection. Quite a bit has been written about dating, going steady, pinning, engagement, and the like. But nothing has been made of the findings. It might be well to recognize these stages in some way. Perhaps certain rites of passage are needed to mark them. Young people themselves do tend to develop such rites. There is an exchange of class rings or of fraternity pins. Or a simple announcement that they are going steady.

Slater has analyzed what he calls dyadic regression and the community's efforts to prevent it.¹¹ The community, he says, in effect injects itself into the wedding, stealing it away from the couple itself. The community does not want the dyadic relationship to become too self-sufficient, too independent. Instead of fighting the early stages of dating and the like, as in the past, should the attempt be to capture them? Should community members inject themselves into dyadic relationships fairly early? Should public, albeit informal, recognition of the several statuses through which the youngsters pass be encouraged? Should the community wait until

¹¹ Philip E. Slater, "On Social Regression," *American Sociological Review*, 28 (June 1963), pp. 351-56.

the wedding before injecting themselves into the mating process?

Marriage Idolatry and the Sexuality of Women. One item under mate selection in the 1934 textbook has such interesting implications that it deserves to be singled out for special comment. The item is the idea that "marriage is not for everyone." No such item appears in the analysis of current textbooks.

The quip of Oscar Wilde's to the effect that marriage was a wonderful institution, that every woman should be married but no men, is often jokingly referred to. (As a matter of fact, marriage is apparently more necessary for men than for women. In the writer's study of remarriage, it was found that most divorced or widowed men remarry. Women with good incomes were less likely to remarry than those with low incomes.) Schorr has commented that national policy in this country "applies itself to citizens who . . . regard family living as a most desirable state."¹² And the popular cliché pictures unmarried women as love-starved, half-people, stunted in their emotional growth. Increasing proportions of women want to be married. A larger proportion of the population is married than ever before. In 1940, 15 per cent of women in their early 30's were unmarried; in 1960, only seven.

But *is* marriage the best design-for-living for everyone? Granted that it is for most people, have students of the family gone overboard on this theme? Has idolatry of marriage blinded them to the fact that it is not necessarily the best design for everyone? In the writer's study of academic women, review of the literature brought to light an interesting *apologia* for celibacy by Vida Scudder, one of the great professors at Wellesley in the first two decades of the century. She had lived a full, challenging, exciting life without marriage. She admitted that she had missed out on some human values. But, she concluded, she would have lost out on others if she had married.

The present writer is convinced that there are a considerable number of women who, if they had to make a choice, unfettered by social pressures, would select work they enjoyed rather than marriage. They do not have what Terman has called marital aptitude. An Argentinean acquaintance of the author's once wondered out loud how any society could operate without nuns. There are so many things that have to be done which only dedicated women can do. Many societies can flourish without depending on nuns, and certainly no one advocates celibacy for everyone. But it does seem that it is about

time to stop thinking that marriage is the best design-for-living for everyone regardless of other factors. It is about time women were protected from stigma if they do not marry. It has long been known that, as a result of the marriage gradient or tendency of men to marry slightly downward, studies of the unmarried tend to show the men somewhat inferior and the women superior. The recent survey of the mental health in mid-Manhattan has shown that mental health impairment was lowest among the unmarried women, highest among the unmarried men; it was higher among the married women than among the married men.

Related to this general area is the need for correcting current conceptions of the sexuality of women. The pendulum has swung so far from the Victorian standard of frigidity that sex has become almost compulsive among women. The theory has been promulgated that female sexuality is identical with that of men. The results of this error may not be as serious as those of the Victorian error, but they are not negligible.¹³ Fresh thinking is needed here. The problem is not simple.

Culture is not necessary to stimulate sexuality in men. Unless actively discouraged, male sexuality can be taken for granted. But a cult of sex is necessary to stimulate a high level of sexuality in women. A culture can attempt to equalize sexuality, or at least to minimize the differences, by either downgrading sexuality in men or upgrading it in women. Chivalry and the Victorian model dealt with the problem by downgrading sexuality in men and upgrading it only for some women. The Pacific Islanders, on the other hand, upgraded sexuality in women. In fact, sex was a way of life for everyone. It was a major cultural theme. It has been argued that since downgrading sexuality in men is a positive deprivation for them, the preferable solution to the inequality of sexuality is to upgrade it in women, which results in only a negative, if any, deprivation.

Regardless of what approach is used, however, it seems that room has to be made for the considerable proportion of women who find celibacy congenial, who have little talent or aptitude for marriage, who enjoy men as human beings without desiring them as sex partners, who find fulfillment in work they enjoy. Though family professionals continue to "sell" marriage, they ought to know more about the competitive product.

Idolatry of Reproduction. In the 1934 textbook it was apparently taken for granted that

¹² Schorr, *op. cit.*, p. 452.

¹³ David Sapirstein, *Emotional Security*, New York: Crown, 1948.

couples would want to control family size; thus Hill says, "Family-size control is treated . . . as a matter of sex knowledge involving the methods and techniques of contraception. . . ." In 1963, it is apparently taken for granted that couples know how to control family size; now family-size control, according to Hill, "is treated as a family function to be mastered by arriving at agreement on number of children desired, spacing, and methods to be used." Family-size control is now viewed as one of the developmental tasks of the family.

For the public to which family textbooks are directed, methods of contraception are presumed to be known. Attention, Hill states, is therefore "given to conflicting beliefs of religious groups on the matter of methods." The problem for this public is no longer scientific but ethical or moral: how can control of family size be achieved by those who want it in ways that do not revolt them or conflict with the ideas of their local priests. (There appears to be a difference of interpretation of Church teachings on this subject; some local priests interpret them as permissive of pills, some do not.)

The current textbooks' lack of concern with contraception reflects the family's revaluation of children. "There is," Hill continues, "some evidence that families have turned away from the accumulation of durable time-savers, time-fillers, or comforts to make *children* the articles of consumption that they wish to enjoy. Some families have gone so far as to reject comforts and time-savers in order to live under simpler conditions." The question might well be raised whether this is not one place where the family should be viewed as the independent variable. It may be that individual families are quite willing to give up material goods for children. But, the community may well ask, what right do they have to ask the community to do the same? Again, the taxpayer may object to paying for the schools, the playgrounds, the clinics, that the baby boom makes necessary.

If family specialists' writings and research have had an influence on the mania for child-bearing among young people today, should this whole area be re-evaluated? Granted that the reproductive function of the family is basic, has a fetish been made of motherhood? Has it become practically compulsive? Are all women capable of mothering all these children? It might be worthwhile to think freshly in this area.

NCFR OBJECTIVES AS REFLECTED IN RESEARCH

In the research mirror, as contrasted with the

textbook mirror, a somewhat different emphasis in NCFR objectives shows up. As contrasted with the textbooks, which gave only 17 per cent of their space to better functioning of families, almost half of the research, as Hill's analysis documents, dealt with better family functioning. Much of this, apparently, had to do with "correlates of different types of power structures," but a large part had to do with child-rearing and child adjustment. The upgrading of families with respect to the performance of certain functions is the major concern here.

In an unpublished paper, Hill has spoken of conjugal units welded together by love sentiments "into which children can be born, cared for, and reared to adulthood. Within the family all the basic elemental needs are met and kept from becoming individual problems which, if left unsolved, might demand collective action." He surveys ways other than family ways of performing these functions, such as those in the USSR, the Kibbutzim, the Chinese commune, and even eugenic colonies, and rightly concludes that Americans are not likely to accept any of them. As Schorr has pointed out, "the clearest element of a family policy appears in national agreement that children are cared for best by their own families."¹⁴

On the basis of past research, there is solid underpinning for such a policy. There is a firm and convincing body of research dealing with the emotional needs of infants and children—as well, indeed, as with those of monkeys! It is known that deprivation can have ineradicable deforming effects on them. The conviction in this society is that the family is the best agency for providing for these needs.

It is also evident, however, that many so-called families are incapable of doing this. Recent concern about battered infants and children demonstrates the unavoidable fact that being a biological parent does not guarantee that one can perform psychologically and socially as a parent.

These are trite observations, cited here precisely to emphasize that a poverty-stricken situation exists with regard to inventive ideas for dealing with "families" that are incapable of performing affectional and socializing functions. Idolatry of the family has prevented exploration of new ways for dealing with these problems.

THE INJUSTICE OF EQUALITY

Among the many conflicts in values—all of which NCFR honors—is that between justice

¹⁴ Schorr, *op. cit.*, p. 546.

and equality. This is recognized when special provision is made for the physically handicapped. Equal opportunity for them often means giving them more than is given to others. America is only beginning to see that special provision must also be made for those handicapped in other ways.

It is understandable that textbooks, beamed at a college public, would pay little attention to lower-class—including Negro—families, but it is not to the family field's credit that, in Hill's analysis, even research concern has not encompassed them. He gently chides workers in the field for certain omissions in their research preoccupation and asks, "Are all families intact, nuclear units of first marriages without horizontal relations between children?" Schorr similarly notes that the commonest conception of "family in the United States is the intact nuclear family—a man, his wife, and three or four children."¹⁵

Granted that these middle-class white families have needed a good many of the answers that research has been designed to offer, has the horizon become too limited? Has a point perhaps been reached where the investment of educational, counseling, and research time and efforts will bring in more returns if these are oriented toward Negro and lower-class families?

It seems that in the next 25 years, NCFR will have to sacrifice some of its cozy preoccupation with the family of its members' own race and social class. Hill's documentation of changes over three generations suggests that the white middle-class family is doing all right. It has problems, to be sure—no one ever supposed a time would come when the family would not have problems—but the problems are, as suggested above, those resulting from very high, even luxury standards. They do not, in this writer's opinion, demand as much research attention as those of some other American families.

Should these others even be called families? They surely are not the people Hill describes as "sex partners . . . sorted out and . . . linked with the love sentiments (as) . . . conjugal units. . . ."¹⁶ When family specialists speak of diversity in the family, they usually speak of ethnic, even of class diversity. They usually do not include "an integrated lower-class culture in the United States, in which the single-parent family and serial mating are the norm."¹⁷

A major national developmental task of the next 25 years is going to be the "acculturation"

of a vast segment of America's population. Hard as the first stages of Negro emancipation have been, the next ones are going to be infinitely harder. Establishing the principle of civil rights, of formal equality, has been a long, hard fight. It has been all but won. But raising the level of Negro standards is going to be much harder. Most of it will have to be done by Negroes themselves. Those who are going to have to supply the leadership know this. Among them there is an enormous drive toward respectability. Family workers should be ready to help.

Not very much of family research is pertinent. Hill analyzes power structure shifts in the family, showing the trend toward equalitarianism. "Correlates of different types of power structures" is a component of research on better family functioning. Equalitarianism in white families usually refers to upgrading the wife's power position. But in the Negro family—and in lower-class families in general—the problem is not one of wives achieving more power; it is, rather, a problem of wives not being forced to exercise so much, as the Detroit Area study has suggested.

Hill asks, "Will equalitarianism mean more shared decision-making or more segregation of decisions in which the wife makes most of the household and child-care decisions and the husband makes many of the financial decisions most of the time?" How happy many of the Negro wives would be if their husbands were in a position to make financial decisions!

With respect to parent-child power relations, Hill asks, "Will not parents be authoritarian with respect to children into adolescence. . . . ?" Yet studies of childrearing practices among low-income, chiefly Negro families in Washington, D.C. show that parents, that is, mothers lose control over their children as early as the ages of five or six. Not permissiveness but some kind of control is the problem here.

The truth of the matter is that the family in the "integrated lower-class culture" to which Schorr refers has resulted, in part, from a situation which has precipitated Negroes into a position without the character structure to deal with it. The Protestant Ethic with its emphasis on time, order, cleanliness, thrift, and work had only a minimal impact on Negroes. A few New England missionaries brought it with them to Negro schools after the Civil War, but without the freedom which was its original accompaniment, it produced a docile labor force rather than strong, self-disciplined persons capable of delaying gratification. "Cleanliness is next to godliness," "A stitch in time saves nine," "Early to bed and early to rise makes a man healthy,

¹⁵ Schorr, *op. cit.*, p. 456.

¹⁶ "New Vistas in Family Relations," unpublished paper.

¹⁷ Schorr, *op. cit.*, p. 456.

wealthy, and wise," "A penny saved is a penny earned," "The devil finds mischief for idle hands," "Never put off until tomorrow what you can do today," "Order is heaven's first law," "Hitch your wagon to a star," "If at first you don't succeed, try, try again"—the whole armory of mottoes which became second nature to children reared in the Protestant Ethic were unknown to children in Negro families. They did not, therefore, develop the character structure required for the kind of family characteristic of industrialized societies. All of which leads squarely to the problem of values.

THE PERENNIAL PROBLEM: VALUES

Tiring to death as it may be, there is the continuing and perennial problem of critical assessment of values. At every professional meeting this question of values must be confronted; it would be nice to dispose of it once and for all. But there it is, and there it will always be. NCFR members have to try to think freshly, never, if they can help it, stereotypically.

No matter what ideas they toss out, what problems they attack, or what counsel they offer, NCFR members are sure to have thrown in their faces by someone or other at some time or other that they are simply a bunch of parochial middle-class people afraid of sex and trying to impose their bourgeois values on the whole world. As a continuing and never-ending project of the next 25, as of the last 25, and of the next 50, 75, or 100 years, members will have to keep their values under close scrutiny. This chore becomes terribly tiring. If it were out of the way, it would be easier to get on with the business at hand. But preoccupation with values is inevitable. *Are* family professionals' values capricious? *Are* they statocentric, or class-bound?

This writer rejects in entirety the notion that so-called "middle-class" values are the quaint preoccupation of a smug, narrow, puritanical, intolerant, blue-nose segment of the population which hates to see anyone have fun. Quite the opposite. The kind of family which family professionals envision—as portrayed in Hill's analysis—is precisely the kind of family that tends to emerge everywhere throughout the world with industrialization.¹⁸ Although not a rabid functionalist, this writer is convinced that the so-called Protestant Ethic in its current form is still the bedrock on which industrialized societies rest. "It was the ideas and the social system of

the West, and more particularly of the Puritans, that made possible our great wealth."¹⁹ It has been pointed out that Calvinism could liberate the individual because it shaped the kind of personality that could be trusted with freedom without producing anarchy. As more is learned about the functioning of other societies, the more important a certain kind of character structure seems to become for industrial societies. All the disciplines which at close range look as though they were designed only to frustrate and deprive, at longer range look indispensable for shaping the kind of clock-regulated, gratification-delaying, sober, responsible people that an industrialized society depends on. Morroe Berger, a specialist on the Near East, once noted that as soon as any of these countries decided to industrialize, they immediately took over at least a modified version of the Protestant Ethic. A classic example of the functional relationship between industrialization and the Protestant Ethic is the about-face the USSR made with respect to the family. Immediately after the 1917 revolution, the bourgeois family was all but liquidated. The result was disastrous. In the 1930's, according to the Macses, the family was reconstituted on a basis far more strict and puritanical than that in the U.S. Max Rheinstein even speaks of the discipline theory of marriage in this connection.

But the problem of values is especially acute right now; Americans are, indeed, facing a "crisis of conscience." Once capitalism reaches a certain point, apparently, the central organizing principle becomes one of consumption, not production. Not the old virtues of thrift, saving, and work, but new values of spending and of leisure come to the fore. A new ethic emerges and with it a different basic character structure. If it can combine the strength produced by the Protestant Ethic with the gentleness which abundance makes possible, the kind of family which Hill's three-generation study paints may be the "wave of the future."

To meet the needs of the family today and tomorrow, NCFR members must never permit themselves to canonize or stereotype knowledge, to espouse a creed, to take a formal stand, or to discourage outrageous ideas; they must always welcome creativity no matter how brash it may seem. If or when NCFR thinks it has all the answers, if or when it ceases to examine values in a searching way, if or when it shrinks from controversy, it will have ceased to serve a useful function.

¹⁸ Goode, *op. cit.*, pp. 13 ff.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 12.