International Commission on Couple and Family Relations

50th Anniversary Celebration
and
Annual International Conference

New Harmonies:

families holding
relationships, work and the generations
in balance

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INTRODUCTION

This publication contains the texts of the main papers presented during the 50th Anniversary Celebrations of ICCFR and its 2003 Conference in Leuven, Belgium.

It has been produced with the technical support and as a result of the financial generosity of the Family and Social Welfare Administration of the Ministry of Flanders. It has been the commitment to the purposes of ICCFR of Marc Morris which has made all that possible.
In the Chair's Conference Report the wonderful hospitality of the Ministry of Flanders has been recorded. Here, we put on record the presentations which were the major elements of the Celebration and the Conference. What cannot be recorded is the detail of the richness of conversations between those who participated in the events and who shared a common concern for the well-being of couples and families, worldwide.

It was a most remarkable experience for those privileged to participate in it. We hope that the papers now published provide some indication of the significance of those days in May 2003 and in Leuven. It is our hope that they also point to the future work of our Commission and of international, interdisciplinary efforts to support couple and family relations worldwide.

DEREK HILL
ICCFR Chair

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CHAIR'S CONFERENCE REPORT

WELCOME ON BEHALF OF THE FLEMISH GOVERNMENT

MARC MORRIS
Director-general Family and Social Welfare Administration, Ministry of Flanders

Ladies and Gentlemen,

On behalf of the Ministry of the Flemish Community, allow me to wish you all a warm welcome to this opening ceremony for the 50th conference of the International Commission on Couple and Family Relations.

The working languages for the Commission conferences are English and French but please also allow me to extend a welcome to you in Dutch at the opening of this event.

Welcome to Flanders, the northern part of Belgium, a region with a rich but also turbulent past. A region where you may discover cities and towns known for their magnificent artistic treasures and world famous painters.
We are meeting today in the principal city of the Flemish Brabant province: Leuven.
Leuven has a past it can rightly be proud of and it may also be proud of a whole host of cultural treasures. The heritage of the University of Leuven is recognised as being one of the richest in Europe. I would therefore like to thank the Catholic University of Leuven for its hospitality, for offering us the opportunity to hold this opening ceremony in the University halls. Leuven is first and foremost a city known for its lovers of fine food, people who enjoy the good things in life. I therefore hope that all those taking part in the conference can spare the time to explore the city's many squares and tiny streets, each of which has its own story to tell.
I would also like to thank the Leuven municipal authorities for the reception they are providing for the conference participants in the splendid setting of the city hall.

I would like to extend a special welcome to the guests of honour at the "jubilee conference". They have all made a major contribution in the past to ensuring the smooth functioning of the Commission and to the productive and informative annual conferences. We are delighted that you could attend this opening session.
I would like to welcome Ms Mieke Vogels, the Flemish Minister for Welfare, Health, Equal Opportunities and Development Co-operation. Madam Minister, on behalf of all the participants, allow me to thank you for taking the decision three years ago to contribute to the funding and planning of this 50th conference. We also appreciate it very much that you have agreed to address the assembly.

Fifty years since the inception of the International Commission on Couple and Family Relations: a half century of exciting activities that well deserve being paid special attention.

A glance at the programme for this 50th conference, which obviously also includes a few cultural activities and other recreational events, convinces me that the conference will be particularly interesting, productive and instructive. This historical conference centre, the Groot Begijnhof, an oasis of peace with its picturesque 13th century houses, was recognised as a UNESCO World Heritage Site in the year 2000. I am convinced that this will be a source of inspiration for you all and contribute to ensuring the efficient conduct of the proceedings.

May this afternoon's session mark the start of an unforgettable conference.

GRATEFUL FOR THE PAST
CONFIDENT OF THE FUTURE

HERMAN PAS
ICCFR Co-Chair

1. WELCOME SPEECH

It is a great privilege to welcome you to Leuven, a city so close to our hearts, in the prestigious buildings of the University and in these academic surroundings.
We sincerely hope that all our guests will feel at home in this historically old but academically young university city of Leuven.

2. 50 YEARS OF CMG - ICMIR - ICCFR

This Commission has been in existence and has been operating for 50 years and that is why we are gathered here today.

I will not be giving an historical overview of dates and events. This sort of information you can find in your conference folder. And of course in our "history" entitled "*Vive la Différence*". It is a fascinating story.

"The Commission's past" could be wonderfully recounted just by paraphrasing the key words of the titles of the annual conference.

50 years, is this "*just a question of time*" (Stockholm), sometimes just a matter "of overcoming "*distance, diversity and dislocation*" (Sydney), to reach the current stage of "*globalisation*" or even "*new harmonies*" (Leuven).
Or perhaps a bit of "*managing conflicts*" (Malta), a spoonful of "*mediation*" (Lisbon) and even "*reconciling violent relationships*" (Durban) have proved rather useful?

I personally have been involved in the story since 1965 when I was still struggling with the "*problems of young families*", (Lausanne) so I think I have earned my right to tell you something about it.
This gives me the right to express how grateful we are for what has been achieved over the last 50 years.

2.1 1952/53 - 2003: Oxford/Lisbon - Leuven

It all started in the UK in 1952 in Oxford (well-known for its wonderful university and its clever musical minds). David Mace started it off with a report about marriage guidance, part of the family welfare programme. In 1953, the first working meeting of the IUFO, the Commission on Marriage Guidance, was held in Lisbon.
Now 50 years on we are meeting to celebrate its birth in Leuven…
Oxford - Leuven seems to us a worthy combination.

The archives state:
"In the summer of 1952 at a Conference of the International Union of Family Organisations held in Oxford, England, a statement was made to the delegates by Professor David Mace. a British speaker, concerning the central importance of marriage guidance to any adequate programme of family welfare. He asserted that, as the family is the foundation of human society, so in turn the marriage relationship is the foundation of the family. No programme for family welfare, no aid applied to the family from outside, could therefore be fully effective unless the marriage relationship which lies at the centre of the life of the family was healthy and secure.
This statement aroused great interest among some of the Oxford delegates. Programmes of family welfare, in many countries, had given little consideration to the marriage relationship as such; not because its importance was not recognised, but because the relationship between husband and wife was considered too personal, too private, to be the subject of any welfare programme. Proposals to help married couples in their personal adjustment were viewed as a threat of interference in the private lives of those concerned."

This idea took a long time to be accepted. In 1974 it was submitted to a conference in the Netherlands "*State Intervention in Marriage and Personal Relationships*".

David Mace…who called himself "a British speaker," travelled all over the world with his wife in his mobile home. He was not only the founder and chairman of this Commission but also laid the basis for one of our strongest supports - NMG, RELATE and professional marriage counselling in other parts of the world.

In his own way, David Mace was a "globalist" avant la lettre, a remarkable man who left his mark on the Commission.

2.2 The Commission's objectives

The objectives were defined in a text by David Mace. Today we would call this a "mission statement".
"Having defined its field, the Commission was in a position to consider its objectives. At the present time it has set itself three tasks :

1) **To gather information**
In many countries today attempts are being made to provide marriage guidance services. In most cases these new beginnings are initiated by interested individuals or groups who set out to meet their local needs with little knowledge of what is being done elsewhere. Until the Commission was set up, no effective attempt had been made to find out exactly what was happening in this field. This is clearly the Commission's first task. **Until the facts are known, no sound policies can be developed.**

2) **To encourage intercommunication**
Between pioneers in this new field, so that they may benefit from an exchange of experience. There is no need for costly mistakes to be made in one country when another country has already made the same mistakes and learned how to do better. There is value in variety and experiment; but progress comes much more rapidly when the fruits of experiment can be quickly and efficiently shared.
The Commission sees this as one of its most important tasks - to foster the exchange of literature, **to put people working in the marriage guidance field in personal touch with each other, to provide opportunities for leaders in the various countries to come together and increase their competence by learning from each other**.
The meetings of the Commission already held would have been worthwhile if they had served no other purpose than this.

3) **To foster new developments**
While its primary purpose is to study and investigate, the Commission sees no reason why it should not, as need arises, seek to help countries which need guidance in the development of marriage guidance services. Such help could be given by making literature available, by recommending visits from experienced leaders in other countries, by encouraging the opening up of training facilities in lands where marriage guidance is well advanced to suitable persons from less developed areas. What the Commission can offer in this direction is at the moment limited. But opportunities may well increase in the future."

Building bridges between disciplines was from the start considered a major assignment. "*bridging the disciplines*" (Pittsburgh).

2.3 What has the ICCFR achieved?

The history of the Commission, as far as we can make it out, is rather surprising. Sometimes I am tempted to think of the Heigh Ho song of the Seven Dwarfs that my grandson loves to sing with its underlying philosophy of: "You've got to make the effort".
The burning questions: *"Who Cares?"* (Finland) and *"Who Pays?"* (Hungary) were never far away.

The ICMIR was established within the IUGO. For many years it operated as an integral part, supported logistically by the mother organisation.
As a result of the historical developments within the UIOF – WFO, the Commission had to find its own way, especially in the eighties, and determine its own reason for existence and its own objectives and find its own means.
Since then, it has developed within its own autonomy without deliberately breaking its links with international family organisations (at least not the link relating to family relations, family support and family policy).

2.3.1 And what about on the home front?

Within the UIOF, the relationship was always somewhat ambivalent like *"a marriage under stress*" (Seville).
What was the reason for this?
An interesting question to which we have yet to find a satisfactory answer.
It was certainly not only the style, atmosphere and climate although it was largely determined by counsellors and therapists' own way of communicating.

And yet we should be able to answer this question. In my personal view, it has something to do with a clash between 'company cultures', between authorative, dogmatic thinking and the open, unprejudiced study of the living conditions of families as they really are and seeking out the most feasible solution.

We could have perhaps been clearer about the reasons why the Commission is often forced to pay attention to new, rather delicate and controversial themes from the family aid point of view - marginal themes in the eyes of some - (divorce, violence, alternative families) especially as the merger between policy and workers in the field is regarded as one of the characteristics of the ICCFR.

The content of the work of the Commission was at times misunderstood.

In this *"Impasses of Divorce"*, the question remained: *"Which way forward ?"* (Pittsburgh).

2.3.2 You've got to make the effort

Despite the handicaps of the lack of a fixed budget and financial operational means, apart from the contributions of participants and members, from both individuals and organisations, a rare and modest sponsorship, despite the lack of any logistical support, despite decreased government investment in the sector in various countries, resulting in financial limitations to budgets for international contacts, despite the questioning by organisations and services regarding the usefulness and effectiveness of their participation, and despite the increasingly heavy administrative burden, the Commission has managed not only to ensure its continuation but has also managed to develop, expand and present a better image.

And "yet it moves", the ICMIR-ICCFR has worked, has got "*beyond middle age*" (Zurich) and those concerned have dealt with "*the male crisis*"(Toronto), the level of conferences and publications has been raised and the confidence of members and public institutions has also risen.

Even participants have increased their expectations.

Every year a conference is held, at the invitation of a different organisation or institution in another country, another part of the world, America, Africa, Australia, etc.
Participants and speakers of a high level, also from new countries, take part. Creating a more professional approach for counsellors and heads of policy units, creating an additional need for professional training sessions.
This all adds up to something.
Taking everything into consideration, it has been quite a successful "*marriage across frontiers*" (Newcastle NI) under the slogan "*vive la différence*" (Oxford).

It is expected that this will continue in the future … after Flanders, it will be able to carry on in Estonia, Austria, etc.

3. EVALUATION

What has been the value and meaning of all this?
If you have been involved for such a long time, you are expected to begin with the judgement of others.

Although all the chairmen, from the start up till now, have been English-speaking and the founders and pioneers from the Anglo-Saxon counselling tradition, including Flanders and the rest of the world… they have left their Anglo-Saxon stamp on the Commission, a British institution, which will be important for the future of the ICCFR, stated surprisingly in a letter of 17 September 1999 to the Charity Commission:

"The information supplied in your letter of the 11 June and the 21 July does not take this case application any further forward. Whilst ICMIR-UK has objects for the advancement of public education.
However *the proposed objects are not exclusively charitable in that the subject of study ("families") may not be either educational (i.e. not a sufficient subject of study or of sufficient educative value) nor sufficiently clearly defined*. In addition, the *public benefit* cannot be presumed, and *has not been demonstrated*, particularly as the activities of the organisation are directed to providing a forum for the exchange of information and views by practitioners and professionals in the fields of marriage guidance, family law, counsellors, mediators and family policy professionals.

In particular, it is not even clear that ICMIR-UK is actually educating "family professionals" through its conferences, or by the dissemination of reports of conferences. This is borne out in the statement about objects in the letter from Paul Tyrr(e)l to Gerl(in)d Richards to the effect that ICMIR-UK's main purpose is to offer an annual international forum for counsellor's, mediators, family policy professionals, family law practitioners and national family organisations to meet and improve their skills through discussion and analysis. This is not an educational activity nor otherwise charitable. The process is described as being one of "international professional development". It is not clear that these activities are properly educational and in any event it seems that any benefit from attending the se conferences or reading reports of the conference proceedings is primarily a private benefit to those who attend or receive reports.
In addition, it is still not clear how the work of this organisation may benefit the public.
Whilst it is envisaged that it will result in improved services and programmes within the participating countries, the work of the organisation is not directed primarily to achieving this.
The ultimate benefit to the public, if any, is too far removed from the stated purpose and (so on)".

A good genie is often misunderstood. Our apologies to institutions such as RELATE and the TAVISTOCK INSTITUTE which have provided us with remarkable chairmen and participants.

Wouldn't it suffice to look at the level of experts who have given us a helping hand to refute such an allegation?

We won't make it so easy for ourselves. This comment also makes it clear that something remains to be done, that it is better to communicate what we have done and that explanations and clarity are in order.

3.1 "Self-fulfilment" (Bruges 1980)

"Self-fulfilment" was the theme of our conference in Bruges (1980). What we do ourselves, we do better: so let's be a bit self critical. "Could do better."

3.2 If you ask the chairmen

If you ask the present or former chairmen or members and participants what the Commission means to them, you will no doubt hear something about personal enrichment in the same breath as objective elements such as enhanced or new insights, new points of view, an open discussion, an exchange of views, about themes which are not only intellectually important but which also touch us personally.
International friendship which is not merely rational but also emotional. *"We enjoy working in this setting…"*

Outside the Commission, this is regarded with some suspicion. A Commission that "enjoys working" and since Turku also dancing, "Où est le sérieux ?"

Why shouldn't work also be enjoyable?

In a letter sent by David Mace who could not attend due to illness we read: *"Through the years I have grown very fond of our Commission members, and it will be strange to go through this month of June without seeing them this year."*
(Letter Dr. David MACE, 22 May 1969)

" … je voudrais vous exprimer combien (la Commission) a été importante pour moi. L'ouverture à une dimension internationale est une telle bouffée d'oxigène . Et puis j'ai particulièrement appprécié le caractère à la fois sérieux et décontracté de notre travail, d'où sa qualité. Il y avait aussi l'ambiance chaleureuse de notre équipe, les relations uniques de sympathie et de réelle amitié entre nous tous… "
(B. Legrand 9 octobre 1994)

"For me attending the annual meetings was an opportunity to assess what my agency was doing against best practice in other countries and to learn about new thinking and developments from other cultures - as well as enjoying the privilege of meeting many delightful like-minded people. My main contribution as the second President was introducing small group work which provided concentrated time and an intimate atmosphere for sharing and thinking together in depth."
Nick TYNDALL, UK (Commission Chair 1970-1986)

"A great strength of its annual meetings was an ability to combine stimulating input with plenty of time to get to know other people, resulting in real community building that inspired loyalty and affection from me and many others. Above all, the seriousness of the work did not detract from spontaneity, feelings and a sense of fun. We were all involved in building something together from the conference experiences, and everyone had a voice."
Christopher CLULOW, UK (Commission Chair 1987-1994*)*

"Let us be stimulated and challenged by our differences. Let us feel safe in our similarities. But let us not be too different or we will fall apart. And let us not be too similar or we will wither with boredom."
John CHAMBERS, N. Ireland (Commission Chair 1995-1998)

"Our commission is an outward looking organisation. This is one reason it has continued to flourish for so long with so little material means. … Our commission can share the sentiment "Proud of the past, confident of the future."
Paul TYRRELL, Australia (Commission Chair 1999-2001)

"Over the years ICCFR has given the opportunity to meet other professionals from around the world to exchange ideas and to gain a wider knowledge of couple and family relations. This has not only been an enriching experience but has enabled to keep colleagues in touch with new trends and to lobby for enhanced family policies. It was a great privilege to organise the first conference on the African continent. In its 50 years the ICCFR has built solid foundations for an international forum for the advancement of couple and family relations."
Simone BAVEREY, South Africa (Treasurer-Commission Member since 1972)

We enjoyed working in this setting.

3.3 What contribution has this Commission made?

3.3.1

Every year a conference at the invitation of another organisation in another country or another part of the world. America, Africa, Australia, with top class participants and speakers is in itself a positive contribution.

3.3.2 Conference topics

Who will ever find the time to analyse them scientifically and to investigate the impact of our work?

Based on a superficial analysis carried out by us, we can categorically state that the Commission has never been afraid to tackle sensitive, contemporary subjects.
For instance, "*marriage across frontiers*" in Northern Ireland, "*sexual abuse of children within the family*" (Exeter) or "*reconciling violent relationships*" (in South Africa).
The titles of these conferences show clearly that the most important themes relating to couples and family relations were discussed.

One has the impression that at least in the choice of topics, the focus was initially on marriage and marriage counselling.
In the period since 1986 (although this date is an arbitrary choice), the focus has concentrated more on the couple on the one hand but at the same time, very explicitly on marriage and family life.
An important aspect of the special nature of the Commission is the opportunity to meet up in a global context with a professional approach to counselling and family therapy.

3.4 What is the Commission's trade mark? What is its attraction?

The themes, the open forum, diversity and differences?
The interdisciplinary nature of the meetings (counsellors, family organisations, policy)?
Its own style (working in small, strongly committed working groups?)
The openness, commitment and high level of debate, also in the case of sensitive and controversial subjects?

I would like to go into this in more depth.

4. APPROACH TO CONTROVERSIAL SUBJECTS

Our founder David Mace wrote in 1956:

"4. APPROACH TO CONTROVERSIAL SUBJECTS.
In the field of marriage guidance there are certain subjects - for example, birth control and divorce -on which wide differences of opinion could easily arise, especially when those taking part in the discussion come from a wide variety of religious and cultural backgrounds. To exclude such discussion would be a denial of the very purpose of the Commission and would surely destroy its international character. Yet to allow differences of opinion to create dissension would be to endanger the Commission's work.

To meet this possible danger, the Commission has agreed upon the following rules:
1) **The members of the Commission will always be ready to give a respectful hearing to any point of view which is sincerely expressed, whether they agree with it or not;**
2) No member of the Commission may represent a particular opinion as being that of the Commission unless it represents the agreement of all the members;
3) The Commission will not adopt by vote a particular point of view on a controversial issue upon which its members are divided, but will content itself with expressing both sides of the question and indicating that it has been unable to reach agreement."

Perhaps we could ask ourselves rhetorically if we haven't been rather successful in this respect. Mutual respect has always been the basis of every discussion.

4.1 A good listener…

This is not an easy matter.
It has always been a major problem at every conference or international meeting - the problem of communication. My English-speaking colleagues taught me this. Faced with the diversity of this group, we all had to prove we were capable of dialogue, of making an effort to make ourselves understood, to carry on explaining until everyone understood, to ask questions, to answer questions, etc. Of course it is not at all the case that between people with different mother tongues, coming from different environments and cultural circles, that they understand each other immediately. We tend to imagine that we understand what the others are saying because we understand the words but forget that it is the cultural, religious and social context in which we have been brought up that defines the content and subjective meaning, the sensitivity of words, which appear to be identical and unambiguous.
Moreover, it is not only the richness of the difference and diversity that distinguishes us but also what unites us, what we share and what we have in common. An additional problem appears for those who have to communicate, actively or passively, in a language that is not their own.

And it is not only the case in the Commission but also within families and among couples.

Without a conscious and continuous effort, no cooperation or serious understanding can be possible.

It is precisely this effort that is the basis of the forum where we can speak to one another with great openness about delicate and sensitive subjects, offering a divergent viewpoint, in a linguistically different professional and cultural context, in a different cultural environment and diversified professional culture.

4.2 Influencing policy

One question that I had to ask when evaluating the operation of the Commission was, did we show enough interest in the role of policy, the government, in our warning role, in defending the interests of this type of service for families and individuals and for those of our clientele?
Not only by going into psycho-relational problems in depth and working out adequate therapy but also sharing experiences, needs and views.

For structures and working means, general policy measures which may help in getting to the bottom of recurring problems.

Well of course we did!

It is always a question of fixing priorities with limited means - what should be given priority?

I have the impression that the recognition of the social and political importance of this service has not been adequate and is far from secure.

Nevertheless, one of the great moments for our Commission was undoubtedly the assignment given to chairman Nick Tyndall and a number of members by the European Council to produce an all embracing study entitled "Consultations Matrimoniales et Conseils Familiaux" (footnote ref. EC).

This report was the subject of the CMG conference in Bolkesjo, Norway. After an overview of the situation and needs, it came up with a number of fundamental policy proposals: what type of services were needed? state financial and supervisory regulations, staff required, legal status, etc.

(1. Type of services required; 2. Financing and supervision by the state, Staff?; IV. Data on consultation and evaluation; V. Research into marriage breakdown; VI. Divorce and attempts at reconciliation; VII. Legal prerogatives (professional secrecy) and VIII. Family education.)

It could have been a wonderful framework for the proper structuring of the whole sector, at least in Europe. Unfortunately, nothing came of it as no one adopted it as their programme.

It is clear that worldwide the sector needs a well functioning lobby which could contribute to creating a framework within which counselling and the Commission could carry out their tasks.

5. TRUST IN THE FUTURE

More than being grateful for the past and satisfaction with the results so far achieved is the certainty that the work is not finished and will never be finished.

The basis for trust in the future is that the work will be continued: you alone…, the innumerable individuals, organisations and institutions who have supported the Commission, will continue with this task. Your determination is the best way of honouring all those who have devoted their talents and commitment over the last 50 years.

Explaining how the programme will look in the coming years is the privilege of the Chairman.

6. WORD OF THANKS

THE DEVELOPING COMMISSION: MAPS AND MILESTONES

PAST CHAIRS OF ICCFR
IN CONVERSATION WITH THE GENERAL SECRETARY

1. REFLECTIONS ON THE JOURNEY – PEOPLE, PLACES, PRIORITIES

by Gerlind Richards, ICCFR General Secretary

In the 25 years during which I have been associated with this Commission, there have been many different elements in my work: factors changing and constant, themes recurrent and novel. The journey through the years has passed a number of landmarks and changed course at certain milestones. Together with two of our past Chairs, I will attempt to sketch out a map of some of the developments.

People, Places, Priorities

Is it not remarkable that in its 50 years, the Commission has only had seven Chairs? It seems to me a sad sign of the times that their term of office has become shorter in recent years, since such long-term commitments have become more difficult to absorb into busy careers and also the commitment we now need from our Chair is much greater as the Commission has expanded.

I never met the Commission's founder and first Chairman, Dr David Mace, although we corresponded regularly in the early years of my work for the Commission at the International Union of Family Organisations' headquarters in Paris. His concept of the new Commission was that of a small group of experts pioneering work in the new field of marriage guidance who meet regularly to monitor and present the latest thinking and findings. He himself chose the topics for these 'Commission Meetings' and proposed the people to present and take part, the wider audience being provided by the family organisations that made up the IUFO (now known as the World Family Organisation). His work as Chief Officer of a UK organisation, the National Marriage Guidance Council, took him round the world and he talked enthusiastically about the Commission wherever he went with the result that what had been conceived as a predominantly European group very quickly became known world-wide (although at the time conferences did not venture outside Europe). Priorities for the Commission Meetings were the criteria for the new profession of marriage counsellor – training, standards, recognition, funding. If this sounds uncannily familiar, we recognise themes that pre-occupy counselling – and other – agencies to this day, of course. David Mace retired in 1969 after 17 years as Chair.

His successor's term of office was only one year shorter. Nicholas Tyndall made his mark before even taking up office as Chair in 1970 by insisting that the format of planning the Commission's work should change. A group of people working in the same or closely related fields but in different countries were to share with him the task of taking the Commission's work forward. The 'Bureau' was born, with founder members from Germany, Switzerland, Belgium, France and the Netherlands. Nick also firmly believed in the value of informal and personal encounters and gradually gave the discussion groups a place of importance at the Commission Meetings. They are to this day a very special feature of our events and one that participants value greatly. A first foray outside Europe was made in 1981 when a rather scaled-down meeting was held in Toronto. Efforts were made to hold another Meeting in India but it turned out that the time was not ripe.

'My' first Commission Meeting was held in Vienna in 1978 and the subject was 'Two Become Three'. One of the main speakers was a young researcher from the Tavistock Institute of Marital Studies: Chris Clulow who would later on publish a book on the subject of the birth of the first child ('Partners Become Parents'). The topic foreshadows a broadening out from focussing on the couple relationship only. This continues to be one of the concerns of this Commission: to focus on the priorities of its members at a global level. It is a concern that is easily recognisable when tracing the topics of the conferences: the following year in Finland 'Aspects of sexuality and Marriage counselling' discussed the hot new area of sexual counselling which the counselling agencies in the UK, the Scandinavian countries and elsewhere were then pioneering. 'The male crisis: implications for the couple and the family' (1981) heralded the advent of New Man and was followed by a number of conferences that looked at the changing roles within the family and within the couple relationship from different angles: 'Marriage and work – changing values and structures' two years later in Ireland, 'Equality in the family: anticipating the consequences' (1987), to name but two.

Then again, certain conference topics only 'happened' once: 'Beyond Middle Age: Marriage and Family Relationships in Later Years' in 1982 was the only occasion when we looked at the 'third age'. 'Responding to Childlessness' in 1988 was fired by the public debate about the new fertility treatments then available in some countries and although we have repeatedly considered taking up the debate about the ethical issues around this subject which has seen such dramatic developments since then, we have not yet managed to do so. 'Mixed marriages' was a landmark conference held in Northern Ireland even before the peace – but more of that later. The role of the carer in the family, and the 'economic value' of family relationships are two further subjects that were only discussed once. It would be interesting for the Commission to reflect why this is so, when subject areas dealing with violence in relationships, changes in relationships, and relationship breakdown (separation, divorce) were re-visited time and again.

What is more, it is quite noticeable that our conference subjects have become broader in recent years. This reflects the growing spectrum of disciplines involved in the Commission's work. In response the Board (as it has been re-named) has added to its core of counsellors and volunteers working in family organisations to include other professions involved in supporting couple and family relationships (social work, psychology, law and government family policy).

Not only has the professional spectrum broadened, we have also developed into a geographically more inclusive body. The Board now has members from four of the five continents: Europe – USA – Africa – Australia. And if it has not yet managed to include the Asian continent, you may well imagine that this is due to practical obstacles. Let me say that our Board is entirely voluntary (as is all the work) and self-financed which amounts to a very substantial support on behalf of some of our member organisations and individual Board members! We are most sincerely grateful to them.

The second occasion when the Commission ventured outside Europe was not until 1991 when a new link which had been forged with the US Association of Family and Conciliation Courts (AFCC) brought about a Meeting in Pittsburgh, PA. One of the benefits from this event was that the Board was joined by its first member from outside Europe: Byrnece Gluckstern on behalf of AFCC. By then, Christopher Clulow had been Commission Chairman for five years. As psychotherapist and Director of the Tavistock Institute of Marital Studies he had brought a new perspective to the position. Commission Meetings grew into conferences with three or more eminent speakers and keynote papers based on new research findings. Regular publication of the conference reports in professional journals broadened the Commission's audience.

Chris was Chairman for 8 years and his successor in office in 1995 was John Chambers (a move back to Relate, as NMGC was called by then). John had already made Commission history at the 1992 conference in Northern Ireland by introducing a new element to the annual conferences in the shape of workshops to complement the input provided by the keynote papers. One of the landmarks for the Commission in his term of office was its 1997 conference as part of the Second World Congress on the Rights of Children and Youths in San Francisco – again hosted by the AFCC. Between the conferences, Board Meetings grew more demanding (and longer…) since the more complex conference structure required a more rigorous planning approach. But I will leave it to Chris and John to tell their own tale.

The Commission's first non-European Chairman took over in 1999. Paul Tyrrell, then Director of Centacare Australia, chaired an event which was for many the most memorable Commission conference of all - in Durban, South Africa. The host was FAMSA Durban – the Family and Marriage Association of South Africa, and the organisation of the conference was led by that Association's previous Director, Simone Baverey. Simone had been a Commission member for more than 25 years at that time and she has since taken on the demanding position of the Commission Treasurer.

Simone epitomises one of the most ambitious aspects of the Commission's work: its multi-lingual dialogue. (She is fluent in five languages). Officially, the Commission has two working languages: English and French. In reality, the linguistic diversity at conferences is quite staggering with the result that only the minority of participants will work in their native tongue. Translation between the two official working languages is provided wherever possible and all texts exist in both English and French. However, for a multitude of reasons the discussion groups do not offer translation except informally between members. Whilst this comes as a bit of a shock to newcomers, we have the experience of many years that the special working conditions brought about by the fact that all but very few participants' have to work in a foreign language creates a certain equality. In fact, the need for the occasional interlude to tease out the meaning of an expression that seems untranslatable has been found a helpful aid to reflection and communication. The process requires considerable skill on the part of the Group Facilitator, of course.

Paul only chaired the Commission for three years and it was left to his successor, our present Chairman Derek Hill (back to Relate again!) to chair the conference that ventured furthest from the Commission's original European base. The ICCFR conference in Sydney, Australia presented the Commission with many unique opportunities: meeting a greater number of Australian colleagues and hearing at first hand about the priorities of the Asia-Pacific counselling and family organisations. It was hosted by Relationships Australia, an organisation whose roots go back to David Mace's visits to that country. The conference strengthened links which the Commission had been building up for many years. Sustaining these links is one of the challenges which the Commission faces. Derek will speak about his own vision for the Commission later.

As we are courageously sailing past these milestones, facing the challenges that new horizons – both geographically and metaphorically speaking – present to the Commission, let me finally do homage to one of the great 'constants' in the Commission's life. In its fifty years, marked by seven Chairs, there has only ever been one Co-Chair. Herman Pas has been a stalwart throughout its ups and downs. He was invited to take on this role during the Chairmanship of Chris Clulow, and his counsel was much appreciated by all – perhaps most of all by myself to whom he was an ever-ready help in need.

People, Places, Priorities – have made the Commission what it is today. It would be impossible to judge which of these was the most influential factor, but if I could cast a vote it would be: people.

2. REFLECTIONS ON THE COMMISSION ON COUPLE AND FAMILY RELATIONS

by Dr. Christopher Clulow, ICCFR Chair 1986-1994

International Commissions live with some of the challenges facing couple relationships and family life. The most notable of these is managing differences. Differences can be marked in international gatherings by language – the means by which we communicate with each other. It can be hard enough to understand the nuances of communication when conducted in one's own 'mother' tongue, so the potential for messages to be 'lost in translation' when different languages come into play is legion. The temptation (especially for those speaking the dominant language) is to insist that there should be just one language. In relationship terms this mimics the dilemma of the speech therapist working with a deaf mute (a drama vividly played out in the play 'Children of a Lesser God') – is it the mute who should be learning to speak or the speech therapist who should be learning to sign language? The Commission has avoided this temptation in its mission to build on diversity.

One of my anxieties on taking on the chairing role of the Commission from my predecessor, Nick Tyndall, was that it was a body that operated in two languages – French and English. My ability to speak French was (and, sadly, despite the best efforts of some of my friends in the Commission, still is) very poor. It was little consolation to hear André Rauget, the then General Secretary of the IUFO, respond wryly to my concern with the remark 'but you speak English very well'! With time I realised that, in my case, there was a purpose selecting as Chair someone who could only understand half of what was going on – it meant things being slowed down to my (the slowest) pace, so that if I could keep up, then the chances were that so could everyone else! And I really enjoyed the slowing down of communications that the Commission required. Along with the operation of 'international time' (the cardinal rule of which is that things always start late, sometimes very late!) it provided a real contrast to the busy pace of the rest of my life. And if it felt like stepping sideways for me, then the same may have been true for others.

Switching into another gear made it possible for me to be more open to different perspectives. One strength of the Commission continues to be that, in contrast to many international gatherings, it draws participants together, as knowledgeable in their different fields, to work on specific issues. This process of working together, learning about what other people do and how they think, provides a quality of experience that is quite different from sitting in a lecture theatre listening to a succession of experts talk about what they know. We not only learn about what each other knows, we learned about each other. This provides a basis for building an international community that is linked by personal as well as professional ties.

One thing that interested me was that the Commission was symbolically led by a couple. While all the Chairs have been relatively mono-lingual, white and male (and this is something the Commission might want to reflect on in the future), the Honorary Secretary has been consistently multi-lingual and female! And, as is sadly true in so many partnerships, she has done the lion's share of the housework. Indeed, without Gerlind I can confidently say that there would be no Commission in existence today. I also wonder about the passing of the men and the consistency of the woman, but this gets me into territory that is best avoided! While the Chair and Honorary Secretary are a visible partnership, behind them was the Deputy Chair, Herman Pas, who provided wise counsel and firm anchorage in difficult times. And we were assisted by a remarkably lively and able Bureau who provided stimulating ideas and the practical commitment to seeing them realised. In terms of communications, the mix of the Commission's 'parental couple' and its supporting committee has worked remarkably effectively, then and now, to build the professional family it has brought together. That wider family has also 'fed' the centre, offering invitations to host meetings, practical support and

lively participation. This ensured that the work of the Commission extended beyond the continent of Europe to America, Australasia and, most recently, Africa.

Of course, there have been changes, and these have reflected the environment in which the Commission has operated. Changes of name have reflected the de-regulation of marriage and the relevance of other family relationships (when I acceded to the Chair the Commission's title changed to that of 'Marriage and Interpersonal Relations' – the 'interpersonal' indicating changes taking place in the structuring of couple relationships that is now fully expressed in the Commission's title). The balance between plenary papers and group meetings has shifted, and during my time there was the first appearance of the workshop as a third format, something that my successor John Chambers developed. While the work of the Commission was already disseminated through a report from its annual meeting, I made it my business to see that its deliberations and papers reached a wider audience through publication in professional journals. During my time the Commission became financially autonomous of the IUFO, and while the organisational implications of this began to impact while I was in the Chair, the developments following from this have been vigorously pursued by my successors.

Much water has flowed under the bridge since my term ended in 1994. What has been heartening to observe is that the river has not dwindled to a stream, but has built in strength and speed, reaching people and places that some of us would never have expected of it. The river is, of course, the Commission, and it continues to slake our thirst for knowledge, collegiality and the building of international relations.

3. REFLECTIONS ON THE COMMISSION

by John Chambers, ICCFR Chair 1994-1998

The annual conferences always seem to select topical issues as far as I am concerned. My first direct involvement in planning this annual international event was in Newcastle, Northern Ireland in 1992. The theme of 'marriage across frontiers' was based on some original research undertaken for the conference by Queens University Belfast, drawn from the experience of couples in Northern Ireland, where one partner was protestant and the other catholic. This had never been researched in Northern Ireland before and the conclusions made an impact far beyond the conference. It was also the first time we included workshops in the programme and this provided more quality input, which enriched the group discussions. It would be unthinkable now to have a conference without the workshops.

During the short period in which I was privileged to be the chairman the topics were: who pays?, values, children and the differences and similarities in men and women.

The 1995 Conference in Hungary was called 'WHO PAYS?' and it seemed every organisation represented was having severe financial difficulties, including the Commission itself. It forced us to face up to the importance of finance in our work and also in families. It can be very tempting for therapists and the like to avoid such matters and dismiss them as having minor importance. I think we also then looked more carefully at how we could ensure that the organisations we represented and worked for could identify clear benefits in belonging to the Commission. This was part of a process of becoming a bit more formal in our structures and our input. It also encouraged us to be more assertive about the economic benefit from the work of family organisations, when family break-up is prevented, or at least when help and support is provided for those affected.

The 1996 Conference in Switzerland was on the topical subject of 'VALUES'. This was also a challenging subject for our members. Practitioners tend to find it difficult to acknowledge that they cannot work in a 'value free' way and one of the most difficult aspects of this conference was for practitioners to discuss their own values.

San Francisco in 1997 was a very new departure for the Commission as we became part of a very large World Congress. We were anxious about loosing our identity in a bigger event, and to some extent we did suffer from being much smaller, but we also learned a lot about our need to be exposed to a wider world. The topic was children and the Congress produced resolutions which were distributed widely around the world.

My last conference as chairman was in Oxford in 1998. The subject was the core of our commission 'VIVE LA DIFFERENCE!'. It also focused on the reality that a lot of the work to do with families and relationships seemed to focus on women. Most organisations had many more women counsellors and women clients than men. The changes in roles of women had an impact on men, but many of these were denied or at least underestimated by both genders.

The most obvious impact of the commission is on the individuals who attend, especially those of us who are regulars. As well as the obvious stimulation of different cultures and languages and ideas, it has been extremely valuable for people who are living under high stress in their work, and often working in isolation, especially those heading their organisations, to find personal support from others who understand the stresses and dilemmas, but who are separated from the agendas and dynamics that exist back home.
The conferences have also provided a rare opportunity to take risks and float new ideas. This is an invaluable benefit of working small groups and having time to explore new ideas without having to make firm proposals and precise costings. I would like to think that many new initiatives, with enormous benefit to families, have resulted from this risk-taking in small groups.

In an age of more and more specialisms it has been invaluable for therapists, managers, researchers and policy-makers to meet and make connections. This can be one of the most difficult relationships between people, and in my experience counselling organisations have found it more difficult than most. We still need to find ways of including clients as their voice is the most important of all.
I know my life and my ability to do my job would be the less without the Commission. Herman Pass has been a faithful servant who could be very serious especially when he gives his judicial 'look', but he is someone who also demonstrated how much we needed to enjoy ourselves as well.
So **'VIVE LA COMMISSION'** for another 50 years at least. It matters.

BROAD OUTLINES OF A FLEMISH POLICY ON FAMILY AND INTERPERSONAL RELATIONSHIPS

MIEKE VOGELS
Flemish Minister of Welfare, Health, Equal Opportunities and Development Cooperation

Ladies and Gentlemen,

First of all, I would like to welcome you to Flanders and the city of Leuven. There was an International Commission on Couple and Family Relations conference here in Flanders, in Bruges, in 1980.
However, this year is a special anniversary. The Commission is holding its 50th conference, which should not pass by unnoticed. This first day is therefore a celebration of this 50th anniversary and will be concluded in a festive manner with a Flanders' Festival concert. After which I will be glad to offer you a reception and buffet.

Looking back on the previous conferences, it is clear that the Commission concentrates on socially relevant subjects. The International Commission on Couple and Family Relations conferences are held worldwide. The subjects that are dealt with are important for everyone and arouse international interest. I am therefore happy to welcome this international company to Flanders.

As the Flemish Minister of Welfare, Health, Equal Opportunities and Development Cooperation, I have noticed that there have been major developments in the couple and family relations and the combination of family and work in Flanders. This is what I would like to talk about today.

In 2002, exactly 58,460 babies were born. This is a 1.5 percent drop compared to the previous year. It's true, these are only provisional figures, but the trend is clear. Over a ten-year period, the number of births has decreased by 13 percent. And experts are predicting that this will continue.

What is remarkable is that women do in fact want children. Many young women would like two or three children, but do not have them for practical and financial reasons.

The most important consequence of a de-juvinated society, combined with the well-known greying of the population, is that there are increasingly less active people to take on the care of an increasing group of older people and people who require care. The percentage of senior citizens (65-84 year olds) has gone up from 12% to 15% over the last 30 years and this will increase by another 22% in the next 30 years. This has enormous consequences for social security, given the explosive increasing costs for health care, care at home and senior citizens services. It has already become clear that a great deal of money will have to go to the care sector to ensure permanent quality and affordable care. As a continual increase in extra social levies is unacceptable, the alternative is as essential as it is simple, at least in theory: Flemish people should have more children.

Family policy must look ahead and take the interests of the generations after us into account. Otherwise we will burden the youth of tomorrow and the day after with the costs of the elderly of today and tomorrow.
This inter-generational solidarity is very important. In addition, 'more children' is a relative concept. Specialists state that an average of two children per woman is sufficient for ensuring care. Currently, the Flemish average has dropped to 1.4 children per woman.

Young women must also be encouraged to start thinking about having children on time. The later they start, the fewer children they have. Women who get pregnant when they are older also run more risk.

The question remains, how can we increase the birth rate? International experiences, for example, in Scandinavia, have taught us that a persistent family policy bears fruit. This includes more fiscal stimuli such as making day care centres tax deductible, increasing child benefit or cheaper building loans for families with children.

The solution is not only providing financial concessions. Sufficient social services such as childcare and care at home must be guaranteed. In addition, there should be more possibilities of harmonising family, work and care. The daily combination of family and professional life is the very core of our society.

Despite the decreasing amount of children, the demand for childcare continues to increase. This has much to do with the fact that less of today's grandparents want to or are able to take care of their grandchildren full-time, because they are still active on the labour market or because - after a life of working hard - they want a life without too many fixed arrangements and worries.
Saving on childcare won't be an option over the next few years. On the contrary, we must invest even more. Growth noted over the past few years must be continued to meet demand.

Research by Van den Bergh, Akaert and De Rycke in 2002 has indicated that combining a full-time job with children is still too much of a burden for young women as well as young men. Men as well as women experience more obstacles in their family relations depending on the extent of their daily task. Due to parent/child relations, it seems useful and necessary to reduce the efforts of parents' daily work to proportions that are more manageable.

Policy efforts that focus on harmonising 'work and family tasks' must be supported. Non-transferrable care rights for mothers and fathers could be extended. After all, families become stronger if they can be responsible for illness, birth, child adoption or career breaks themselves if required. Some measures that enable a better combination of family and professional life are part-time jobs, time credit, maternity leave, paternity leave, parenthood leave and career breaks.

In 2000, I launched the 'Quality of work, quality of life' project. With this project I wanted to make the debate on the work/life balance more accessible and specific for the general public. The ageing of the population, the increasing amount of pensioners and people in need of care and the increasing amount of people active on the labour market have resulted in encouraging an increasing amount of women to become active on the labour market. However, health indicators show that the amount of children decreases as women's work increases. This is not the case in countries such as Norway, Denmark and Sweden, where almost 100 percent of women are active but where there is also a company culture in which a woman need not be ashamed of her pregnancy. In Flanders, we are also on the eve of a turning point and a change in company culture. Companies make an effort to be people-friendly, child-friendly and woman and man friendly. This is a basis for achieving equal treatment for men and women when building up their career.

As Equal Opportunities Minister, I try to anticipate this structurally, actively encouraging people-friendly companies, care credit and the work/family combination.

Over the past century, the social core of our society has evolved from a family relationship to a nuclear family. The 21st century family corresponds less and less to the image of a permanent relationship between man and wife living together with three children. Children increasingly grow up in single parent families or in newly constructed families. Some children grow up with two fathers or two mothers. This extremely varied family pattern needs a different interpretation of family support. Good government policy concentrates on the quality of family life. For this reason, the Flemish government is continually adapting its actions to the needs and expectations of families.
Upbringing is no easy task. Initiatives that focus on improving communication and upbringing in families are definitely no luxury. Support for upbringing is essential for families who need it. Tips and guidance can do no harm, quite the contrary.

Much research has indicated that women are still mainly responsible for and appointed to care tasks. This makes their labour market position vulnerable and gives them an unequal starting position. The redistribution of care tasks is not a private matter. It is a debate on equal opportunities and deserves attention. Due to the pressure on the labour market, the request for active full-time women is increasing. People with a care responsibility deserve the space and support to bring these tasks to a favourable conclusion.

Gradual phasing out of stereotypical role patterns on a basis of gender is a condition, so that ‘being a parent’ is equally important as ‘being a father’ and ‘being a mother’. Only then will pluriformity and diversity come first and be an expression of the possibilities and limitations of each individual.

These are all political issues I want to strive for as a minister. A good start would be the appointment of a minister for the family in future governments, Flemish as well as Federal. There was a time when ‘family’ was a rather politically unacceptable word. It seemed stuffy, conservative and narrow-minded. But this is now behind us. In the meantime, families with homosexual/bisexual, unmarried or divorced couples and newly constructed families have earned their place in the rich scale of forms of cohabitation which are called families.

I hope you have an interesting and informative conference. Hopefully the multicultural and multidisciplinary discussions with colleagues will provide you with new and enriching insights that can help you with your future activities.

A COMMISSION FOR TODAY

DEREK HILL
ICCFR Chair

We have already heard something of the Commission's history from my colleagues.
The purpose of this presentation is to explore with you the likely future role of the Commission and some of the challenges that will be faced in the coming years.

Guided by my fellow Board members I want to address five questions:
- Is there a need for an International Commission on Couple and Family Relations?
- What should be the broad purposes of the Commission?
- What challenges lie ahead for the Commission?
- What will the Commission actually do?
- How might the Commission's future activity involve us all - individually and organisationally?

You have been given a sheet which lists those five questions but which provides no answers. In the spirit of consultation and collaboration what I am going to ask you to do is to write down your own responses to those questions, your comment and your suggestions. At the end of the session please leave your notes for us to collect. We will make use of all those ideas and comments to shape the future of ICCFR/CIRCF. Thank you in advance for that important contribution.

IS THERE A NEED FOR AN INTERNATIONAL COMMISSION ON COUPLE AND FAMILY RELATIONS?

Over a period of some 200,000 years human communities have learned to predict and to protect themselves from many kinds of natural disaster. Today communities face those natural events but also have to deal with situations which result directly from human activity such as the depletion of the ozone layer and the unsustainable harvesting of fish. Some of the effects of that activity are slow acting, others have an immediate impact – wars, HIV/AIDS and SARS fall into the latter category.

The reality is that around the world couples and families are facing new challenges and problems with an ever-increasing frequency. Those challenges and problems are as diverse as the communities which cause them and which struggle to deal with them. 'One size fits all' solutions risk destroying the diversity which makes human relationships and communities so rich a resource. The knowledge, skills and collaborative spirit needed to create a diversity of *appropriate* responses are to be found in the multi-cultural, multidisciplinary gatherings of ICCFR. That fact justifies the continuation of the work of the International Commission on Couple and Family Relations.

WHAT SHOULD BE THE BROAD PURPOSES OF THE COMMISSION?

Most people attending this session will be aware of the Commission's Mission Statement (available at www.iccfr.org). It was written and approved in a form which reflects the Commission's history. It makes explicit those features of its work that have earned it the respect and loyalty of family-related professionals, and those in family organisations,

throughout the world. It also provides a touch-stone with which to test the Commission's development proposals. The Mission Statement raises questions rather than providing answers. This is a good thing since it obliges those who shape the Commission's activities to repeatedly ask whether its priorities and policies accurately reflect the needs of members and affiliates its stakeholders.

WHAT CHALLENGES LIE AHEAD FOR THE COMMISSION?

The challenges can be grouped under one of three headings: Stakeholders, Agenda Priorities and Activities.

Stakeholders – The Commission's members and affiliates, those who use its publications, and couples and families worldwide have a collective wisdom which must not be ignored. All are busy people with limited funds to resource their work with couples and families. They do not have time to struggle to be heard within the Commission. The Commission must therefore ensure that its doors are open to all who identify with its Mission, and it must provide a forum within which ideas and practices can be discussed freely and fully. It is my personal perception that one grouping lacks an appropriate profile within the Commission. 'Faith community workers' have always been a part of the membership but the Commission's caution in addressing spirituality and religious issues has not given that group the scope to share their insights into the different cultural/religious traditions regarding couples and families. Today, we cannot afford to ignore those influences which currently divide communities. I hope for a more direct approach to those issues and for an understanding of the ways in which dialogue can draw together the international community as well as couples and families worldwide. Do you agree? We would be interested to hear from you.

Agenda Priorities – As an international body it is natural that the Commission turns to the agendas of the United Nations family of organisations , and of the related Non-Governmental Organisations. Those connections suggest one agenda. Contacts with individual national governments suggest other agendas. Listening to our stakeholders often suggest a third set of priorities. The Commission must hold a balance between those differing priorities and to do so we need to network vigorously. In the last analysis we need to give priority to that which we can do best, and it seems likely that this thought will incline us to remain 'informal' and to build on the benefits of collaborations which result from personal contacts, shared interests and complementary skills and knowledge.

Activities – The potential range of activities are familiar:
Campaigning; Submission of Resolutions to governments and international agencies; Research and the preparation of Reports, Dissemination of factual information, the Facilitation of members' networking; Conferences and Seminars; Support and Resourcing of Family Organisations; and engagement in Community Development Projects.

Every one of those activities could be justified by our Mission Statement. The Commission's problem is to find a mix of activities which is purposeful but which also reflects the fact that those active within the organisation are volunteers with busy lives, and that we have no substantial, recurrent funding.

My Vision of the Future of the Commission

First - We must preserve the unique international, multidisciplinary forum which ICCFR has sustained over fifty years.

Second - We must engage in institution building. We cannot survive in today's pressured world without greater human and financial resources.

Third - We must extend our range of activities and communications, and our skills in those areas.

Fourth - We must continue to spread our contacts to countries and communities we have not yet touched, and to groups of workers with whom we currently have no contact.

My knowledge of the ICCFR Board tells me that those four objectives will inform their decisions. The Commission has had no 'fairy godmother' to resource its efforts. However, it now has a sister organisation – The ICCFR Trust – which is a registered charity in England and Wales and which has the capacity to do many things that the Commission could not do. We are enormously grateful to Schapiro Thorn Inc. (USA) for financing both the setting up of the charity and for being its first benefactor. But if the Trust is to thrive and to support the work of the Commission it needs people ready to dedicate time and energy to making sure that it is known and to seek funds for its purposes.

THE FUTURE?

Campaigning has been mentioned. This needs special skills and dedicated financial resources. The Commission is not well-placed to take up this work at the moment. We may acquire that capacity in the future. Many of the other roles for the Commission can be developed progressively. Slowly, we are learning to use a website (**www.iccfr.org**). Internally we are now very largely an organisation connected by emails. We still face challenges to make best use of those technological resources. A complicating factor is our commitment to remain a bilingual (French/English) organisation. That said we are aware of the risk of being seen as a Eurocentric organisation. Our conferences need to be fresh and innovative, wherever they take place. There are many themes to do with couple and family life on which we must turn a spotlight.

YOUR ROLE?

The Commission needs people ready to devote time and energy to its purposes. At present we cannot offer paid employment but we can offer the rewards of some voluntary time devoted to a worthwhile cause with a global impact. Let us know if you want to join in our work.

We also need countries, governments and institutions willing to host our conferences. Without, we cannot become truly global institution.

Last, and simplest of all, we need your ideas, information and encouragement. The ICCFR Board thanks all those who have contributed in whatever way to the successes of the last fifty years, but we ask your continuing active support so that our next fifty years will be similarly successful.
Thank you for your attention.

*[The full text of this presentation is available from **secretariat@iccfr.org***
The results of the request for conference participants' suggestions and comments about the future of ICCFR are available as an appendix to the Chair's Conference Report to be found later in this publication]

FAMILIES: A CROSS-CULTURAL PERSPECTIVE

THORAYA AHMED OBAID
Executive Director of UNFPA, United Nations Population Fund

Good morning. It is a pleasure to be here in this beautiful and historic city of Leuven. And it is an honour to address all of you today at the 50th Conference of the International Commission on Couple and Family Relations. The Commission believes that stable, flourishing communities are based on thriving couple and family relations, and I could not agree more.

I would like to thank Mieke Vogels, the Flemish Minister of Welfare, Health, Equal Opportunities and Development Cooperation, and Professor Thérèse Jacobs, the General Director of CBGS for inviting me to participate.

I will frame my remarks this morning on the issues of families from a cross-cultural perspective. I liken this perspective to a kaleidoscope, which removes all blinders and provides a new vision, a new combination of shapes, colours and designs. Our challenge is to stay open to many different visions, to resist our own desire for blinding our minds to the diversity of "being" and "doing". I will argue that families around the world share many of the same dreams and aspirations, although these are expressed differently within the context of their cultural settings and norms. Actually families everywhere are facing unprecedented, and similar, challenges and they find their own way of responding to these challenges. I will conclude that since families are changing in response to our rapidly changing world, policies to support them must also change in order to increase social cohesion and harmony.

INTERPRETATIONS OF SOCIO-CULTURAL CONTEXTS MADE ALL THE DIFFERENCE

Ladies and gentlemen,
I stand before you today as the leader of UNFPA, the United Nations Population Fund. We support population and reproductive health programmes in some 150 countries around the globe. We also support gender equality and male responsibility. I usually present myself as an example of a developing country woman who had the same dreams of all women all over the world. What made a difference is the way my parents understood, interpreted and articulated our socio-cultural setting, values and beliefs, with the specific objective of empowering me to make choices in my life, including to be educated as far as I want, to work, to choose my husband and to determine the spacing and number of my children.

I also stand before you today as a woman, a mother, and a wife. I have raised my two daughters on the same socio-cultural interpretations that I learned from my parents but with more open understanding and articulation so that they can fit in their new society, which is certainly somewhat different than mine. Yet they still know who they are and from where they come.

I have been living through changing times – from my parents' interpretation of our values and beliefs to my own, to that of my daughters'. I lived through my time as a waged-working mother, something my mother did not experience. And I know very well the challenges that working mothers and families face in an increasingly competitive and rapidly changing world. I am also living through my daughters' time when opportunities are global and abundant but

when competitiveness is at its peak. These are changing times and they require adjusted and adjustable strategies at the individual, family, national and global levels.

I also stand before you today as a Muslim woman. I am the daughter of parents from a modest background who came from Medina, but my parents were determined that I should have all the opportunities that my brothers had, not because the Declaration of Human Rights said so; they did not know anything about it, but because their religion told them that every Muslim must READ. My father, a devout Muslim himself, took literally the command on instruction in the first surah of the Koran, which is an order to "READ". So I went to the kotab, or madrassa, religious school in Mecca, at the age of 3, in 1948. From there I went to boarding school in Cairo, and finally to university in America on a scholarship provided by the Saudi Government.

Part of the socio-cultural interpretation of what is required to fulfill the Islamic requirement of knowledge as basis for faith is how my parents dealt with sending me to boarding school at the age of seven. For them, being good Muslims did not stop them from sending me to a Presbyterian missionary school in Cairo, Egypt. They saw only one God and they believed in their Muslim duty – to educate their daughter. It is the openness of their interpretation of the socio-cultural context of their society that allowed me to be what I am today. Just to give you an idea of the impact of their decision and how they handled their culture, I was the first Saudi woman ever to receive a government scholarship to study overseas and to be one of the first three Saudi women to receive a Doctorate of Philosophy from a university in the United States. And here I am the first Saudi woman to attain a leadership position in the United Nations. I do not mean to brag about myself, but rather to show how a family interpreted its socio-cultural context and made a dynamic force for change, to move societies forward and link it to historic changes, rather than to keep it static and thus push it out of human history.

My professional experience in the United Nations, both in the Arab countries from 1975 to 2000 and in my present post which gives me global exposure, has given me the opportunity to observe some of the challenges that families today face and to observe how seldom the voices of families themselves are included in the public debate. My personal experience has aroused my own personal interest about how others undergo similar transformation in rapidly changing societies.

My parents' continuous adjustment of the socio-cultural context of our family life without relinquishing our values and identity shows an understanding of how to use culture as a force for change for the betterment of their children. Now that I read books about cross-cultural issues, I am more appreciative of their vision and their ability to understand a complex phenomenon of human behaviour. The writings of Professor Abdullah Ahmed An-Naim of Emory University, USA, provide a basis for understanding the changes that societies and families in developing countries are facing. In his book*, Human Rights in Cross-Cultural Perspectives: A Quest for Consistency*, Professor Naim points out that "one of the apparent paradoxes of culture is the way it combines stability with dynamic continuous change, which is induced by internal adjustments as well as external influences. Both types of change, however, must be justified through culturally approved mechanisms and adapted to pre-existing norms and institutions. Otherwise, the culture would lose the coherence and stability that are vital for its socializing and other functions." He goes on to say that "another feature of the dynamism of culture is that it normally offers its members a range of options or is willing to accommodate varying individual responses to its norms." Finally he concludes that a "third and more significant feature of cultural dynamism is the ambivalence of cultural norms and their susceptibility to different interpretations." How true are these statements in view of what we all need to do and understand as we think of families within a cross-cultural perspective.

WE ALL NEED FAMILIES

My personal experience has been reaffirmed as I have discovered that while our individual experiences are unique, our global aspirations are often shared. There are the ties that bind us together as families. The value of kinship bonds, reciprocity, and the dream of loving families are strong and enduring across continents, cultures and generations. All people who enjoy love and happiness in their families, no matter from which culture they come, share the same joys. Each of us belongs to at least one family, and the desire to belong to a family unit seems to be one of our deepest human instincts. If we are deprived of a family, we form another through alliance or living arrangements.

During my studies for my first university degree, I was alone in the United States. At Christmas time I had nowhere to go. An American family "adopted" me, so to speak, as a foreign student who needs a Christmas home. We became so close that they truly became my second family. We came from two different cultures, religions, values and social structures but we found much in common – that universal feeling of wanting to be part of a social unit that provides comfort, love and care. Thus, the feeling of being away from home was balanced by being part of the family-away-from-home. All of us, in one way or another, create new social units, family units, in order to give ourselves emotional stability and security. This is a human instinct that unites us all.

MAJOR CHANGES AND CHALLENGES AFFECTING FAMILIES WORLDWIDE

Yet, we live in a new century, a century full of many challenges to which both families and individuals have to adapt and change their way of living and way of doing, without losing the core of who they are.

First is globalization. In this era of economic and cultural globalization, people everywhere are puzzled by the transformations they witness. People wonder if the quest for harmony is really possible. We have jettisoned traditions that have sustained social order for centuries. World population has quadruped from 1.5 billion a century ago to more than 6 billion today; political and economic structures have been transformed, and the context in which we live has been radicalized at a fearsome pace. This rapid pace of change, which distinguishes this period from others, demands almost immediate adjustment. This is a worldwide phenomenon that cuts across all societies and cultures. You, in Europe, have lived through this experience and you have examined closely last year the impact of globalization on families in the 2002 conference of the International Commission on Couple and Family Relations, whose theme was: Distance, Diversity, Dislocation – Families Facing Globalization.

Many of us keep on asking – Must economic globalization be accompanied by cultural globalization? Must we all have the same perceptions and views of the world? Must we all have exactly identical needs and life priorities? Must we all want to dress alike, eat alike and consume the same things? Must we all express ourselves in the same way? These are questions that all families are trying to answer as their young members undergo change-change in values and in beliefs, in outlooks on life, in how to live, how to earn an income and how to spend, how to relate to one another and how to respond to global issues? Many of us know the answer. No, we need to safeguard our identities in order to maintain internal harmony, emotional security and social stability, but we also need to change to accommodate the new phenomenon of economic globalization. We need to safeguard our identities so that we can interact with the changing global environment with strength and pride, so that we can say as the Keynote Address of the opening day of this Conference said "proud of the past, confident of the future." We certainly cannot all become a unified culture

of Coca Cola, MacDonald and Pizza Hut but we must become a unified culture that benefits from the revolutions of communication technology and trade. Most families know this very well, but many more are still not equipped to deal with such challenges.

Second is war. If we look back, we remember the twentieth century as indeed a transforming century. The generations of Leuven know this well, having survived the burning of the city in World War I and extensive bombing during World War II. The past century witnessed nearly continuous conflict. Warfare escalated from a clash of opposing armies to wholesale killing of civilians through gruesome, low-tech genocides and high tech wars that spilled into the 21st Century. Iraq is just the most recent of these high tech wars, with all its victims and destruction.

Third are scientific and technological advancements, western democratic values and the concept of universal human rights.
In the early 1900s and well into the post World War II era, food was neither as abundant nor as well distributed as it is today. Living conditions were more harsh and dangerous. Maternal death was common and the average life span for men at mid-century remained only in the forties. For the most part, women had few opportunities for education or independence. Respect and status were gained by hard work in family production and reproduction or by family extensions and social relations. Responsibility for the family's safety and well-being resided in its males, whose authority was rarely questioned.

One of the most dynamic influences on family life and society in the last century was the extension of the concepts of individual worth and human rights. These concepts, associated with the idea of freedom, captured people's imaginations worldwide. The notion of individual worth challenged both political systems and age-old customs and helped propel the anti-colonial and women's rights movements. The foundations of society and family were shaken and reshaped. Basically this meant the erosion of the extended family in developing countries where the collective identity, collective services and collective good were lodged. Families worldwide but especially in the developing countries had to face the serious challenge – moving from a collective identity to the individual identity of its members, from the collective rights and responsibilities to individual rights and responsibilities. In other words, they had to adapt to the challenges of moving from "WE" to "I".

Hierarchical structures, mostly male and patriarchal - from religious communities to institutions of learning, parliaments, businesses, and families - have been challenged by emerging secular democratic values and concepts of human rights.

Fourth, and related to what I have just said, is the concept of the rights of women. At the beginning of this new century, the radical notion that women can aspire to rights and opportunities hitherto available only to men is finding its way to women everywhere. The global movement for women's rights and equality is one of the most dynamic social forces of our time. It reaches from the slums of Rio de Janeiro to the apartments of Tokyo, from the mud houses in Mauritania to the mansions on the Côte d'Azur.

Women's participation in democratic discourse within the home and society cuts across all cultures and classes. Nearly everywhere, the status of women today is better than that of their foremothers a century ago. Access to education and opportunities for salaried work, the capacity to plan pregnancies, improvements in legal status and the recognition of domestic violence as a violation of human rights have reshaped women's lives.

In the past half century alone, the use of contraceptives in less developed parts of the world has soared from 10 per cent to 65 per cent of couples. Planned pregnancies have freed millions of women from poor health and fear; increased education has also taken hold and families themselves have become smaller, healthier and better educated.

However, while these gains have altered our way of life, much more remains to be done. In societies where women are seen primarily as wives and mothers, girls have fewer opportunities to continue education and to perform other social roles. This discrimination fosters the vicious cycle of poverty and poor health that runs from generation to generation. Millions of women continue to be voiceless and vulnerable due to legal inequality, harmful traditions, and deeply rooted discrimination. Many women still believe they are inferior to men and practices reflect this. In India, millions of girls are missing from society, killed as fetuses due to a preference for boys. In El Salvador, a higher price is paid to a midwife for the delivery of a boy than for that of a girl. In Mexico, the theft of a cow is considered a more serious crime than the rape of a woman. And who among us will ever forget the human rights that were denied the women and girls of Afghanistan?

It is clear from the above that there are many things that unify women globally, and one of them is the quality and scope of the barriers they face. Different groups of women may vary in the ways in which they experience and interpret those barriers, in the strategies they adopt for overcoming them, in how successful they are at transcending them. These obstacles are different in degree, but perhaps not in kind, from those facing many women of many different backgrounds. The incorporation of different cultural perspectives can help us understand, on many levels, that gender is to a large extent what societies make it and that cultures construct the meanings that individuals attribute to their experiences. The important point is to get to know the range of similarities and differences that exist across cultures and to work to transform the negatives and build on the positives.

While there has been much talk about the changing roles of women, there has been less debate about what is happening in men's lives. Men of all ages, in all cultures, are confused by and/or resentful of the changes in our societies that result in a shifting of their roles and responsibilities. Both confusion and resentment are understandable, given the fact that being born male has historically been a guarantee to privilege and authority. It is sometimes difficult for men to see changes take place without their approval. Some men, including political and religious leaders, are responding with fear and a desire to return to what they perceive to be fundamental values, or static interpretation of religious texts. They interpret events and social trends through a narrow lens that tries to oppose change but often leads to human rights abuses and violent confrontations. Such extremism seems to touch mostly the lives of women and whatever is related to their role within the family.

The fifth challenge is the impact of economic transformation. The search for security in times of economic transformation is yet another factor shaping the course of family life. As more and more people are employed outside of the home -and often far away from home- the number of extended families is shrinking, and nuclear families are sometimes breaking apart. This remains an ongoing process in many parts of the world, as is the move of families to urban areas. Today half of all people worldwide live in cities, compared to 14 per cent 100 years ago. This massive rural exodus to cities has profound consequences for family life.

In Egypt, for instance, the cities have grown so rapidly that they have been "villagized" overwhelmed by rural values and customs; a phenomena that leads to more poverty, confusion, exclusion and thus to conflict. A study on the socio-cultural changes of the Arab Family was completed in the late 1980s, while I was working at the Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia. One of the study's main conclusions was that as more and more families became nuclear in their structure due to urbanization, the family relations remained extended. Most daughters telephoned their mothers daily and most sons still felt responsible for the welfare of their parents. There is still a pattern of a gathering in the parental home once a week in which all children and their families are expected to participate. This is another example of how the socio-cultural contexts are adapted to change yet how their foundation remains the same.

In Egypt, for instance, some 2.5 million citizens leave the country every year to seek work abroad. This has weakened families because couples are separated and women become heads of households, a responsibility that is thrown on them without preparation or earlier experience. Studies about the impact of migration of labour to the oil-producing countries have shown that women "grow and mature" as heads of households and it becomes extremely difficult to return to the earlier pattern of family relations when the men return home for good. Therefore, adjustment to the traditional husband-wife relations took place in order to meet the challenges of an emerging social and familial context.

The sixth challenge is the change in family size, structure and function. We can safely say that there are trends that are common to families in every region: smaller households, delayed marriage and childbearing, increases in divorce and remarriage rates, and longer years of widowhood, particularly for women. Globally, women and couples are waiting longer than ever before to get married and have children. Regional averages of women's age at marriage are 22 years in Africa, 23 years in Asia and Oceania, 25 in Latin America, and 26 years in Europe and North America. Men's mean age at marriage is considerably higher than women's in all regions. Studies show that for most parts of the world, there is a general trend towards marriage postponement, which is due in part to the growing emphasis on and access to education. Worldwide, the mean age at first marriage has increased 1.6 years among women and 1.2 years among men over the past decade alone. However, there are still millions and millions of teenage brides, for whom early marriage means lost opportunities for education, and limited chances of social and political participation.

All over the world, family formations, such as reorganized families and single-parent households, are on the rise. Households headed by women are increasing everywhere. The fact that one quarter of the world's households are now headed by women raises the question of how well men are adjusting to the new times - how well they assume the responsibilities of son, husband, and father in times of social transformation.

All over the world, the number of separated or divorced men and women has gone up since the 1980s. Overall, Sweden and the United States still have the highest divorce rate, at about 50 per cent, followed by the United Kingdom, Belgium, Luxembourg, the Nordic countries and most countries of the former Soviet Union, which range at about 40 per cent.

However, in many parts of the world, it is not divorce that creates single-parent and step-families, but rather parental death and orphanhood due to armed conflict and HIV/AIDS.

AIDS, in particular, has greatly affected family structure and functions, disproportionately increasing the vulnerability of families living in poverty.

Worldwide, more than 14 million children under age 15 have lost a mother or both parents to AIDS since the beginning of the epidemic. The number of AIDS orphans is projected to reach a staggering 40 million in the next seven years. In the absence of capable adult caretakers, children in numerous HIV/AIDS affected households have assumed decision-making responsibilities and roles as heads of households. They care for parents and younger siblings dying from AIDS. They work long hours at household chores, supervising younger children and labouring to support the family. Many drop out of school and jeopardize their own health and development needs. The burden of care often falls disproportionately on older women and girls.

Another important trend that we are witnessing is an increasing number of widows. There are more widows than widowers everywhere, an average of 4 to 1, because men tend to remarry more than women, marry at an older age, and have a lower life expectancy at birth. In many countries, women's higher life expectancy and the greater likelihood and length of their

widowhood have left them economically vulnerable. As families grow smaller and split due to migration and urbanization, larger numbers of older women are left on their own during their last years, running a risk of social isolation and destitution. In some societies, widows are ostracized and left to suffer alone. One must also mention the increasing number of war widows, a population group that is increasingly growing due to wars and military conflicts in many parts of the world.

Although the number of young people in the world has reached unprecedented levels, the combined effects of declining birth and mortality rates worldwide have produced an ageing world, with profound implications for the future. One day in the middle of this century, older persons and youth will represent an equal share of the world population for the first time in history. The ageing of societies creates new challenges, and the growing number and vulnerability of widows is just one example. At the Second World Assembly on Ageing, held in Madrid last year, government leaders recognized the growing need to strengthen solidarity among generations and promote intergenerational partnerships, while keeping in mind the particular needs of both older and younger generations. The message from Madrid is clear: we must create a society for all ages.

All of these developments have important consequences for the provision of security and welfare support for dependents, particularly children and older persons. Economists estimate that in the United States alone, family members provide care for the elderly worth some $250 billion each year.

ROLE OF POLICY MAKERS

Despite these demographic shifts, a critical share of policymaking remains locked in the old paradigm: social investment is for the young and social protection is for the old. This paradigm emerged when the world was largely three-generational, and age-based roles were relatively unambiguous. But the world is increasingly four- and five-generational, family structures continue to evolve, and needs for social services will continue to change. It only follows logically that policies and programmes should adopt a more age-integrated approach without delay. Instead of focusing solely on the costs associated with particular populations, policies should reflect a new intergenerational contract, based on the realities of a multigenerational society.

Ladies and Gentlemen,
I believe very strongly that we must listen more closely and respond more generously to the smallest group in our globalizing world, namely, the family. Our families have changed far more than the institutions or policies that serve them. The changes today's families are experiencing are the result of many trends, as I have mentioned, both positive and negative. The most important trend may well be the infusion of democratic and egalitarian ideals into family relationships and decision-making. Teaching the next generation their rights and responsibilities, their obligations to community and society, must begin in the family and adults, the parents, must be the successful example.

Just as we ask families to be responsible for their own, we must also ask our leaders to be responsible for the needs of future generations. As extended families shrink in number and nuclear families expand, a gap continues to grow in terms of the services provided by the extended family. The nuclear family, especially with working parents, finds itself facing more difficulties in coping with living requirements, from care of the little children to household chores to simply finding time to rest.

All over the world, social protection systems need to be strengthened and in some cases comprehensively reformed. Strategies should take into account the roles played by

institutions of family, kinship and community, creating an enabling policy environment to keep the “small systems” afloat and gradually link them to formal systems of social assistance and protection. Social protection systems should support social objectives that seek to enhance equity and equality, social justice and the maintenance of the social fabric.

The International Year of the Family, observed in 1994, and the major United Nations conferences that were convened during the last decade, recognized that various forms of the family exist in different socio-cultural and economic systems. World leaders have repeatedly reaffirmed that the family is the basic unit of society and is entitled to receive comprehensive protection and support. Governments have also agreed that marriage must be entered into with the free consent of the intending spouses, and that spouses and/or partners should be equal within the context of the family unit.

There are many concrete recommendations that governments from around the world have agreed are essential to family well-being. One recommendation is that Governments, in cooperation with employers, should provide and promote means to facilitate compatibility between labour force participation and parental responsibilities, especially for single-parent households with young children. This is one of the major new adjustments that have taken place and we need to expand and fine-tune it.

The world’s governments have also agreed that it is essential to grant particular assistance to families in difficult life situations. Conditions have worsened for many families in recent years, owing both to the lack of gainful employment and the measures taken by Governments seeking to balance their budget by reducing social expenditures. There are increasing numbers of vulnerable families, including single-parent families headed by women, poor families with elderly members or those with disabilities, refugee and displaced families, and families with members affected by AIDS. Increased labour migrations and refugee movements are an additional source of family tension and disintegration and are contributing to increased responsibilities for women. In many urban environments, millions of children and youths are left to their own devices as family ties break down, and hence are increasingly exposed to risks such as dropping out of school, labour exploitation, sexual exploitation, unwanted pregnancies and sexually transmitted diseases.

Therefore it has been agreed that Governments should assist single-parent families, and pay special attention to the needs of widows and orphans, and that all efforts should be made to assist the building of family-like ties in especially difficult circumstances, for example, with street children.
These basic recommendations were agreed by the world’s governments in 1994 at the International Conference on Population and Development. It is this agreement that guides the work of the agency I head, the United Nations Population Fund. But although governments agree on what needs to be done, they often fail to implement the necessary policies and programmes and devote the necessary resources to carry them out. We see this clearly as we strive to promote women’s empowerment and gender equality and universal access to primary education and reproductive health services, which include family planning, safe motherhood and the prevention of HIV/AIDS. Although these services are critical to individual and family well-being, they remain severely under-funded. While the necessity for social protection has increased, resources allocated for this purpose are actually shrinking as a result of declining aid, and cuts in government spending.

In closing, I would like to stress that the main hope of harmony in the contemporary world lies in the recognition of the plurality of our identities, which cut across each other and defy sharp divisions.

I believe it is very important to have a clearer and more forceful articulation of the implications of our shared humanity, which is a basic identity that all of us share, amidst the

many diverse identities that we respectively have. While the invisible hand of the market may be able to keep the global economy turning, it takes the human hand, and the human spirit, to guide it in the most productive direction to fashion a world that is socially inclusive, transparent and democratically anchored. There is a need for social and economic strategies to reassert human values, human priorities and human rights. Being part of our global village requires a broadening of our sense of family, a commitment to a larger community. It demands solidarity with future generations and a long-range view of our common well-being. The family is not failing so much as is the willingness and ability of policymakers to respond to the changing needs of changing families.

Before I conclude, I would like to note that there are forces today that blame the perceived breakdown of the family on the advancement of the status of women. This is unfortunate, and mistaken because women themselves are the first to be victimized by family breakdown. It is, after all, women who must shoulder the responsibilities discarded by others - educating the children, caring for elders, and earning the family's keep, no matter how difficult the tasks may be. As the writer and activist, Perdita Huston reminds us in her book *Families as We Are*, "Those who hark back to some mythical, harmonious past condemn the transformations underway, ignoring the fact that families of the past were no different from families of today - some kind and nurturing, some cruel and exploitative." It does no good and is not fair to cast the beleaguered family as villain for all that ails contemporary society. Such strategies not only serve to turn back a social agenda that has emphasized the worth of the family and also the rights of its members, but they also allow governments to evade the responsibility, and cost, of social programmes that would support vulnerable families through a difficult era of transformation.

As I said earlier, it is only through a socio-cultural kaleidoscope that we can see all the wonderful shapes, colours, and designs of families in all parts of the globe. It is only by looking through a kaleidoscope that we can lift our blinders and see the diversity of human experiences, both poor and rich, near and far. Then we can truly say that we respect the human need for self-identity and understand the human dynamism necessary to face the challenges of our ever-changing world.
I thank you.

INDIVIDUALS, COUPLES AND FAMILIES: THE SENSE OF CHANGE

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THE VAGUENESS OF PRIVATE LIFE

Since the mid-sixties, families in Europe have undergone important changes which include fewer marriages, more divorces, more unmarried people living together, more reconstructed families, more single-parent families, fewer large families, more births outside marriage and more women going out to work. The impression one gets from these demographic and statistical facts is, above all, an increase in family instability and a breakdown of what was considered the "traditional" family structure. (C. Martin, 1997). For this reason, Louis Roussel (1989) added the adjective "uncertain" to the word "family" in order to emphasise that the reference model had disappeared and given rise to a diversity of family types.

Between the years 1920 and 1960, a social consensus arose, validating a family model, created by marriage, a marriage of love, consisting of a man and a woman, strongly differentiated by their roles and by their children. It was an institution that was experienced as solid, concentrating on the happiness of the group and its members. The woman devoted herself so that this objective could be achieved while the man earned money and symbolised the authority needed. Since the mid-sixties, families as well as the values that underpinned their formation, have gradually changed. Love, more egalitarian but less cohesive between spouses, has destabilised the institution; divorce by mutual consent has been recognised. The development of girls' education, being in charge of one's own fertility and the women's movement have, for their part, contributed to the reduction in male power within the family and the division of labour between spouses - the change from paternal authority to parental authority, the growth of paid work for women, mothers in particular, all bear witness to this change.

In this respect, the family has become more vague. Marriage is no longer necessarily the founding event of the family. Many young and less young people live together, have children (the number of births outside marriage has increased considerably), and then separate. For Jean-Claude Kaufmann (1992), the integration of the couple as a group depends more on the purchase of a washing machine, i.e. the practice of doing the washing together (a task that is not equally divided) than on contracting a marriage. This shows the importance that processes take in the construction of identities. The impression of vagueness mainly comes from regulating the practical issues of living together and the partners' commitment to it rather than any institutional criteria.

EVERYONE WANTS TO BE RECOGNISED AS A PERSON IN THEIR OWN RIGHT

In order to understand these changes as other than as a breakdown of the model described above, we have to examine the functions of the family. It is often forgotten that the aim of the family is not merely to reproduce itself but also to prepare individuals that society needs both now and in the future. It is not possible to analyse the family by concentrating exclusively on the family itself. We have to ask: what family, for what individual and in what kind of society? Changes have become inevitable as everyone agrees that the world of the 21st century will not be like the world of the thirties. It is therefore socially acceptable that modern families do not resemble the families of the past as they do not have the same tasks to accomplish.

Contemporary, western societies are defined as "individualistic". Individualism is expressed in two ways, individuals on the market which is in full expansion as societies which have rejected this principle have practically all disappeared, witness the symbol of the fall of the Berlin wall and increased globalisation and those who want to be recognised as unique and separate individuals (F. de Singly, 1990). The family contributes to these two aspects, the first by mobilising its resources so that its members can be successful, notably children in education and the second by paying attention to the personal development of each member, man and woman, adult and child. It is this second contribution that we will be examining.

Nowadays, all individuals want to be recognised as "someone". This is the modern imperative (C. Taylor, 1992), as the novelist Christian Bobin has fully realised: "There is nothing else to learn in life than the self. There is nothing else to know". However, he also adds: "We cannot learn this on our own. We need someone to help us reveal the secret of self - through love, a word, a face" (C. Bobin, 1996). It is thought that these personal resources, this personal identity, is hidden within one's self, the "real me" - this myth of interiority - has gradually come to be accepted in the west (C. Taylor, 1998). It has now become the norm for all of us to which another facet has been added - that of the autonomous being.

The interest in new forms of personal life, more unstable and less institutionalised, is therefore understandable: the couple and the family's task is to help all members in this endless self-construction. The couple and the family provide at least two services. The first is to support what Giddens terms "ontological security", even more necessary in contemporary societies where uncertainty reigns. Trust is what provides stability in a world which the child inhabits where, despite the momentary absence of its parents, it has the certainty of being loved. The individual looks for security in the life of the couple whether or not he actually experienced it as a child. This is what the young woman feels in the novel by the modern Japanese author, Banana Yoshimoto (1999). She is momentarily destabilised by an event. Nevertheless, she manages to recover thanks to the support and companionship of her flat mate. "All these images gradually dissipated in the warmth of the tea, the conversation and the brightness of the room. This was no doubt what I desired. No one can grow up without wounds. Everyone remembers having been radically rejected by their parents at least once. For instance, in the womb where we can't see or speak. So we desperately and illogically seek out the person who can take over from the parents, who will be ready to share the responsibilities at moments of extreme distress. This is certainly why we want so much to live with someone ". (pp. 124-125). This service must also be provided for children who must receive unconditional acceptance, based on trust. Love represents the ideal of this trust if it is unconditional and free. The mother of a young girl of twelve expresses the role of love in this process of recognition: "I don't have just one best memory. It is more the marvel of everyday life. Every morning, when I go to wake her, I say to myself: 'Well, this is my daughter. I am proud enough. Actually, it isn't really pride but love. Proud in the sense that she is physically rather pretty and not too dim. But this doesn't really matter. If she were ugly and stupid, I would speak in the same way".

The second service is supporting the discovery of the child's personal identity. This is a new version of the myth of Pygmalion: the person close is the one who enables the other to get to know himself better. This will be the role of the parent. This is the same with the partner where "the adult" is also an unfinished being. The individual wants to have someone who knows how to "translate" his personality as it is difficult to know yourself directly. The other's opinion, started by a parent, by a companion (whatever the type of living arrangements or tie), represents one of the main supports for the permanent construction of personal identity.

The modern family highlights what Emile Durkheim postulated in his family sociology course at the end of the 19th century regarding the development of the family as an institution: "We are not only attached to our family because we are attached to the person of our father, mother, wife and children". Within this family, "everyone has his own physiognomy, his own way of feeling and thinking". (E. Durkheim, 1975).

From the mid-sixties onwards, the importance given to people as individuals and to the relationships which support them, to the detriment of institutions, has increased even more. Nowadays, in a private space where affection is evident, the family contributes to the creation of the private identities of each of its members. In individualistic societies, it fulfils this central function, that of consolidating or attempts to consolidate the "self" of adults and children. Contrary to what the term individualism would lead us to believe, in order to become himself, the individual needs the esteem of persons to whom he is attached. These significant others are, more often than not, the spouse for the partner, the parents for the children (or vice versa), even if others are capable of fulfilling this task.

CHANGES IN THE PARENT/CHILD RELATIONSHIP

The modern family is not primarily defined by a mechanism of internalising norms and values. The transfer of moral values from one generation to another is not the central core of education. In other words, the individual must justify his actions by himself. This is a very important change which has also taken root in society's mode of production: the only certainty in an uncertain world is that the future will not be like the past or even like the present. The fact that young people will not take their parents' place, contrary to traditional societies, because these places will have changed. Education must therefore prepare for this changing future and provide children with an identity enabling them to be able to operate in a flexible society.

The relationship between parents and children is changing. A mother or father no longer wants to "create" their child, they are trying instead to create an environment in which their son or daughter can develop. They are trying not to impose. In *A good enough parent*, Bruno Bettelheim (1988) defines the new pedagogical objective: parents should not try to create the child they would like but on the contrary help it to develop its potential. The undermining of the transmission of "good education" and of authority is in line with this idea. For a child to be itself, it must have parents who are also themselves, sincere and authentic, who are not obsessed with the role they feel they have to play. The demands of the emergence of the infantile self requires a personal commitment on the part of the parents and not adherence to external regulations. Bruno Bettelheim effectively expresses this line of thought: To believe that rules exist on how parents should behave vis-à-vis their children, is to compromise emphatic understanding which can only come from our own experiences, no matter how unique they may be, and those of the child.

The duty of modern parents is to pay attention to their child, to decipher his behaviour and to help it to develop. One of the differences between children and adults is the ability to interpret personal behaviour even if, subconsciously, adults are also incompetent. To help us understand this work of interpretation, Bruno Bettelheim analyses the gesture of the child who throws his rattle out of the cradle. The parents should not be angry. They must

understand that their son or daughter is trying to get answers to some basic questions. Can I have an influence on my environment without engendering dire consequences? ... Can I impose my will and manipulate objects without suffering? ... Can I get rid of something which is annoying me? ... Can I momentarily renounce my possessions without loosing them forever? (B. Bettelheim, 1988). The parent gives a negative response if he or she refuses to take part in this game or a positive one by returning the rattle and accepting the game's repetition. It's only if the parent agrees to take part in this game that he or she can help the child to develop. It is clear that parental competence is mainly based on psychological know-how rather than on any moral consideration.

AN ETHICAL RULE, RESPECT FOR ALL FAMILY MEMBERS

This does not mean that ethics have disappeared from the family environment even though they do not take the form of "morals" in the ordinary sense with a series of prohibitions and commandments. The relative deterioration of transmission between the generations of morals perceived as traditional with the primary virtue being that of obedience, i.e. more authoritarian types of authority, does not imply a situation of *laisser-faire*, a moral relativism. These are the values of democracy – it is first and foremost a value, an ideal based on a certain conception of individuals who must be in charge of their own life and thus become autonomous and independent beings. The family has become democratic. Young and old participate in decision making without any confusion of roles and places. The importance of negotiations in family life is consistent with the primacy given to interpersonal relationships.

Considering everyone as a person in their own right and worthy of consideration means functioning with an emphasis on human resources and cooperation. If all members are individuals in their own right, this means that the position within the family is not enough to define them. A child is therefore not just a "boy" or a "girl", the child is also him or herself. The question of children's rights has become increasingly important for this very reason (A. Renaut, 2002) and will continue to perturb family affairs.

The family is not without points of reference, it is only that they have changed. They are less part of a register of moral values which had governed the past but are based on a more flexible way of regulation, operating within a system of new psychological values. Jacques Donzelot in *La Police des familles* [Family policy] (1977) and Robert Castel in *La Gestion des risques* [Risk management] (1981) have underlined that these values require not only strict obedience (as they are not commandments) but also a certain initiative, a flexibility of personal interpretation required to put them into practice (F. de Singly, 2003). Rigid rules are no longer an ethical ideal nor a reference for managing human resources and politics.

The working of the modern family has also changed in another sphere - its way of dealing with opposing interests. In the past, someone, usually the mother, was in charge of the well-being of other members of the family. Nowadays, women refuse to take on this role believing that no one should be burdened with it. This therefore requires the coordination of various opposing interests, taking account of the adults and the children whose rights are recognised. However, coordination does raise a problem as no one has been designated to carry out the job. And it is this problem that the modern family finds difficult to cope with. There are also few principles governing the coordination of opposing interests, apart from the required discussion and negotiation, to take account of not only the interests in question but also the personal aspect of each family member.

Problems arise when it comes to divorce. In the past, divorce was rare and was to all intents and purposes only acceptable after the children had been brought up. Adults were first and foremost parents. Nowadays, both men and women have refused to accept this constraint, and consider that they have a right to a life which allows them to continue to

develop, which in certain cases means separation. This right is now recognised. There is clash of interests between the adults, who want to divorce, and those of the children who need a stable environment. To solve this problem, a moral principle has gradually been worked out according to which everyone's needs must be respected. This principle of respect for personal development has led to divorce by mutual consent which attempts to limit any negative consequences of divorce on the children. The happiness of adults cannot be built on the unhappiness of children who, according to psychologists, need both their parents. As a result, an extraordinarily powerful statement has emerged, children have the right to both parents (and not just two adults living together and acting as parents). When two adults decide to divorce, the theoretical separation between two elements of social identity arises, that of the parent and of the partner (I. Théry, 1998). Divorce is no longer just a marital concern, the parental aspect also has to be protected. This imperative could be laid down in law with the maintenance of joint parental authority after divorce. A man and a woman who have a child must remain parents for life. Under these conditions only, divorce could become a collective concern of the family and its members. The adults would be happier as they would no longer be obliged to live together for the sake of the children, an argument that used to be used against divorce, and the children would be happier as they would not have to choose between the two parents. Joint interests would be satisfied, at least on paper, due to a dual acknowledgement: constraints linked to marital love which do not necessarily coincide with that of parental love and the needs of the child who needs both mother and father for self-development. Under certain conditions, modern individualism and the family have become linked - no one need be sacrificed for the sake of certain interests. A variant could be added to this principle - no one need be sacrificed for the sake of the general interest.

The implementation of these two principles leads to internal tensions within the couple or family. Equality between the sexes is not applied in practice and there is no sharing of domestic chores. The interests of the woman are less respected than those of the man who is better able to defend his professional worth as was the case in previous generations. (C. Marry, F. de Singly, 2002). After divorce, men suffer for the weaker investment made in their role as father, with the mother taking on the main role and often given custody. Violence against women and children bear witness to an evident lack of respect for the integrity of the individual with many men wishing to continue using masculine domination as a means to regulate family interaction.

THE IMPORTANCE OF EXPERTS AND OUTSIDE HELP

Modern families have recourse to points of reference, often implicit, on how to conduct their personal life. However, these principles cannot be compared with specific instructions; they leave a wide margin of interpretation to men and women who are constantly learning how to find their way. These individuals have come to regard the world as it is now rather than borrowing recipes for coping from grandma. They just have to look at women's magazines (where the advice pages are in abundance) or educational and psychological publications, novels, essays or television series, televised debates and even reality TV. (P. Duret, F. de Singly, 2003). Each of these offer in their own way first hand accounts, advice, expert advice and life experiences enabling everyone to find their own truth, their own way of dealing with life. The creation of the modern self requires life-long learning provided to a great extent not only by one's own experience but also by all this reading matter, by having recourse to all sorts of experts and also by conversations with friends and confidants. This phenomenon is part of what Anthony Giddens refers to as "reflexivity" (1987, 1994).

This demand on the part of individuals, linked to that of public policies to help them to be parents or to remain parents, has become a priority. It is for this reason that family policies are increasingly including this aspect by implementing measures enabling better coordination

between organisations supporting parents with difficulties, notably at the moment of divorce, when one of their own is imprisoned, during an adolescent crisis or a subjective or objective crisis of the father or mother, for instance, if one of them should loose their job, etc.

Modern models of the family and of the individual nearly always include periods of crisis for one of the members or for one of the relationships whereby calling on external help, whether or not professional, has increasingly become socially acceptable. Psychological well-being and the personal development of every member of the family is an aim coveted by all. However, many individuals do not have sufficient social, economic and psychological resources to reach these goals by themselves or are capable of providing them to their nearest and dearest. At some time or other, nearly all parents feel unable to cope, especially during the period of adolescence. They may feel the need to consult a specialist either by reading their advice in the press or by seeking out a specialist in the event of a crisis. In a society that demands above all that the individual should be independent and autonomous, the most successful psychological reasoning is one which approaches the process of identity creation based on this dual dimension. Recourse to intermediaries whose speciality is psychology or psychoanalysis is increasingly becoming the rule. The modern family is thus based on a paradox as withdrawal into personal life requires recourse to external knowledge, maintaining the socialisation of the family, ensured less by what the neighbours and the extended family think despite the importance of services provided by them, than by the intervention of specialists who are capable of supervising family functioning, for instance by having recourse to all types of mediation, in a family or educational context.

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SOCIAL AND COUNSELLING SERVICES: HARMONIES AND DISHARMONIES BETWEEN FAMILIES, RELATIONSHIPS AND THE STATE AND SOCIETY

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INTRODUCTION

Two developments form the basis of the thematisation of the harmonies and disharmonies of the social and counselling services in the field between families, relationships and the state and the society. Changing family and relationship patterns are of course leading to more and certainly new demands for assistance. The way in which social work is confronted and must deal with requests for help is under pressure from changed relationships between the client, service provider, market and government. At the crossroads of both developments, social and counselling services (social facilities and social workers) are now facing the task of redefining their role.

1. WELFARE IN LATE MODERN SOCIETY

'Risk society', 'reflexive modernity', 'biography of choice' and 'life policy' are well-known concepts which are used by authors such as Beck and Giddens to outline the changes which our western society is undergoing (Beck, 1986, 1997; Giddens, 1994). They are relevant because today we are living in a period in which nothing is fixed definitely, sustainability is evaporating and homogeneity is hard to find in many domains. It is a period in which people continually have to choose and justify their choices for themselves and for others (Baert & Jansen, 1997; Lammertyn, 1999). Developments are occurring in high, late or post-modern society at the levels of work (we just have to think of flexibilisation, uncertainty, structural unemployment, etc.)[1], the economy and politics (liberalisation, globalisation) and in the social and cultural sphere (individualisation, becoming released from traditional social bonds, roles and institutions are the consequence of increased economic and cultural autonomy) which bring larger scope for action and freedom of choice for the individual. People can continually choose from a multitude of possibilities and chances to form their own lives. In principle it makes them "directors of their own biographies". However, freedom of choice is also the burden to choose, because making choices means that a person bears the responsibility for each choice made (or not made or eliminated). This director's role assumes a capacity to choose and negotiating skills as well as taking on responsibility for choices made. It is now less and less possible to fall back on the known, 'traditional' securities (traditions, religion, work, etc.), and people must increasingly deal with unpredictability, uncertainty, losing and winning in the shorter and longer term. There is thus a reverse side to the coin, because it is not easy for everyone in this risk society (Beck, 1986, 1997) to plan and execute his/her own life project self-reflexively. "Living in the 'risk society' means living with a calculating attitude to the open possibilities of action, positive and negative, with which, as individuals and globally, we are confronted in a continuous way in our contemporary social existence" (Giddens, 1994: 24). The choices people make and the decisions which people take relating to their own lifestyle, the 'life

[1] Cf. 'la nouvelle question sociale' (Rosanvallon, 2000)

policy" (Ibid. 210), can lead in principle to demands for help from time to time by everyone (Baert et.al. 2002: 6)[2]. This clearly can have consequences for the individual's[3] welfare, and that this creates a major challenge for (formal and informal) social care and welfare policy. "For us, "welfare" means here "a condition which is sustainably pursued where someone receives and seizes social opportunities to belong and to develop in society" (Baert & Vael, 1990: 147). Using this definition of welfare it is clear that welfare must be viewed in principle as a social event because it is based on integration and participation in societal life. It relates to all facets of someone's life, in other words. "Participating in society means that each person fills his or her position in society in accordance with his individuality and personal possibilities and limits" (Baert et al, 2002: 14). This integration and participation must first occur in existing, refurbished or newly developed social institutions in various spheres of life such as the personal relationship network, work, education, social-cultural bonds and politics (Baert,?: 3)[4]. But because integration and participation processes are often difficult in a complex and turbulent society, occasionally jammed and sometimes also dramatically threatening to run out of control, it is not enough to leave everything to the individual and the (primary) social institutions. Individuals who formulate a request for help can thus also call on one or more care systems or sources of help when looking for a solution to their problem, such as self-care, blanket care, self organisations and movements, the media and professional assistance or social work. This last source of help covers on the one hand the help provided by private people in a professional context, and on the other the recognised publicly financed services and associations where experts offer help to others within a professional activity or regulated voluntary commitment. In other words, it entails an active specialised system of provision of services and care. In the later part of this contribution we focus solely on this source of help, social work, and investigate the developments it is currently undergoing, the role which it still plays for help applicants and demands for help and which role it should (can) play in our view.

2. SOCIAL WORK IN REFLEXIVE MODERNITY

Recognised and publicly financed services (care organised or subsidised by the authorities) are under pressure in our late modern society and have to contend with a great deal of criticism. After all, the caring state has come up against its boundaries. On the one hand this is the result of economic developments[5], but on the other it is also due to changed socio-cultural circumstances and views.

Firstly, there is an ever-louder demand for "tailored care" based on two main principles: *maximum independence of the care applicant* and a *correct situation of the assistance*[6] (Baert & Vael, 1990: 89-90). The existing supply no (longer) fulfils this demand and critics of the caring state go even further here when they say that in the caring state, care creates the need (Achterhuis, 1979). This means that the need, as soon as it comes into contact with the care system must be translated professionally in accordance with the methods and relationships available within care. It leads them to decide that the caring state will have a

[2] In the later part of this article we understand the concept 'demand for help' as a term referring to a relationship between two people: "on the one hand, there is the actual applicant for help who formulates the request for help, on the other hand, there is the person to whom the request for help is addressed. The latter can be a professional assistant, but also someone from the family circle or circle of acquaintances, a colleague, …"(Baert e.a., 1995: 1)

[3] Research in the Netherlands showed for example that after the over 75s single parent families share least in the increased welfare (which was measured using indicators such as health, income, education, living environment, education, work, development and relaxation)(Notten, 1992: 206).

[4] This implies that policy concerning welfare must be understood as the whole policy directed at promoting welfare, as an inclusive policy that has repercussions in all policy domains: all policy managers are responsible for welfare. Welfare policy therefore cannot be reduced to a sector-based policy.

[5] The redistribution of goods organised by the authorities created very high costs with it on the one hand, and on the other it was demonstrated that not everyone benefits to the same degree (the well-known Mattheüs effect).

[6] "Correct situation" is taken to mean that the care "meets the need for care as well as possible, places as few limitations on the help applicant's living situation as possible, promotes the help applicant's feeling of wellbeing and respects and stimulates the help applicant's independence as much as possible" (Baert & Vael, 1990: 90).

tendency towards supply steering in social care, where the care aimed at a specific demand for help is adapted to reflect the existing offer. The code word is thus 'adjustment', which means that care must accommodate the need as effectively as possible: "if the need changes, care must also change" (Notredame, 2002: 34, Flemish social congress, 1990). Adjusting the supply to meet both the need and among the various care systems themselves does not appear to be an easy task in practice.

Giddens notes that the caring state's remedies are no longer suited to new demands and problems faced by people in late modern society[7]. These new questions and problems call for a new form of protection, namely protection or care directed at prevention and precautionary measures (Lammertyn, 1999: 30): citizens must be armed with everything they need in order to be able to choose ('life politics') and thus have to get more than just (standardised) help if they (threaten) to run into difficulties. After all, citizens must become "responsible risk takers", and this immediately redefines the task of the 'new care state': "Cultivation of human potential must replace "after the event" redistribution as much as possible" (Ibid.).

One of the new challenges for social care lies at the level of the family. After all, the process of reflexive modernisation outlined above not only occurs at the level of work, politics, the economy and socio-cultural life. The traditional "large" or extended family (made up of 3 generations and a large number of children) has made way for the nuclear family (parents and their children only), which today is coming under increasing pressure in turn[8]. A range of new relationship patterns and family forms are developing in addition to these more traditional relationships[9]: "It is no longer clear if people will get married, whether they will live together but not marry, marry and not live together, whether people will have children inside or outside marriage/the family and bring them up with the person with whom they live or love, but who lives with someone else, or whether people will have children before, after or in the middle of a career" (Beck, in: Lammertyn, 1999: 19). The individual is thus also faced with taking on his/her 'director's function' here because the community no longer strictly and categorically represents or stipulates which relationships are permissible or not. The people involved are expected to regulate their behaviour through mutual consultation and with mutual agreement and to conclude a sort of psychological contract concerning reciprocal respect and an investment in shared life. The order-based household is making way for the negotiated household (De Swaan, 1989), and fixed role patterns and family bonds are being replaced by role management and the individual's personal projects. New relationship patterns and family forms thus create new chances and possibilities, but on the other hand also (logically) produce new questions and/or threats, such as 'how does a relationship like this progress?', 'How can I make this known to the outside world?', 'How do I deal with it?, 'What happens if children come onto the scene?', 'What are my rights and/or duties here?', … When looking for answers to such questions it becomes increasingly more difficult for an individual to call on traditional social bonds and on established relationship and role patterns: "The revolution in family life is happening at a fast pace and is undoubtedly creating many adjustment problems. The larger chance of emancipation goes hand in hand with a higher chance of problem situations and marginalisation" (Baert & Vael, 1990: 163).

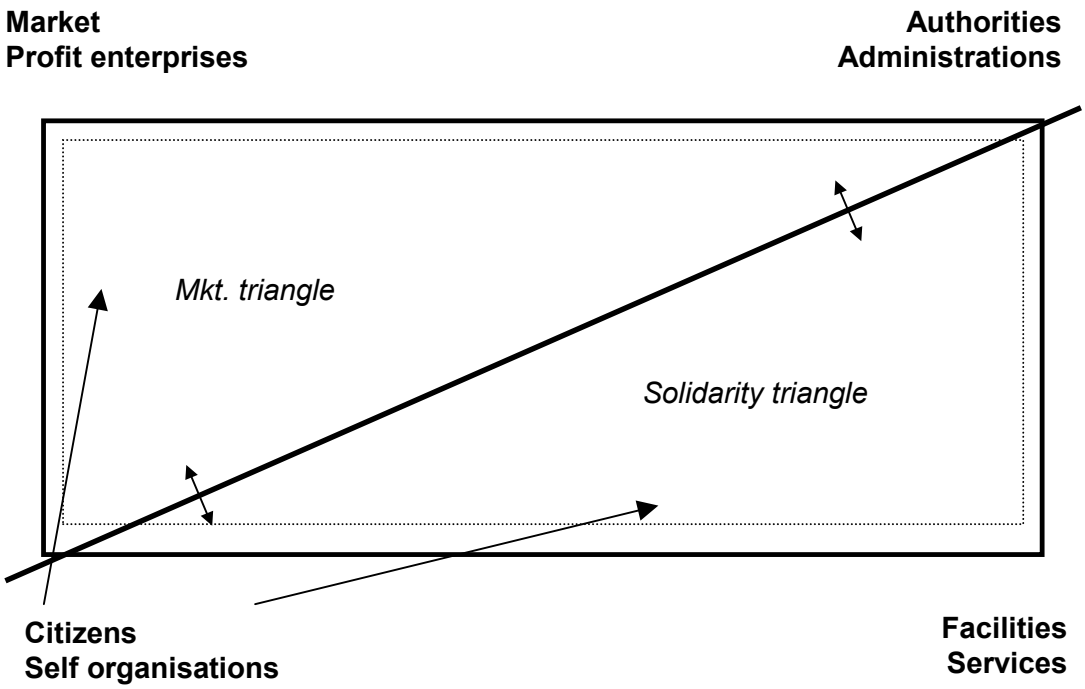
Finally, we also note the creation of a sort of 'market thinking" as regards welfare, namely the conviction that in addition to the authorities the market (specific facilities in competing positions) can play an important role in welfare and can help to ensure a better supply to the help applicant.

[7] Giddens speaks from the transition from "external risks" to "manufactured risks" (Lammertyn, 1999: 30).
[8] "The normative nuclear family appears to be under threat: there are fewer of them. An analysis in 1981 Census, found that only about one in ten of households conformed to a strict definition of nuclear family type" (Jones & Wallace, 1992: 74)
[9] We just have to think of single-parent families, newly composed families, LAT (associative) relationships, homosexual relationships, etc.

For example, we find important indicators for such thinking in the replacement of the terms "need" and "care" by "demand" and "supply" and "help applicant" or "client" by "consumer" or "customer", the phenomenon of the "withdrawing authorities" and the individual instead of collective insurance and provision of service.

If we survey the above-mentioned developments in the thinking on welfare and social care, we note that there is a growing advocacy (from our view correctly) for a needs directed (or *demand* steered) approach in social work, where the help applicant holds the central position and where both private and public facilities which meet each other in a so-called "quasi market" try to provide suitable care tailored to the client. In other words, the help applicant becomes a "customer" of the social facilities. In this model the authorities act as an 'arranger of services provided by others' (Kessl & Otto, 2002:14): as the financial provider they have controlling competence, but the services are executed by profit or non-profit organisations (cf. outsourcing of government tasks). In other words, "the new privatisation of social facilities can thus also be described as *directed privatisation*" (Ibid.15). Perhaps we can best describe these new relationships between the authorities, citizens and services using a "social rectangle" (Baert, 1994):

Figure 1 - Welfare in the "social rectangle"



This diagram enables us to investigate the (dominant) power relationships between the various positions. Thus we can distinguish between both a market triangle and a solidarity triangle in the social rectangle[10]. In the caring state there is little attention for market thinking in welfare (where the solidarity triangle takes up much more, if not all, space in the social rectangle - **figure 1**: the diagonal is located more towards the top) and government intervention comprises/comprised mainly of recognising, regulating and subsidising its

[10] The changing power relationships can be visualised in the diagram using the diagonal which can be shifted more upwards/downwards. The arrows starting from "Citizens & Self organisations" represent the demands for help encountered by individuals/groups in the welfare sector.

welfare facilities. Today we note that more and more space is being created for a 'welfare market' in which both profit and non-profit organisations operate and where government intervention is limited to recognising and (to a lesser extent) regulating the various facilities ("withdrawing government"). If this development presses ahead fully, we may become familiar with a decentralised, private welfare sector where the government gives its citizens the means needed to "buy" services from private welfare facilities (**figure 1**: the diagonal is shifted further downwards, so that the market triangle takes up nearly all of the space in the social rectangle).

Van der Laan (2002) sums up the demand-oriented approach in the welfare sector as follows. "Demand steering starts from people's *possibilities* and power. Paths are developed and implemented with the client. He/she has *personal responsibility* in the path, *directs* it personally insofar as possible and *makes as many personal choices as possible*. Paths fit in with the client's *subjectivity*. They are consequently developed from *his or her wishes*, motives and possible perspectives, and fit in with his competences. Paths aim at developing these *competences* further, fit into the *social context* and are developed and executed within this context (in regular society). The relationship between worker and client becomes characterised by respect and equality" (Van der Laan: 2002: 45). What is striking is that a heavy emphasis is placed on the individual's [11] responsibility in this approach and on the self-directing powers of collective bodies such as families and communities.

3. DEMAND STEERING IN SOCIAL WORK?

We next examine the above-mentioned developments in welfare thinking critically, not only paying attention to the risks which such a demand-oriented approach create for welfare organisations and social workers, but also looking for a repositioning, a reinterpretation of the role of welfare organisations and social workers in the social rectangle ("authorities", "care", "market", "need") in terms of welfare and social care. Prior to this, however, we wish to distinguish between three functions or core tasks in social work which form the framework for our analysis of (current) thinking on welfare:

Help provision function: this means that the specific demand for help from the individual in his/her specific situation must be accommodated to a maximum and integrally. This is first done by receiving, listening to and possibly clarifying the demand for help as a type of entry or access gate for further provision of assistance. This can be performed on an ambulatory basis where the help applicant continues to function within his/her natural environment and involve the provision of information and/or advice, reference to more specialised services which have the required know-how concerning the formulated demand for help, or ambulatory support and counselling. When this is not or no longer possible or appears inadequate, provision is made for a replacement environment, where among other things, we think of semi-residential and residential welfare facilities or other family replacing living groups ("the safety net function of social care").

Empowering the individual and his/her social network ("development work function"): *actually* supporting people. This means that in addition to providing help, attention must also be paid to expanding the involved person's/people's competences to increase their negotiating space and to make them fitter to cope with their problems; otherwise new demands for help could arise.

Signalling function: publicising and requesting (specifying) attention for (new) demands for help and/or problems (cf. inequalities of opportunity, exclusion mechanisms, etc.) which are noticed during the exercise of the above-mentioned tasks at societal and policy level, with

[11] cf. supra: phenomenon of individualisation.

the goal of enhancing the quality of life of citizens and contributing to public debate and policy development in the area.

The above-mentioned core tasks in social work are perfectly executable in principle in a policy thinking that assumes demand steering. However, in our view people must be careful with its implementation in practice. The greatest danger or risk is that when we look at the social rectangle "'authorities", "need", "care", "market"), social workers and welfare facilities are pushed into a tight corner by both the controlling authorities and their clients. We wish to discuss this thoroughly below and also pay attention to its consequences for the practice of social work.

Clients of social work currently have increased possibilities and resources themselves (cf. personal assistance budget, care cheques, vouchers, etc.) with which they can go looking for the type of assistance which suits them best[12], and thus personally take (acquire) responsibility for their own help provision process. This can lead to clients "shopping in the welfare market". In a situation of this type social workers (and social facilities) run the risk of being "degraded" to "production staff" (Baart, 2000:13) or "service providers during sales" (Van der Laan, 2002: 49) in their efforts of providing tailored care for the specific application for help from their client. "In a manner of speaking: the client directs the worker. Or more accurately: the worker follows the client" (Ibid.: 50).

However, social workers and welfare facilities are also confronted with a certain pressure from the *authorities*, because "it is no longer sufficient for the facilities to show they organise a given type of service as well as possible; they also have to provide measurable results" (De Vos, 2002: 63)[13]. In other words, the controlling and subsidising authority expects efficiency and (especially) results in the assistance as a sign of the "quality" of the care, on whose basis facilities can legitimate their existence[14]. When this is not successful, the facility is not only threatened with losing (a part of) of the allocated subsidies; its continued existence is also endangered. This means that a results-oriented way of working has to be adopted, with all its consequences. Thus it is noted that helpers choose "good clients" (sensible, accommodating, rational, stress-resistant, persevering, active, etc.) above the so-called "difficult cases" (aggressive, resistant, insincere, etc.) and that the help given to these clients is of a different type (e.g. more prescriptive-controlling for "difficult clients" and more informing advising for "good clients"; Baert, et al, 1994). Mattheüs effects still occur in current social work, whereby social inequality is still reinforced.

Helpers are also almost "forced" for financial and economic reasons to fit their clients into well-defined assistance (with the help of trusted/standardised methods and techniques), so that 'tailored care' is occasionally hard to find. Finally, this results-oriented work also has consequences for the helper-client relationship, and more specifically for the distance created between them. In such a context the helper does not have adequate time and space to learn (more) about the help applicant's situation, with contact limited to meetings and discussions at the social worker's office: he/she no longer moves "among people". In our view, demand-steered work (including the "tailored care" principle) is making way for a "refined supply-steering" (Van der Laan, 2002: 50) in social work, where the existing supply casts its shadow on demand, as it were[15].

[12] Cf. 'more freedom of choice' as a goal of demand-directed work: freedom of choice can relate to freedom to determine the service or product being brought in personally, but also the choice of selecting a provider personally (Bosselaar, in: Van der Laan, 2002: 45-46).

[13] Incidentally it is still merely a question whether it is characteristic of social work (and even all types of care for welfare) that the results of the care given cannot simply be *guaranteed*?

[14] As regards this quality term some important (normative) questions arise concerning this quality question such as 'Who decides and therefore knows what quality is?', 'How can quality be examined, and/or measured?', …

[15] An example is the drawing up and organisation of so-called 'care packages' at the level of the individual client.

To sum up what has just been stated, it can be said that social workers in a situation of this type (namely pushed back by clients and the authorities) only need to have a certain "technical professionalism", and that any normative and reflexive professionalism is threatened with being left behind: "Less call is placed on executing workers' reflexive power. You only have to look at the most efficient means for given objectives" (Van der Laan, 2002: 50). Kunneman (1996) formulates it as follows: "In the past fifteen years, the sector has not only been confronted with sustained cutbacks but also with a new output oriented management style where the financier acts as a customer and workers are expected to provide closely calculable services at maximum efficiency in the shortest possible time […] Technical competence is especially expected of professionals in the welfare sector: professionalism is ensuring that you have your jobs arranged methodically, the agreed output is reached and the financier/client is kept happy so that the subsidy will be continued in all circumstances" (Kunneman, 1996: 107).

4. TOWARDS A (RE)INTERPRETATION OF THE SOCIAL WORKER'S TASK?

The preceding items make it clear that the (professional) social worker moves at the interface between client requests, expectations and demands from the government (authorities) and what the market offers and/or recommends. From this position, he/she can (and in our view must) take on the role of the dialogue intermediary. This role means that he/she acknowledges/recognises the interests of the various actors and through dialogue with the client tries to reach a justified choice relating to his/her request for help and the supply of help. In addition, it will also be clear that we consider social work as a player that can and must contribute to the development of the citizens/applicants for help to responsible subjects who are able to make choices relating to their own biography and may and can take on joint responsibility for (their participation in) life in society.

The authorities, clients and especially social workers therefore may not forget that quality social work entails more than applying a number of 'technical skills' which people providing assistance have. In our view, technical professionalism can only be meaningful when account is taken of the normative professionalism and reflexive professionalism which bear it. Under normative professionalism, we understand that "normative steering is partly taken as a starting point for professional action" while the term reflexive professionalism indicates that "this action occurs consciously and in a considered manner, exclusively on the basis of know-how based on experience or theoretical practice" (Van Houten, 1996: 149, Kunneman, 1996). In other words, social workers must (be able to) be *reflective practitioners* (Schön, 1983, 1990), who continually ask themselves why they do what they are doing, and can take on responsibility for this at any time in the assistance provision process both relative to themselves and relative to the client, colleagues and the authorities: "The professional worker in healthcare and social care must always work in accordance with the principles of participative acquisition and application of knowledge. This will be interpreted differently for the anaesthetist than for the streetworker. But both must come to a suitable combination of knowledge-from-inside-out and knowledge-from-outside-down" (Bouwen, 1998: 76). This combination thus also be considered as the result of interaction and dialogue between the assistant and client. Clients do play a central role, but in our view must also realise that while they are also (the most important) partner in the assistance process (*joint*-subject), they are also still the *object* of the care provided and that these roles must be taken on simultaneously. Clients are thus *dependent* (as an applicant for help) on the one hand, but also on the other, also *competent to decide* (as an independent citizen who jointly determines the goals and resources of the care) (Van der Laan, 2002: 48).

The plea for the social worker to be a “reflective practitioner” also has implications for social policy of the (controlling and subsidising) governments. These must recognise that achieving results in assistance requires a lot of time and resources, and that tailored care cannot be achieved via (“forced”) standardisation and a technical routine in assistance: “Tailored work can only be offered if you direct efforts towards the actual client in the here and now situation. From case to case. This is at odds with a forced separation of demand and supply” (Ibid.: 48). In addition, social workers’ independence and expertise must be recognised as regards as regards the choices they make in the assistance provision process. However, in reflecting on these choices (on the basis of the above-mentioned normative and reflexive professionalism) they also fulfil a social function: they are in a preferential position in terms of recognising social and cultural conditions and processes which jointly contribute to or still contribute to the creation of problem situations and requests for assistance among the population and thus must (be able to) contribute to the discussions about these (which have to be) carried out at the level of society.

EQUALITY: A MYTH IN A WORLD OF INEQUALITIES

SIBONGILE MKHABELA
Nelson Mandela Children's Fund, South Africa

This conference gives us the opportunity to share our thoughts and reflections on a very challenging theme of equality at a time when societal inequalities are very sharp and seemingly deeply rooted. In this presentation I will share with you from my experiences and background as a social change activist, a mother worried about the next generation, a social worker, a former para-legal practitioner, children and a family advocate and a concerned professional. As much as I will attempt to explore the topic within a global framework, I will also focus our attention on Africa its challenges, which threaten the family, especially in my own country, South Africa.

Is equality a myth or a reality? I will argue that in the present political, social and economic environment equality and equity are a myth. Even in our very elaborate and progressive democratic systems, the world over, the issue of equality is an unattainable dream for the marginalized, the poor and powerless.

We need to share, however, a sense of what we can achieve or accomplish. If we were to begin to pool together our efforts, resources and strategies armed with the understanding that our lives, whether we are poor or prosperous, are interdependent.

In this conference we need to remind ourselves that the world has been and is currently steeped in many struggles. The struggle against oppression and exploitation has left deep social, political and economic scars amongst people. The first victim of our struggles has been the family. The South African family was targeted to provide cheap labour for the mines and white owned farms. Families were dispossessed of their land and were politically disenfranchised. Just as South Africa liberated itself from Apartheid, it found itself in the vicious grip of HIV-AIDS, which is compromising an already undermined family system.

Today, one of the most challenging issues is to define what family is. HIV-AIDS and other socio-economic trends have forced upon us new family constructs and new definitions. Families made of siblings (child headed households), families that miss the adult, economically active generation, as mothers and fathers succumb to HIV-AIDS, leaving their destitute children with grandparents are common.

Why then do we engage on issues of equality? We simply accept that ours is a huge responsibility to a generation, which needs to be nurtured. We can, with sufficient political will, reduce the inequalities for the sake of couples and families plus children.

Issues, which adversely affect families and couples, do not seem to change. They have deep-seated roots and are very stubborn to change. Any literature review raises the same issues. Gender inequality and women's oppression, in spite of the many steps taken by governments and development agencies to change the situation, persists.

Racism and skewed incomes as well as wealth and power imbalances are entrenched. Societal inequalities seem to be deepening, as the rich become richer and the poor become poorer. We witness much more than hunger or lack of food security. Fundamentally, there is

paucity for opportunities, access to information and poverty of meaningful participation in decision-making among the vast majority of families.

BASES OF SOCIAL POWER, CITIZENSHIP RIGHTS, AND DEMOCRACY

Not long ago, a select group of men and women in Tanzania, during discussions and thoughtful observations, identified that efforts aimed to enhance the position of families will need to promote programmes which guarantee families and women, in particular, the following:

- Financial and other resources
- Time free from all forms of work to engage in educational, political and recreational activities
- Space in which to carry on production and reproduction activities
- Relevant knowledge (knowing what and knowing how)
- Accurate information concerning the world and matters that impact on one
- Social organisation to enable the collective struggle for the basic rights
- Access to instruments and tools of production, including health, opportunities, facilities, employment, education, income, services and welfare.
- Constitutional issues i.e. human rights, civil rights and political rights;
- Economic Issues i.e. wages, working conditions, opportunities for employment, protective legislation;
- Family Relations : Marriage, divorce, child custody, issues of estate;
- Health issues : Reproductive rights, HIV/AIDS, Mother to child transmission, care and support.

All the above issues remain unresolved in many countries. Amarjit Kaur, having made some observations on the status of women in five East Asian nations, concluded that statistical and other facts demonstrate that, despite the fact that the principle of equality between men and women is formally recognised in the five countries, (Indonesia, Malaysia, Philippines, Singapore and Thailand), there still remain unequal treatment of women in the law, education and employment. While it is acknowledged that law does not solely determine the status of women, nonetheless it can obstruct or accelerate the achievement of full equality.

Conferences over time have shared a common objective, namely, to facilitate the process of gender equality, the empowerment of women, and the transformation of society at all levels, including households and communities. A two pronged approach, which focuses on policy reform and transformation through animation, negotiation and lobbying, has been a preferred strategy. The issues as earlier stated, have remained primarily the same. The challenge facing couples and families remain primarily welfare, access, conscientisation, participation and control/power relations, resource ownership, information, gender division of labour, access to credit, technology, income disparities and social services.

It may not be unreasonable for us at this Conference to recommit to the fundamentals of the UN 1985-1995 decade for Women which were built on themes of “Equality, Development and Peace”.

- The theme of equality focused on the efforts to eliminate all forms of discrimination and inequality based on gender.
- Development issues aimed at the advancement of women in political, cultural, and economic positions.
- The aspect of peace centers on strategies to bring harmony in society by eliminating all forms of violence against women and children and combating sexual harassment as well as minimisation of war.

This event offers us an opportunity to confront obstacles to these themes. Despite this great energy for change, there seems to be a resistance to change on family and women rights. We simply cannot afford this. Responses including those from civil society have failed to support women as human beings and in their roles as mothers. Very quickly, for example, attention of HIV-AIDS treatment has turned to save the lives of children through nevirapine. The life of the mother does not seem to have much value.

RACIALLY BASED ECONOMIC INEQUALITIES

Inequalities result, to a significant extent, from past racial policies and practices. Furthermore, if present racial inequalities remain intact, it will contribute to continuing racial stratification for the next generation. This is true in the United States among the minorities and in South Africa among the African majority.

Until recently, the social sciences and policy debates neglected an inquiry into wealth, intergenerational transfers, and policy processes that resulted in differential life chances based on racial criteria. Wealth has been a neglected dimension of the social sciences' concern in its enquiry of the economic and social status, especially of Americans in general and racial minorities, in particular.

An examination of wealth distribution in America offers an indispensable contribution to our current understanding of racial stratification. According to Saegert and others, information regarding assets and liabilities of American families has traditionally been scarce. Until the mid-1980s, the American Survey of Financial Characteristics of Consumers supplied the only available survey data. This simple observation holds enormous consequences. The lack of reliable field data on the assets and liabilities of households has seriously retarded empirical understanding of their economic well being, life chances, and opportunities for social mobility.
Moreover, this data deficit, it is argued, has not only deprived Americans of an important measure of inequality but has also impeded the social science understanding of how inequality is generated and maintained. All over the world we have had this serious data problem. South Africa, though coming from over three hundred years of structural and systematic inequalities, is making the same mistake in its analysis. We just witness a lack in the data for in-depth analysis. South Africa is also judging wealth by income.
The current debate highlights that the problem here is not simply data shortage but something far more significant. The social science failing, in my judgement, implies a strong institutional, conceptual and theoretical blindness. Just as our understanding of economic well-being and inequality have been short-changed in the process, it is also the case that the instruments used to make social policy have been limited to the equivalent of playing cards with less than a full deck.

HISTORICAL LEGACY

Among Western and Eastern countries there is differential opportunities afforded to classes, caste, ethnic and racial groups, as well as male and female to acquire wealth and property. In South Africa, the Apartheid government declared war on white poverty in 1948. This meant amongst others, forceful removals of black families from their ancestral lands, job reservations (skilled jobs reserved for white people only). African people were relegated to unskilled labour only; Further, the system deliberately and systematically, deprived African children and their families of Education and other opportunities.

ACCESS AND EQUALITY

As already alluded to, equality is about access, especially to basic services, democratic processes, basic conditions of living and the economy/markets. We know that access to Health Care services, clean running water, education, and markets is not yet possible for most people the world over. The South African statistics are not in any way better than statistics in most poor countries. For example, in a world of information and technology advances, only 28% of youth in South Africa have access to a computer. White youth and white males in particular, are most likely to be familiar with computers, only 10% of African youth know how to use the Internet.

MOVING FORWARD: BUILDING THE CAPACITY OF THE POOR TO ENGAGE

In an attempt to balance power relations and enable poor people, women and children - to engage in dynamic processes and decision-making forums or platforms that impact on their lives, the Ford Foundation has been in the forefront of the development of new theories. The concept of Social Capital has been put forward as a possible approach to create better access, equality and equity. Social capital is defined as the set of resources that inhere in relationships of trust and cooperation between people.
These kinds of social assets do not alleviate poverty directly; rather, they leverage investments in human capital and household financial resources. Poor people rely on the support of extended family relationships and of more formal organisations like churches to survive.

Eskia Mphahlele defines social capital, with a stronger African feel, he states "…in traditional society, all institutions and individuals co-operate within a unified social unit to help give society a member it can be proud of. A child is surrounded by several models of good conduct and not only by his immediate family. The whole community takes an interest in his growth and welfare" and he concludes "The value of the individual life and communal life is thus heightened in our consciousness: the essence of African humanism".

Scholars have long recognized the importance of these community support structures, and in that sense, social capital is not an entirely new notion for understanding the dynamics of poor communities. But recent scholarly work on social capital has served to renew interest in how social organization and norms of cooperation, both within a community and its relationships to outside institutions, affect its development. In particular, this work has stimulated new thinking about the role that social capital can play not just in helping families survive, but in advancing public policy that seeks to combat poverty and reduce inequalities.

Writers warn that social capital is not an alternative to providing greater financial resources and public services to poor communities. Rather, it constitutes an essential means to increase such resources and to make more effective use of them.

We are further informed that social capital can play an essential role in strategies to combat poverty in several ways. First, it can help make investment strategies work in a range of policy areas: public health, safety, housing, economic development and education. Strong community organizations can enhance the effectiveness of public institutions and revitalization of strategies. Second, to the extent that the poor act collectively and forge alliances with outside actors, they stand a better chance of commanding the greater resources that are necessary for combating poverty.

More broadly, social capital strategies suggest a shift toward seeing the poor as active agents in the betterment of their communities. Through strengthening and expanding social connections, poor people can become partners in community development programs, while building the political power needed to increase society's commitment to combating poverty.

We are also reminded that social capital operates within communities, across communities, and through ties with financial and public institutions.

The writers of the Ford Foundation series add that the social capital of poor communities is not limited to their internal relationships. Residents of poor communities are also members of other collectives and communities, through their activities in churches, unions, social clubs, and political organizations, residents of poor communities are sometimes connected across poor and to the more affluent. Furthermore, poor people have numerous connections to the public institutions, like schools, hospitals, and the police, that operate within their communities.

Efforts to build and use social capital in poor communities, especially efforts that seek to stimulate political action, can contribute to a broader transformation of civic and political life. Community revitalization initiatives have been one of the primary ways in which the social fabric of American communities has been repaired and democratic participation has been rejuvenated. Historically, the social movements of the poor and the excluded were some of the most important forces for democratic change in many parts of the world. The contemporary period is ripe for equally broad transformation, one that begins to address the root causes of poverty and equalities.

CONFRONTING THE RACIAL ORDER

The racial ordering of society highlights the fact that many racial injustices are institutionalized, that is, the normal operations of dominant institutions create and reinforce racial inequality. The institutionalized nature of racism places a tremendous additional burden on social capital-based initiatives. At the same time, social capital formation can lead to group consciousness, solidarity and political agendas that can begin to confront institutionalized racism.

Social capital processes are infused with cultural meanings. Cultural understandings and biases affect social capital-building processes because they play such an important role in group identity. We need to transform our notions of cultural citizenship to make them more inclusive of the poor and marginalized.

We are further advised that social capital-building strategy involves developing the capacity of poor people and of course families, to engage in pubic discourse and contest popular cultural stereotypes.

HOW IS SOUTH AFRICA DEALING WITH ITS HISTORICAL INEQUALITIES?

South Africa has created several platforms and mechanism to address the inequalities and issues affecting children, families and communities.

Recognizing that the protection and promotion of human rights cannot be left to individuals or the government, the Constitution and the Bill of Rights create independent national institutions, subject only to the Constitution and the law, to transform our society from its unjust past and to deliver the fundamental rights in the Constitution to all in South Africa.

The South African Human Rights Commission (SAHRC) and the Commission on Gender Equality (CGE) were established in 1996. The SAHRC and CGE work with government, civil society and individuals, both nationally and abroad, to fulfil its Constitutional mandate and serves as both a watchdog and a visible route through which people can access their rights.

FUNCTIONS OF THE SOUTH AFRICAN HUMAN RIGHTS COMMISSION (SAHRC) & COMMISSION OF GENDER EQUALITY (CGE)

1. The Human Rights Commission

- promotes respect for human rights and a culture of human rights;
- promote the protection, development and attainment of human rights; and
- monitor and assess the observance of human rights in the Republic; and the

2. The Commission on Gender Equality

- monitors and evaluates the policies and practices of government, the private sector and other organisations to ensure that they promote and protect gender equality
- reviews existing and upcoming legislation from a gender perspective
- investigates inequality

TRUTH AND RECONCILIATION COMMISSION

The Constitution states that the pursuit of national unity, the well-being of all South African citizens and peace, require reconciliation between the people of South Africa and the reconstruction of society. There is need for understanding but not for vengeance, a need for reparation but not for retaliation, a need for ubuntu but not for victimisation..." Thus a Truth and Reconciliation Commission was established.

BLACK ECONOMIC EMPOWERMENT

President Thabo Mbeki this year stressed that the government is firmly of the view that economic growth, development and Black Economic Empowerment are complementary and related processes. The empowerment we speak of is an inclusive process and not an exclusive one. No economy can meet its potential if any part of its citizens is not fully integrated into all aspects of that economy. Equally, it follows that an economy that is not growing cannot integrate all its citizens into that economy in a meaningful way. Government is to set aside R10 billion towards this programme.

LAND RESTITUTION

The 2003 Budget provides additional funds for land restitution. Recognising the critical role that it plays in restoring what rightfully belongs to those formerly dispossessed.

CONCLUSIONS

In conclusion, it is clear that while equality is now a globally accepted principle, especially in democratic countries, it is much difficult to realise it. It is also clear in my mind that to achieve equality, we need to continue acting together in strengthening families, especially women, communities and community initiatives.

This conference was convened with the aim to encourage and not to discourage the conference participants to explore ways and means of advancing the interest of families and issues which impact on family life today. The fact that various studies, workshops and conferences constantly address similar issues, demonstrates that attaining equality and equity for the majority of the human race remains a daunting task. Time, effort and more resources still need to be invested to programmes and projects which promote equal opportunities within societal structures, the laws which regulate relations among people, and the cultural behaviour which sustain the status quo.

We are more that convinced that laws, structures and behaviour can be changed or abolished. New ones may be put in place in order to bridge the status and class positions of people. In the case of South Africa, the dramatic changes which we have witnessed in the recent years are, in fact, the fruition of many long years of hard work by activists and professionals drawn from many disciplines.

The existing differences and equalities should serve as a spur to increase equal opportunities for all. Changes in our society, while slow, are not to be dismissed. We need to celebrate the progress already made.

The value of conferences, programmes and acts of defiance against the hardships experienced by families is starting to be broadly recognized. As we celebrate victories, we dare not forget that the struggle ahead within an ever-changing world will not become any easier.

The work to bring about fundamental change will need to be advanced by women and men who are prepared to continuously engage in processes of social analysis, awareness-raising activities, and many other actions promoted to change societal structures and practices in all sectors and at all levels of our lives. We have to turn myths into equal opportunities and reality.

CHAIR'S CONFERENCE REPORT

DEREK HILL
ICCFR Chair

1. INTRODUCTION

Fifty years of continuous international activity! That has been the thought that increasingly preoccupied those responsible for the planning and preparation of our Commission's 2003 international conference over the past three years. There had to be both a celebration of past achievements and a conference programme which would demonstrate the relevance now, and in the future, of the International Commission on Couple and Family Relations to all those concerned with the well-being and welfare of couples and families. The Ministry of Flanders undertook to host those events and, with benefit of hindsight, it was that undertaking which ensured their outstanding success. At the risk of using up my stock of superlatives in the first paragraph of this report, the Celebration was superb; the conference was both challenging and inspiring; the hospitality was sumptuous; and the settings for the events – the Main Hall of the Catholic University Leuven, the City Hall, and the Convent of Chièvres, Great Beguinage, Leuven – were sublime (the last named venue being a part of a UNESCO Cultural and Natural Heritage monument). The richness of the whole experience was such that it has taken some weeks for the full impact of the events to be registered and evaluated.

2. CELEBRATION OF THE 50TH ANNIVERSARY OF ICCFR

Efforts had been made to ensure that as many as possible of those individuals and organisations that had contributed in important ways to the work of the Commission over the past fifty years were present, or represented, on Saturday 3rd May 2003. The Celebratory sessions began in the Main Hall of Catholic University Leuven, a venue which might dignify the grandest of events. A welcome by **Marc Morris**, the Director-general of the Ministry of Flanders' Family and Social Welfare Administration, who had also overseen every aspect of the arrangements made for the Celebration and Conference, was followed by the reflections of **Herman Pas** on the Commission's history of international activity. It was he who had compiled and edited the definitive record of the Commission's work – Vive La Différence - and he, by virtue of his long association with the Commission, who could trace the way in which the themes adopted by its annual international conferences had reflected both the changing environments in which couple and family relations were being lived out, and also the complexity of the relationship between the Commission and the International Union of Family Organisations, the latter having initiated the Commission's work. Thus the context for the later stages of our Celebration was set.

General Secretary **Gerlind Richards** and former Commission Chairs **Chris Clulow** and **John Chambers** offered the gathering more personal insights into the work and workings of the Commission, as they identified milestones reached during their respective periods of office.

Ms **Mieke Vogels**, Flemish Minister of Welfare, Health, Equal Opportunities and Development Cooperation, turned the audience's attention to the decreasing birth-rate in Flanders, to the impact of a decreasing proportion of economically active citizens being responsible for the elderly and others who need care, and to the fact that, if ever-increasing social levies were to be avoided, Flemish people should have more children. She went on to review the ways in which government was introducing family-friendly policies and provisions which would enable women to have the two or three children they actually wanted but which had been denied them in the past for practical or financial reasons. The harmonising of work and family tasks lay at the heart of those efforts. Ms Vogels' illustration of the central importance of the quality of family life to the welfare of a society echoed the message of many speakers in past conferences. It also forged a strong link between the content of the Celebratory sessions and the subject matter of the conference programme which would follow them.

As current Chair of the Commission **Derek Hill** invited those assembled to turn their attention to the future of ICCFR. Identifying some of the opportunities and threats the Commission faced he invited everyone to contribute to the shaping of the commission's future activity by completing a brief questionnaire. A very pleasing number of responses were received. Their content is summarised in an appendix to this report.

At the invitation of Minister Ms Vogels participants walked to Predikherenkerk and enjoyed the beautiful 14th/15th century music and the singing of the ensemble 'Li doulz mal' (Festival van Vlaanderen) followed by a splendid reception and buffet in the Main University Hall. The latter was an excellent opportunity to meet old friends and make new contacts.

Few organisations can have benefitted from so splendid an anniversary celebration.

Celebration footnote
At the start of the sessions described a group of elegantly uniformed young lady guides made their appearance and helped visitors find their way from venue to venue. They were to be in evidence throughout the following conference programme, something which added to the sense of occasion as well as helping people arrive for sessions on time!

3. CONFERENCE 2003 - NEW HARMONIES: FAMILIES HOLDING RELATIONSHIPS, WORK AND THE GENERATIONS IN BALANCE

After the opportunity to join a guided walk of the city one hundred and sixteen conference participants from twenty-five countries gathered to hear the first of four keynote addresses. **Ms Thoraya Ahmed Obaid**, Executive Director of the United Nations Population Fund offered a cross-cultural perspective on families illustrated by detail of both her own upbringing and her experiences at the head of a major UN agency. Identifying everyone's need of the benefits of family relationships Ms Obaid observed that in 1994 the world's governments had agreed that it was essential to grant particular assistance to families in difficult life situations, but that many of those governments had failed to implement the necessary policies and programmes. She called for a more forceful articulation of the implications of our shared humanity amidst the diverse identities we respectively have. 'While the invisible hand of the market may be able to keep the global economy turning, it takes the human hand, and the human spirit to guide it in the most productive direction to fashion a world that is socially inclusive, transparent and democratically anchored'.

As in previous years, the conference programme offered participants the opportunity to take part in a series of Discussion Group sessions and to attend two of a range of twelve

workshops on specialised topics between the keynote addresses. Some of the outcomes of those Discussion Groups are summarised later in this report.

In a powerful address the second keynote speaker, **Professor François de Singly**, Université René Descartes, Paris, traced the transition from a family model validated by social consensus between the 1920s and 1960s to a 'destabilised' institution in which paternal authority has been replaced by parental authority – a 'vaguer' entity.
The desire for everyone to be recognised as a person in their own right has led to the situation in which it is the family's task to help all members in the endless work of self-construction. The function of the family has changed radically. It has done so in response to the socio-economic realities of the last decades of the 20th century and of today. And it has done so more rapidly than governments have been able to adjust legislation and social policy so as to enable those new, 'vague' families. 'Rigid rules are no longer an ethical ideal nor a reference for managing human resources and politics'. The family must be democratic. All family members must be respected. Children, as individuals, have rights which perturb family affairs. Parents are parents for life, whether divorced or not. No one need be sacrificed for the sake of certain interests, or for the sake of the general interest. The modern self, the product of self-construction requires life-long learning stemming from both personal experience and reference to all sorts of experts. And that use of experts is increasingly socially acceptable. 'The modern family is thus based on a paradox as withdrawal into personal life requires recourse to external knowledge'.

In his keynote address **Professor Herman Baert**, Catholic University Leuven, described the need for those involved in the delivery of social services (social workers, counsellors, etc.) to redefine their roles in response to changes in family and relationship patterns such as those described as 'vague' by Professor de Singly, and because of changing relationships between clients, service providers, the market and government.
In an era in which individuals are the 'directors of their own biographies' choice is both a freedom and a burden, and their 'welfare' is seen to be based on their integration and participation in societal life. The evidence is that individuals need expert assistance from time to time as they choose engagements with social institutions, new and old. 'Tailored care', that which ensures the maximum independence of the care applicant, meets the care need, and minimises consequent limitations on the applicant's living situation, is what society is demanding. 'Market thinking' has emerged in which both the authorities and other competing service providers contribute to a better supply of help to applicants. Today, that 'welfare market' is playing a growing role as governments withdraw from direct service provision.

Professor Baert identified three core functions which must be performed by care professionals if the welfare market and the authorities are to combine to deliver tailored care. They must provide the required help. They must empower and enhance the capacities of the care applicant and their social network. They must signal to society and the authorities news of new problems and needs with which their work brings them into contact. Thus those professionals become dialogue intermediaries promoting society's debate about how best to support individuals in the process of forming their own lives.

Ms Sibongile Mkhabela, CEO, Nelson Mandela Children's Fund, South Africa, used her keynote presentation to address the issue of equality in a world where societal inequalities are marked and deeply rooted. National governments and international bodies had long-since espoused the principles of equity and equality but for the great majority of the world's families there is little evidence of their active application. In South Africa, now freed from Apartheid, the scourge of HIV/AIDS is compromising already undermined family systems. Racism, wealth and power imbalances, gender inequality and women's oppression, poverty, and the lack of information, opportunities and meaningful participation in decision-making are all identified as the enemies of progress. The institutionalisation of the racial ordering of society and the oppression of women are particular concerns. However, such analyses are

incomplete since little is known about the distribution of wealth - it continues to be judged by income. Thus social policy is flawed by inadequate data. The result is that the access to basic services and conditions for living, to democratic processes and engagement in the cash economy and markets, is still denied to the majority of the world's population.

Ford Foundation workers have introduced the idea of 'social capital' – the set of resources that inhere in relationships of trust and co-operation between people. Ms Mkhabela quoted Eskia Mphahlele's description of this concept – an African perspective – '(Social capital ensures that) the value of the individual life and communal life is heightened in our consciousness: the essence of African humanism.' Though not a substitute for greater financial resources and public services, social capital is an essential means to increase such resources and make more effective use of them. The concept envisages the poor as active agents in the betterment of their own communities, building the political power to increase society's commitment to combating poverty and disadvantage.
Ms Mkhabela saw the need to base the struggle for equality on the collective action of strengthened families, of women, and of communities. Progress made has been slow but needs to be celebrated. The task ahead will not get easier but 'We have to turn myths into equal opportunities and reality.'

Minister Vogels' opening address and the four keynote speakers had skilfully mapped the conference's subject matter. It was striking that those presentations, based on very different perspectives, had all dwelt on the significance of personal choice for individuals living in today's 'risk society', on the need for effective family relationships to support individuals and inform them about the processes of self-construction, and on the need for new and context-sensitive forms of formal and informal support and advice. Ms Mkhabela's mention of 'social capital', sometimes referred to as 'society's glue', provided a concept with an immediate intuitive appeal to front-line community workers. Many participants could probably bring to mind personal experiences of poverty and oppression alleviated, and groups having a greater say in decisions affecting their socio-economic setting, as a result of '…features of social organisation such as trust, norms, and networks that can improve the efficiency of society by facilitating coordinated action.' (Putnam 1993).
The World Bank identifies families as one of the key sources of social capital (PovertyNet 2003) while the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) has noted:

> *Families create norms and social ties, and provide a social network that benefits its members – especially in the context of extended families in 'familial' societies… Relations within the family based on reciprocity and the ability to meet the emotional and physical needs of children can also foster the development of trust and co-operative behaviour outside the immediate family circle. The material and emotional support shared freely between family members can generate an implicit willingness and expectation to reciprocate such support within and outside the family. The family is also a primary source of learning as well as a potential stimulator of success in formal education. Given that education has potentially strong effects in increasing social capital, the family's role in education adds an indirect positive influence on social capital… However, strong family ties (bonding) may on occasion inhibit wider 'bridging' relationships. (OECD 2001, 45 - 46)*

National governments are now taking social capital very seriously in terms of its implications for social policy and provision (Productivity Commission 2003).

It is perhaps too easy to think of social capital as something which should be augmented in disadvantaged social groups, something which 'they' need and the growth of which professionals can stimulate. A moment's thought brings the realisation that it is not a 'them' and 'us' situation, to be truly effective the professionals must themselves trust and be trusted and form an active part of the networks from which social capital is derived. This thought

resonates with those of Professor Baert about a redefinition of the roles of community workers. The one inescapable conclusion conference participants were left with was that equity, equality, a freedom from oppression and poverty and, indeed, democracy itself depends on the 'primary building blocks' – thriving family groupings.

Discussion Groups

Six groups, each with a facilitator, met on four occasions to examine ideas and issues raised by the keynote presentations and the workshop sessions. All the groups were multinational and multidisciplinary. Group members thus had an opportunity hear about experiences in other countries and from people with different professional roles.
During the conference's final plenary session groups and individuals were offered the opportunity to bring matters of general interest or concern to the attention of all. During that session a group proposed that a Declaration which they had drafted should be recorded. The Declaration was adopted by the unanimous vote of participants and it is reproduced in an appendix to this report.
Readers of this report are urged to bring the Declaration to the attention of governments and national and international bodies with which they have contact.

The total of thirty-three hours of group discussion permitted many aspects of the conference theme to be addressed and a number of different perspectives to be developed. Written feedback from the groups' facilitators has been used to assemble a record of that work, the bullet points from each group being placed together.

- The central role of women in creating new harmonies in society, their multiple functions and the need to assert their right to education and information equipping them for their tasks. Their need for 'protected' time in the post-natal period.
- With the Convention on the Rights of the Child in mind, the need to seek universal recognition of the child's ties to both the mother's and the father's families, the need to reject provisions which permit fathers to 'disappear', the need to prevent the abandonment of the child by either parent, and the need to promote the child's right to be recognised and raised by both parents.
- Is a 'Family Code' desirable in all countries? How would such a code address the diversity in forms of families?
- Divorce/separation, the conjugal couple and the parental couple – the need to identify new means to manage those relationships and that between child and parents. The need for a new balance to be found between family alliances and the choices of partners in order to create harmonious societies.
- Today's societies create new needs within families to which responses must be found through collective action and the exercising of both independence and solidarity. The need for the state, the civil society and international agencies to act together to serve those needs. What is the preferred role of the 'market'?
- Worldwide, couple relationships are increasingly the expressions of the choices of the partners. Society must find the means to ensure that those choices are well-informed and that the needs of the relationship are served throughout its life-span. The need to adapt supportive services to reflect the cultural context of couples.
- The need to find more sensitive and reliable means to enable the voices of couples and families to influence service development and policy making.
- The existence of an imbalance in funds available for 'treatment' and for preventative action.
- The need to find ways to increase individuals' scope for choices about time devoted to work and to 'life'.

- (Family) life in the 'risk society' confronts individuals with more, and more complex, issues/choices which they are not equipped to handle. New services are needed to help people in situations in which rules do not exist or are changing.
- Respect is an essential component in dealings with individuals, families and organisations. A need for assistance should not diminish the respect shown to the individual/family.
- Choice is only beneficial if the options available are meaningful. Are marketing and advertising the best ways to inform choice-makers?
- Some services get lost in the market system because their effects are very difficult to measure, e.g. preventative services.
- New harmonies can only be achieved if those concerned are able to accept and forgive the false starts and genuine errors of others.
- 'Self-construction' and the associated learning arises out of dealing with difficulties and problems. How can services help people to make good use of those kinds of experience?
- The changing nature of families, the vulnerability of today's families, and the tension between individual and collective interests are our major problems.
- The start of the helping process is understanding the problem being faced.
- Key features of effective healing programmes are:
  - Acceptance and the opportunity to develop trust through a consistent, available relationship allowing the development of a trust in the world and in oneself.
  - The development of belief in the self strengthened by physically, mentally and emotionally challenging programmes.
- Preventative interventions should include education programmes at all life stages, the anticipation of crises in the life stages of couples, parents, families and children, the careful assessment of appropriate points of intervention. The training and use of key groups to provide services can strengthen community involvement and responsiveness.
- Among the challenges being faced in service provision are economic rationalism, external pressures and challenges, the demanding behaviour and lack of respect increasingly exhibited by clientele, and demands for accountability.
- Practitioners need to become more proactive in their advocacy and representation of the needs of client groups.
- Multidisciplinary approaches generate tensions between process and task, and as a result of different expectations about outcomes.
- The process of a discussion group is a microcosm of the challenges faced in participants working environments – differences in goals, expectations, personalities, working styles, power, availability (time, resources).
- A multidisciplinary approach to specific interest problems is advocated so as to assist in the recognition and valuing of the interdependence of all the many inputs to welfare services.
- Harmony – can couples or families realistically be expected to be 'harmonious'?
- Life 'roadmaps' – a useful idea? What tools or skills are needed to create such roadmaps?
- Roadmaps imply options and choices. The oppressed, the marginalized and those in poverty need assistance based on a different model. What model?
- Belonging = Harmony?
- Ageing populations – additional caring tasks mostly undertaken by women, a deficit in caring skills, the need to modify existing services to meet new needs, the need to prepare family members for changes in roles (adult children becoming 'parents').
- Intergenerational story-telling can assist the integration of the generations. 'Roadmaps' need to show where we came from as well as where we intend to go. These things help to create a sense of belonging.
- Lobbying and advocacy are parts of our role as service providers.
- Societies at cross-roads – self versus community. Balance and harmony need to be achieved on an issue by issue basis.

- Society should actively support families at all stages.
- Practitioners have a role in the empowerment of communities to fight for social change through collective action.
- Communities in all nations should turn again and again to the Declaration of Human Rights. If basic rights are denied little else can be achieved.

In different ways the members of the groups expressed how welcome it was for busy participants to be given the opportunity to spend time *thinking* rather than *doing*. Individuals' felt themselves to be reaffirmed. The openness and sharing experienced was very much valued. It was noted that the richness of the keynote presentations and the workshop content had generated agendas for discussion which were too long to be addressed. Groups had identified their own priorities and had been interested to discover the commonalities and the differences in the work done by others.

Dr Jur Herman Pas, Co-Chair ICCFR

The opportunity was taken during one of the conference dinners to recognise and express appreciation of the many years of dedicated service given to the Commission by Herman Pas. His retirement from the role of Co-Chair will leave the Commission without the source of wise counsel and steadfast commitment to its fundamental purposes on which it had depended so long.

4. POST-CONFERENCE PROFESSIONAL SEMINAR

Twenty of the Conference's participants stayed on in Leuven to take part in a Seminar co-ordinated by Martin Koschorke and facilitated by Judy Cunnington. A report on the event is to be found as an appendix to this report.

5. ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This report has attempted to put on record an account of what must have been the Commission's most complex and splendid annual conference. Being a celebratory event it is fitting to begin the acknowledgements with thanks to the thousands of people who, in their different ways, have contributed to fifty years of vigorous international activity. Activity which year by year has encompassed a wider and wider spectrum of family-related professionals and organisations and which, in the same way, has drawn into engagement an ever increasing number of countries. The unique characteristics of the Commission result from the contributions of those individuals and organisations.

The Commission extends its grateful thanks to Minister Ms Mieke Vogels, to Marc Morris, Director-general, Family and Social Welfare Administration, Ministry of Flanders, and to the members of that Administration, for the very generous financial support provided, for meticulous planning and implementation of conference events, and for the recognition given to the Commission and its history by the invitation to gather in Flanders and benefit from their warm hospitality.

Thanks are also due to Schapiro Thorn Inc. for providing funds which permitted the participation of some colleagues from distant nations.

The **Opening and Keynote speakers** individually and collectively provided the stimuli, ideas and information which permitted participants to grapple with various aspects of the conference theme. The Commission is most grateful for their contributions:

- Ms Mieke Vogels, Minister of Welfare, Health, Equal Opportunities and Development Cooperation, Flanders, Belgium
- Ms Thoraya Ahmed Obaid, Executive Director, United Nations Population Fund
- Professor François de Singly, Université René Descartes, Paris, France
- Professor Dr Herman Baert, Catholic University Leuven, Belgium
- Ms Sibongile Mkhabela, Chief Executive, Nelson Mandela Children's Fund, South Africa

Thanks are due to the following persons for skilfully **chairing Keynote sessions**:

- Professor Wilfried Dumon, Catholic University Leuven, Belgium
- The Hon. Justice Neil Buckley, Family Court of Australia
- Mr Marc Morris, Ministry of Flanders, Belgium

The **workshops** sessions were led by:

- Ms Dianne Gibson, Relationships Australia
  Different Families – New Harmonies.
- Dr Heidemarie Haydari, Federal Ministry of Social Security and Generations, Austria
  The Well-Being of Families: The Role of the Policymakers.
- Professor André Masiala Ma Solo, Centre Congolais de l'Enfant et de la Famille, Republic of Congo
  New Harmonies: The Effect of the Changing Role of Women in a War-marked Central-African Country.
- Ms Vuokko Malinen and Ms Sinikka Kumpula, Väestöliitto, Finland
  Family Living Arrangements: The Joys and Sorrows of Transitions.
- Mr Luk De Smet, Gezinsbond, Belgium
  Reconciling the Rights of Children, Parents and the Family.
- Professor Thérèse Jacobs, Centre for Population and Family Studies (CBGS), Belgium
  Family Relations and Informal Care.
- The Hon. Justice Ina L. Gyemant and Ms Jeanne T. Ames, Kids' Turn, USA
  Where Social Policy and Laws Collide.
- Ms Ingrid Rengö and Mr Martin Wiklander, KFR, Sweden
  The well-being of families: the Role of the Counselling Services.
- Professor Lina Kashyap, Tata Institute, Mumbai, India
  Equal Opportunities: Managing Ethnic, Religious and Social Differences.
- Ms Jenny Riddell, Tavistock Marital Studies Institute, UK
  Couples in Later Years.
- Ms Nouzha Bensalah, Ministère de la Communauté Française, Belgium
  Family Evolutions and Parental relationships.
- Ms Anne-Marie Dieu, Patrick Govers and Ms Lydie Gaudier, Ligue des Familles, Belgium
  Balancing Family Life, Social Life and Professional Life.

ICCFR is most grateful for the wealth of material presented in these workshops.

Participants very much valued the activities of the **Discussion Group Facilitators**.
Thanks are due to:

- Clare Barnes (USA)
- Simone Baverey (South Africa)
- Chantal Lebatard (France)
- Claire Missen (Ireland)
- Ryszard Praskier (Poland)
- Robin Purvis (Australia).

Gerlind Richards, ICCFR General Secretary, had worked alongside Belgian colleagues and with the members of the ICCFR Board for the best part of three years with her usual attention to vital details to bring the plans for the Celebration and Conference to fruition. In particular, it was Gerlind's extensive personal network of contacts which was used to ensure that as many as possible of the Commission's 'old friends' participated in the Celebration. We were all delighted to learn that shortly after the conference Gerlind was awarded the MBE (Member of the British Empire) for her services to the Commission. It is good to know that it is not only those directly involved with the Commission which recognise the tireless work that she has done over the years.
Congratulations, Gerlind!

6. REFERENCES

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APPENDIX I

DECLARATION

We, the members of the International Commission on Couple and Family Relations (ICCFR – CIRCF), 112 persons coming from twenty-five nations, who met in Leuven, Belgium between 3 - 6 May 2003 state that **couple and family relationships are the basis of strong and cohesive societies**.

Therefore, we endorse the statement made during our conference by Ms T.A. Obaid [Executive Director, United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) and UN Under-Secretary-General].

> *'While the invisible hand of the market may be able to keep the global economy turning, it takes the human hand, and the human spirit, to guide it in the most productive direction to fashion a world that is socially inclusive, transparent and democratically anchored.'*

We also endorse the statement of Ms S. Mkhabela (Chief Executive Officer, Nelson Mandela Children's Fund).

> *'..that while equality is now a globally accepted principle we have to turn myths into equal opportunities and reality.'*

Therefore:
We call on all governments to recognise the importance of support for couple and family relationships and to implement internationally accepted social and family rights as agreed in the UN Convention on Social and Economic Rights (1966).

This Declaration was adopted by the International Commission on Couple and Family Relations as the result of the unanimous vote of conference participants during the closing plenary session of the Commission's fiftieth annual international conference on 6th May 2003.

APPENDIX 2

SUGGESTIONS MADE BY PARTICIPANTS IN THE CELEBRATORY SESSIONS

We are grateful for the many helpful suggestions and comments that were offered during the conference period.
The following is a summary of the responses, as received, to the five questions posed during the Celebratory Session.

Is there a need for an International Commission on Couple and Family Relations?

- The overwhelming response was 'YES'.
- Some added that if the Commission did not exist they would wish to create such a forum.

What should be the broad purposes of the Commission?

- Create a worldwide network for sharing ideas and learning from others' practical experiences.
- Collaboration between professions.
- Demonstrate the impact of our work to politicians.
- Promote the need for our work with those who make policy.
- Promote couple, family and child-friendly policy worldwide.
- Promote networking of family-related professionals worldwide.
- Identify and communicate critical issues facing couples and families.
- Explore the value of our organisation for the public rather than for ourselves.
- Promote new forms of services for couples and families.
- Promote the integration of services for couples and families.
- Promote attention to the plight of women and children.
- Promote equal opportunities for all.
- Promote values which encourage self-reliance.

What challenges lie ahead for the Commission?

- It's funding.
- Lobbying - making our concerns known and accepted internationally.
- Creating a consensus about critical issues worldwide.
- Identifying and addressing both short-term and long-term problems.
- Identification of 'cutting edge' issues.
- Giving attention to both couple and family issues.
- Attending to the needs of both children and women in today's societies.
- Showing the 'added value' of organisations working for couples and families.
- Promoting education, attention to risk groups, and working with offenders, in situations where abuse is prevalent.
- Arguing the benefits of a couple as the basis of a family.
- Promoting integration of services to couples and families.
- Seeking recognition of the impact of conflict on the lives of women and children.
- Being non-Eurocentric.
- Finding ways to counter the adverse effects on relationships of technological advances.
- Exploring and mitigating the effects of Globalisation.
- Focusing on preventative services rather than on the after-effects of disrupted relationships.

What will the Commission actually do?

- Continue to organise annual international conferences.
- Use a website to inform, supply an electronic newsletter, provide a means for members to dialogue, and to extend our network.
- Promote preventative work.
- Lobby.
- Extend the Commissions coverage to regions not yet involved (Maghreb, South America, (much of) North America, the Far East, the Arab Nations, and many other nations around the world).
- Link up with other Non-Governmental Organisations.
- Address much more specific issues during conferences.
- Reconsider the scheduling and nature of our conferences.

How might the Commission's future activity involve us all - individually and organisationally?

- Use national UN representatives and structures to bring the Commission's influence to bear on national/international family-related policy.
- Use members' knowledge of problems being faced by couples and families to extend the scope of the Commission.
- Use members' networks to extend the Commission's geographical coverage.
- Post-conference seminars in which members offer skill-based training addressing specific issues.
- Post-conference, on-line discussion and follow-up.
- On-going dialogue between members through use of the ICCFR website.
- Members contributing material to an ICCFR electronic newsletter.
- More dialogue between Board members and the membership at large.
- More frequent testing of members' priorities (the questionnaire was a good start).
- Individuals encouraged to become contributing members for a nominal payment.
- Members compile national/regional registers of organisations focused on couples and families.
- Members form national groupings of interested individuals and organisations.
- Conference time devoted to discussion of the Commission's future priorities and activities.

APPENDIX 3

POST CONFERENCE PROFESSIONAL SEMINAR
7 - 8 MAY 2003

By Judy Cunnington

The Professional Seminar met on 7 May 2-6 p.m., visited Professor Vansteenwegen 8-9.30 p.m., and met again on 8 May 9 a.m.-12.30 p.m.

There were 20 participants from 9 countries. The seminar was co-ordinated by Martin Koschorke and facilitated by Judy Cunnington.

The following is a summary of some of the discussions.

_____ Wednesday 7 May _____

The seminar participants introduced themselves and gave a brief outline of their role in their agency and the training delivered. A list of topics to be discussed was then made.

- Which theoretical models are used in couple counselling training and why?
- Is there a difference between couple counselling and marital counselling?
- Assessment - of trainees, of service delivered.
- What happens if there is no couple counselling training?
- Selection of trainees/counsellors - criteria and method.
- How much ongoing training is necessary?
- Definition of 'volunteer'.
- Sustaining the service with a high turnover of workers.
- Working with multi-cultural clients.

All the counselling agencies represented at the seminar are non-government organisations, although they may get government funding.

In most countries there is little difference between couple counselling and marital counselling. The focus shifted to encourage co-habiting couples to use the services.
In South Africa, Congo and Cameroon, family counselling is predominant while in India family counselling is offered.

The theoretical models used in couple counselling are mainly psychodynamic and systemic, with some use of behavioural concepts and strategies. Where family counselling is the main focus for delivery, system theories are the basis of the training, this is also the case where the services are developing ways of reaching clients not previously served. There is a trend towards couple counselling being an add-on to a previous professional training, usually social work. In South Africa and Sweden, all counsellors are selected from social work, and further training is added. In Germany counsellors are trained in individual work before the couples training. Training and service development in the UK has resulted in a concern expressed by supervisors that they ,may not be able to fulfil their responsibilities.

There followed an interesting discussion on working in multicultural societies. We have to re-learn 'systemic being', not just 'systemic thinking'. In South Africa there is a cultural process to go through whereby both partners approach their family of origin, Family meetings are arranged to solve problems. It is important for counsellors to keep in mind the surrounding families when they see clients. In India the counselling is always family oriented.

SELECTION

- **Sweden** - social work training before access to added-on training.
- **Switzerland** - social work/education/psychology training, plus life experience, prior to a 3 year training.
- **Relate, UK** - personal qualities, ability to cope with academic requirements, skills certificate (50 hrs practice), followed by 2 year Diploma.
- **Scotland** - a minimum of 120 hours training in counselling skills.
- **South Africa** - social work qualification for counsellors, aptitude for volunteers.
- **India** - not enough people come forward to allow selection, so they take what they can.

_____ PROFESSOR VANSTEENWEGEN WORKSHOP _____

Professor Vansteenwegen took us through the work and research his department has been undertaking with couples since 1972. The couples attend from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. every day for three weeks. There are groups, exercises and couple sessions each day. They undertook a controlled study for 6 months, these couples were followed up after 2 years and 7 years. There are a number of interesting findings.

- Co-therapy was more effective, but not twice as effective.
- The basic attitude of the therapist was important.
- Clients were asked which 'verbal intervention' was perceived as helpful, 'reassurance' was the least helpful response mode.
- Assignments - after 6 months no difference was found between couples who had executed the assignments at home and those who executed them in the clinic.
- The most effective intervention came from the clients negotiating their relationship.

Professor Vansteenwegen is currently working on 'The meaning of intimacy' and he shared his hypothesis and thinking on this.

THURSDAY 8 MAY

TRAINING, PRACTICE AND ASSESSMENT

In the UK there is a tension between agencies providing training which fulfils the needs of the clients and the trainees. Trainees want qualifications, agencies need proficient counsellors. Courses are validated by universities and seek accreditation for British Association for Counselling and Psychotherapy (BACP). Counsellors working for agencies many of which are registered by BACP.

In Germany there is no state recognition of counsellor qualifications, although they are in Austria.

In South Africa the clients' primary needs stem from domestic violence, so the initial work is to 'empower' them and teach them about human rights/gender rights/marital rights. The workers go out into the community and settlements.

It is similar in India where social workers are trained at community levels for counselling. But in many rural communities there are no social workers so inservice training is offered to anyone who is suitable.

There was an interesting discussion about confidentiality. This is seen differently in different communities. For instance, in India the whole village would expect to express an opinion about the marital problem prior to the couple being seen.

REVIEW

There was a general consensus that the Professional Seminar is a valuable forum for agencies involved in training. It provides the opportunity to exchange practices and have an appreciation of what is being done elsewhere. It also provides the opportunity to review current practices.

It was generally thought that 20 is the maximum for the group, that there should be more time set aside for informal discussion, that two half days is barely long enough, and that having a specific input was interesting for some but not for all. Some participants would welcome more practical input.

There were two outcomes from the seminar which participants agreed:

- To put forward a model of integrated practical training and theory as 'best practice'. This was considered to be too ambitious at this stage.
- To formulate a number of principles which could be endorsed and underpin national standards.

COLOFON

Vlaamse overheid

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van het departement Welzijn, Volksgezondheid en Cultuur

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