which has been noted often by others. Unfortunately, such information is buried in a plethora of speculation.

Discussing the early history of the issue, Brodeur notes that "in the absence of scientific work, . . . a whole folklore, based on a mixture of intuition, observation and apprehension, grew up around the biological effects of shortwaves and microwaves." It is debatable whether Brodeur has improved the situation or made it worse.

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The Acceptance of Contraception

From Private Vice to Public Virtue. The Birth Control Movement and American Society since 1830. JAMES REED. Basic Books, New York, 1978. xvi, 456 pp. + plates. $17.95.

From Private Vice to Public Virtue is a broadly conceived and admirably executed study of the American birth control movement from the publication of *Fruits of Philosophy* (1832) by Charles Knowlton, an eccentric Yankee physician and freethinker, to the discovery and popularization of hormonal methods of inhibiting ovulation. Reed insists that such a history has to analyze several factors: the role of technology, the contributions of leaders, changing popular conceptions of marriage and sexuality, and broad shifts in social thought. Although his account of scientific innovators such as Gregory Pincus, whose work on hormones led to development of the contraceptive pill, is both subtle and gripping, Reed does not believe that such innovations are the crux of the issue. Rather, he stresses that a wide range of birth control techniques from coitus interruptus to condoms and douches were available during the 19th century and were, relative to contemporary medical information on other matters, reliable. The obstacle to wider acceptance of contraception was less technological than psychological. The psychological "availability" of contraception during the 19th century was restricted by the prevalent assumption that sexual gratification had to be held in check. Similarly, Reed argues that the development of the pill and the intrauterine device owed more to changes in social values than to technological opportunity. These contraceptives were accepted because they offered a way to a biological economy of low death rates and low birth rates at a time of fears of world overpopulation. A generation earlier "the pill would have been dismissed as a dangerous interference with natural processes; the IUD would have been banned as an abortifacient" (p. 376).

Reed's emphasis on the role of social values is reflected in his discussion of Margaret Sanger. Her success was partly due, Reed argues, to the decline during the second and third decades of this century of the idea that sexual gratification within marriage had to be held in check. Greater material abundance and the growth of advertising spurred hedonistic attitudes even on issues of sexuality. But attitudinal change was not always a liberalizing force. Even as Victorian inhibitions waned, rising fears generated by the differential fertility of native- and foreign-born parents encouraged opposition to birth control. During the 1920's immigration restrictionists, Roman Catholics, and most physicians (who associated birth control with quackery) formed a powerful alliance against birth control. The case for birth control long had to be made through "mixed metaphors and twisted analogies" (p. 63); proponents of birth control had to follow an oblique rather than a straight line of attack.

Because social values pertinent to family limitation were often in conflict, the role of leaders was vital to the success of the movement. Reed provides extensive and insightful biographical sketches of figures such as Robert Latou Dickinson, Clarence Gamble, and Katherine Dexter McCormick, but Margaret Sanger is the protagonist of his story and the subject of some of his most penetrating comments. He takes issue with David Kennedy's censorious biography, *The Career of Margaret Sanger* (1970). Kennedy portrayed Sanger as abandoning her radical associates during the 1920's and fostering a new cult of domesticity by affirming that birth control could increase amative gratification in marriage. Reed argues that Sanger was never an apologist for marriage, but merely broadened her base of support during the 1920's. He sees her as the perfect pragmatist, making concessions where necessary to the self-conscious professionalism of doctors such as Dickinson in order to recruit the trained personnel for a national system of birth control clinics.

The diversity of types drawn to the birth control movement reflected Sanger's desire for a broad base. Sanger herself represented the aspirations of a variety of clubwomen, feminists, and working women. Dickinson, her first important link to the medical profession, was a religious man who thought that birth control was necessary to insure the viability of the monogamous family. Others such as Clarence Gamble, the Ivory

A 19th-century handmade rug. [Sophia Smith Collection, Smith College; reproduced on the dust jacket of *From Private Vice to Public Virtue*]

soap heir, were impelled by a belief that the quality of the population would decline if those least able to support children continued to have most of them.

Diversity occasionally bred personal antagonisms within the movement. Flamboyant and headstrong, Sanger at times had stormy relations with others in the American Birth Control League. Gamble's insistence on controlling every aspect of his philanthropic ventures frequently alienated him from Sanger and others. Yet Reed argues convincingly that the movement's leaders achieved as much as reasonably could have been expected, given the inhospitable climate in which they had to work. Indeed, the movement's diversity was an advantage because it stimulated experimentation both in technology and political tactics. Reed notes, for example, that during the 1930's most leaders of the American Birth Control League thought that no new legal initiatives were necessary. Sanger disagreed, and she prompted Morris Ernst to launch proceedings that resulted in the *One Package* decision (1936), which legalized use of the mails for contraceptive materials intended for physicians.

Reed has an admirable ability to enliven organizational infighting and institutional growth. The result is, rara avis, a long book that is also interesting, a model of mature and engaging social history.

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Issues of Family Life

Fathers, Mothers and Society. Towards New Alliances. RHONA RAPOPORT, ROBERT N. RAPOPORT, and ZIONA STRELITZ. With Stephen Kew. Basic Books, New York, 1977. x, 422 pp. $15.

During the 1960's, when activist youth were urging a radical social transformation and an end to war, racism, and economic exploitation, conservative critics blamed the disrespect of ungrateful youth on overly indulgent child-rearing practices inspired by Spock and psychoanalysis. Such child-centeredness was taken as indicative of decline of parental authority and erosion of family life, which supposedly served as the basis of social stability. It is ironic that in the present decade progressive and radical scholars, surveying the seeming disarray of family life, have taken up a similarly mournful cry. Christopher Lasch, for instance, sees in the decay of the family the encroachment of an increasingly rationalized society and consequently the collapse of the last bastion of resistance to the soft-core totalitarianism of late capitalist society (*Haven in a Heartless World*, Basic Books, 1977). Lasch leaves one in despair both about the future of the family and about the possibility of achieving a social order that will facilitate equality and individual actualization.

In *Fathers, Mothers and Society*, Rhona and Robert Rapoport and Ziona Strelitz present an optimistic interpretation of the current changes in family life and hold out the promise of a new alliance among parents, children, and society. From their perspective, much of the difficulty within families is the result of failure to understand the needs of parents. We suffer, they contend, from an inappropriate "child-centered, mother-focused paradigm of parenting" that systematically ignores the fact that parents have needs just as do children. Prescriptions for parenting have failed to take these needs into account, rather treating parents as dehumanized producers of children, in somewhat the same way the organization of work and manufacturing processes has disregarded the familial commitments and personal needs of workers.

The authors place the primary responsibility for the development of this injustice on professional child-care experts in a variety of disciplines. Filling in the gaps created by the obsolescence of traditional child-care orientations within a rapidly changing society, professional experts created a conception of parenting that is inappropriate to the actual living conditions of most families. Through a careful examination of the professional child-care literature the authors delineate the major features of the model that has dominated contemporary thought about parenting. It is a model based on the assumption that child care is and should be built around a biologically founded complementarity of naturally nurturing mothers and weak and vulnerable children. This "natural" relationship flourishes best in a privatized nuclear family in which the husband functions as the sole material provider, minimally involved in the direct care of his children but allied with his nonworking wife in a life dedicated to material and psychological sacrifice for the children and structured to protect the family from the intrusions of others. Within this model, it often has seemed as if there was only one way to be a good parent and that experts were the ones who best knew that way.

After documenting their argument about the impact of experts, the authors go on to a thorough discussion of the diversity of modern parental situations, arguing persuasively that there is a significant discrepancy between actualities of most people's everyday family life and the model that informs most professional opinion.

The remainder of the book is taken up with an attempt to delineate the major parenting issues through four stages of the life cycle: the period prior to the birth of children, the years from preschool to puberty, adolescence, and parenting with adult children and grandparenting. Especially welcome is the authors' discussion of the early and middle years of active parenting, in which they examine parents' experience of children in relation to issues of concern to the parents as adults—intimacy, work, and leisure. Although their review of the relevant literature is necessarily selective this is more than compensated for by the fact that throughout these chapters the authors are fair-minded in their consideration of diverse points of view, honest and explicit about their own preferences and biases, and intelligent and sensitive in the exploration of complex themes such as parental ambivalence, topics often ignored or one-dimensionalized in the professional literature. By the end the reader is well convinced of the need for a new perspective on parenting, one that does not so thoroughly homogenize the multiplicity of parenting situations and that "clarifies the nature of the fit between parents' and children's lives" (p. 14).

But when the authors attempt a discussion of the policy and research implications of their review, the major weakness in their approach is revealed. In their effort to be empirically eclectic and theoretically fair, they have failed to develop a coherent, historically grounded theoretical framework from which to interpret the changes in family life in relation to social and economic forces. Although they recognize that "work has been organized as though families and their requirements did not exist," they explain this as having come about "not so much because industrialists did not care about families, but because the paradigms of social organization allowed them to be taken for granted" (p. 14). For the authors, economic and social imperatives dissolve away and social problems are the result only of misunderstanding.

Without such a framework the authors are also unable to develop any critical self-consciousness of the potential social functions of their own perspective, even while they recognize that it is changed