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# Couples in love.

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**FIVE COLLEGE  
DEPOSITORY**

COUPLES IN LOVE

A Dissertation Presented

By

ERIC S. STRAUSS

Submitted to the Graduate School of the  
University of Massachusetts in partial  
fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

June

1974

Psychology

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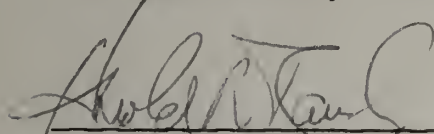
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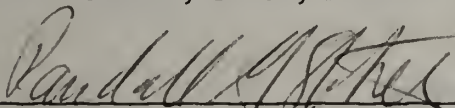
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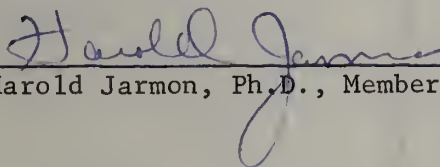
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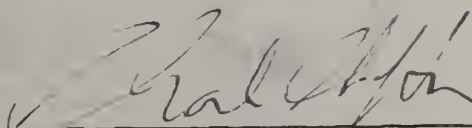
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June 1974

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## COUPLES IN LOVE (June, 1974)

Eric S. Strauss  
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The goal of this study was to understand in a sensitive and faithful manner the lived experience of happily married couples. An attempt was made to explore the workings of a "healthy" relationship between a man and a woman, and to add to our knowledge of the phenomenon of love. A basic assumption behind this research was that people could talk meaningfully about their lives and relationships. Interviews were conducted with nine middle-class, well-educated, happily married couples. These couples ranged in age from their early twenties to their early sixties. The average length of time married was thirteen years, and seven of the nine couples had children. Each couple was interviewed in their home for a total of approximately ten hours. Three to five meetings were held with each couple, and an average of one hour was also spent with each spouse in an individual interview.

The interviews were relatively unstructured, and a number of the key issues or themes in the study were raised initially by couples, not by the researcher. The early relationships of these couples developed naturally, gradually, and comfortably. They allowed themselves the time to come to know each other, and to develop personally as separate individuals. Couples spoke of the importance of a shared personal language, sense of values, and sense of humor in their growing relationships. They emphasized the

significance of the formal structure of marriage. They had a sense of joining the community of married individuals, of assuming broader family and social responsibilities, and of establishing roots, permanence, and continuity in their lives.

These persons shared a "work ethic" of relationship. You have to work at living together, they said. That work included trying to understand oneself and one's partner, learning to compromise, attempting to balance each partner's twin needs for individuality and intimacy, and being able to communicate in an honest, clear, and mature manner. Couples were aided in working at their marriage by the manner in which they conceptualized their relationships. They saw the marital unit, or the "couple identity," as having its own existence. These persons felt a part of a larger whole which was their joint creation, and so work could be done and sacrifices made for the other and for oneself at the same time.

Certain basic challenges or questions also appeared to be a part of marriage. People felt a tension between the desire for excitement and for stability. Children took time away from the marital relationship, and could be a constraining force in a marriage. Couples in this study were working to find their own limits for outside involvements in work, interests or activities, and personal relationships. Finally, wives were strongly questioning their role in marriage and in life. They were wondering how to achieve individuality while still remaining in the family unit.

Couples were able to distinguish between friendship and marital love. They found friendship to be a lighter, less demanding and

involving relationship, based on shared interests, acceptance, and trust. These couples did not begin their own relationship in a classic "romantic love" experience, but rather in a "romantic friendship." Their "romantic friendship" included both strong, exciting feelings and a comfortable, conscious merging of their two lives. When discussing love, these couples stressed the intentional decision and commitment to live in relationship with the other as being the most basic conception of love. Love was viewed as a form of relationship, rather than a feeling, attitude, or character trait. The study concluded with comments about the future research and preventative-counseling use of the "healthy couple" interview format.

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To my parents and to my wife, for their love.



All happy families resemble one another, but each unhappy family is unhappy in its own way.

Leo Tolstoy

Every home is different from every other home, every marriage, even within the same class, in the same clique, contains contrasts between the parents as superficially striking as the difference between one New Guinea tribe and another ....

Margaret Mead

America appears to be the only country in the world where love is a national problem. Nowhere else can one find a people devoting so much time and so much study to the question of the relationship between men and women. Nowhere else is there such concern about the fact that this relationship does not always make for perfect happiness.

Raoul de Roussy de Sales, 1938

## FOREWORD

I would like to begin by explaining both the nature of this book and the reason for its existence. This is a book about people, people who are married. It is therefore also a book about relationships, about the ways people manage to live with each other. It could also be considered a book about marriage, specifically, a book about "happy" marriages. For this reason, it is also a book about psychological health rather than sickness. And so it is also a book about love.

I have always been fascinated by human existence, and its most mysterious and significant aspect to me has been the realm of inter-human relationships. A deep experiencing of the difficulties, anguish, moments of grace, and periods of fulfillment inherent in living with others has marked my own individual growth and maturation. My personal concern for and interest in human relationships has led me into psychology as a profession, and has been the directing force of both my work as a therapist and a researcher of human experience. A major goal of this book is to map out some crucial concepts that will allow us to understand better the world of relationships. An effort will be made to describe the qualities of different forms of relationship. One particular form of relationship, the love relationship, will receive detailed analysis.

So, this book begins with an attempt at elaborating a philosophy of relationship. What are the unique aspects of interhuman life? What are the connections between individual life and growth and relationship? What is love when it is considered a form of relation-

ship, rather than a personal feeling, trait, or attribute? The greater portion of this book, however, is devoted not to philosophy, but to the reality of relational experience. My assumption has been that if one wishes to learn about relationships, particularly loving relationships, then it is both feasible and necessary to talk to the people who are living those relationships. Since the focus of my concern was on that form of love best represented by the marital relationship, I decided to talk to happily married couples about their lives and their ideas about love.

This approach to research is based on the principles of interpersonal and phenomenological philosophy and psychology. Phenomenology is an impressive word that simply represents a desire for a clear and faithful description and presentation of phenomena. It eschews the social scientific habit of manufacturing and then statistically proving hypotheses about events or experiences that are not fully understood. Its goal is not to achieve prediction and control, but a broad understanding of basic human phenomena. In this case, the phenomenon under consideration is the relationship of man and wife.

The discussion of research approach will lead to the research itself, which consisted of extended interviews with each of nine married couples. I shall explain how I went about finding and contacting the couples, what my goals were for the interviews, and how these interviews were structured. Next, I will introduce you to each of the nine couples, so that you will have some idea of who the people are who will be discussing a variety of issues

concerning love and marriage. The longest section in the book will consist of a series of chapters devoted to some key aspects of a marital love relationship. These themes emerged during the course of my discussions with the couples, and in this section I rely on a synthesis of both interview material and literary and scholarly sources to add to our understanding of love relationships. The book then concludes with my impressions of the project and its results, and with the reactions of the couples to being participants in this research project.

In this introduction, I have tried to both make my own interests and beliefs clear and to present you with the organization and format of the work to follow. I hope you will look on this book as an effort to understand--an attempt to learn about love from the so-called "experts" who have put their ideas into print, and from real people who have put their lives, feelings, hopes, and anxieties into their conversations with me.

C H A P T E R I  
A PHILOSOPHY OF RELATIONSHIP

There are two ways we can view any living thing. The first way emphasizes its wholeness, its separateness, its identity. The second way stresses the part it plays in a larger whole, its connection with other living things, its integration into a more complex form. A very basic example is that of a single cell in any living creature. It is self-contained, has its own boundaries and constituent parts, but is also part of a larger system, some organ or tissue which is composed of many individual units. From the simplest form of life to the most advanced, there exists this polarity of identity and relationship.

Many authors have described this principle of duality, providing their own terms for the twin poles of existence. Koestler (1972) states that the basic polarity of nature is between "differentiation" and "integration." He also refers to a "self-assertive" tendency and an "integrative" tendency of life. Bakan (1966) uses "agency" and "communion" to characterize the two modalities of existence; agency representing the force of individuality, communion the fact of participation in a larger whole. For organisms from the cell to a plant to an animal, this basic fact of duality causes no conflict, no turmoil, no dilemma. There is no self-awareness on the part of these forms of life, and so they fulfill their dual role naturally and unconsciously. But when we reach the level of man, the dual nature of life is both most powerfully expressed and painfully questioned.



Human beings are marvelously individual creatures. Campbell (1968) cites Schopenhauer's view that human individuality is so striking that the term "species" cannot be meaningfully applied to humans. In the animal world there are "traces" of individuality in each creature, but the "common character" of the species dominates. In human existence, each person is in his own unique way a "species" in appearance, personality, and nature. Cowburn (1967) also writes that a human being, to a greater extent than any other being, is more vividly himself and distinct from other persons. He adds that individuality is so marked in man that a new word is necessary to describe it, namely "personality." People have both intelligence and consciousness. Their agentic capacities are manifold. While similarity is the principle and strength of all lower forms of life, difference is the theme and crucial challenge of human life.

Fascinatingly, strong individuality makes for potentially strong relationships. Relationships between animals, for example, do not exist on the same level of understanding and mutuality as do those between human beings. Just as human individuality can be striking in its force and strength, so too can human relationships be endowed with a unique richness, depth, and power. People are faced with these two aspects of existence, self and relationship, both requiring fulfillment, both separate yet interconnected in complex, mysterious ways.

Many philosophers, however, rarely went beyond a consideration of the individual self in their theorizing and model-building. The "I" was given concentrated scrutiny, but relationships between men were ignored or considered a mere aspect of individual life. In the

nineteenth century Feuerbach began to create a philosophy of I and Thou, and in this century insights into the world of relationships have been made the basis for a variety of philosophical approaches. The gaze of some philosophers has been shifted from the subjective to the "intersubjective." These writers have realized that individuality and relationship do not exist as totally separate, simultaneous aspects of human life, but take form and shape together. Further, they assert the primacy of relationship, the fact that the self can only grow in and through interpersonal encounters. Human beings cannot live alone and still be "human," because their uniqueness, their nature is actualized in the world of others.

This philosophical approach, "intersubjectivity," represents a new slant, a new perspective on existence. It maintains that the self evolves from relationships, and describes the realm of interpersonal relationships in subtle and sensitive ways. Relationships are so complex, and yet we live in them every day. Perhaps we can learn to understand them and ourselves better by opening our minds to the ideas, concepts, and language of the interpersonal philosophers --men like Martin Buber, Gabriel Marcel, Ludwig Binswanger, and John Cowburn.

This chapter is not meant to be a systematic review of the works of all the above authors. Instead, it is an attempt at synthesizing and presenting the key concepts of intersubjectivity so that these ideas may provide a foundation for the research on relationships that follows. But I must give some special and specific mention to Martin Buber, because of the immense influence he has had



on my life and my work. I first encountered Buber, a Jewish theologian and philosopher, through his masterpiece I and Thou in 1966. Since that time I have returned again and again to this man and his ideas, and Buber has been the primary inspiration for my work in psychology. When I first attempted to read I and Thou, I was unable to "get through" it. As a course assignment it was too difficult. But something in it remained with me, because I came back to it and to Buber some years later and devoted myself to reading and writing about this interpersonal philosophy.

When I look back at my life at the time of my first exposure to Buber, I remember myself as being alone, unhappy, worried, consumed by work and unrelieved by intimacy with anyone except my family. Because of these feelings, I was very much self-concerned, and this only added to my isolation. A few years later, after my re-immersion in Buber, I met and eventually loved the woman I would later marry. Perhaps it is only fanciful hindsight that leads me to tie together my opening myself fully to Buber and my being able to open myself in the deepest way to another human being. But I really believe the connection exists. I learned something powerfully personal from Buber, and the result was a natural and gradual flowering of my life with others.

Buber has written that "in the beginning is relation," and the world of the infant and its mother is one of union or fusion. But as the infant matures, self becomes differentiated from other, and two worlds open up as possibilities. One is the life of identity and separateness. Isolation and loneliness represent the dark side

of individuality. The second is the life of relationship, of individuals involved and concerned with each other. Fusion and self-negation are the pathological extremes of this experience. These possibilities are the expression in human existence of the basic duality of nature. Buber describes the "two-fold" movement of life. The first movement is called "the primal setting at a distance," and is the presupposition for the second movement, "entering into relationship." The central idea here is that it is necessary for there to be an other before there can be relationship. Difference, or as Buber put it, distance is required between two persons before a relationship can occur. One cannot relate to a part of oneself; only independent beings can meet and confront each other. The unique fact of human existence is that relatedness has to be attained. It is of a special order, it can be a deep experience, and it is not built-in as an aspect of instinctual life. Unlike the cell in a body, an ant in a colony, or an animal in a herd, a person must consciously create or make his relationships. Because of the greater distance between individuals in human life than in other forms, a person faces relationship as a possibility, not a reality. Yet paradoxically, one's identity, one's personal integrity and health depend upon bridging the distance to others. The question then becomes, Can people overcome the distance between them and break through to relationship? Is it possible to move beyond separateness and really know or be known by another?

A great many writers and artists seem to believe that confirming relationships are nearly impossible to achieve. Sartre is perhaps

the best known advocate of the position that "hell is other people." Other people, he says, take away from our freedom, demand things of us, and can offer us little in return. An extreme form of this stance is represented by the paranoid personality, who feels on the outside of events and suspects a conspiracy of others against him. A further extreme is the schizophrenic reaction, where inner fantasies take the place of the real world of other people in a person's life.

The world of distance and alienation is explored with cold precision in the artistic creations of Sylvia Plath and Ingmar Bergman. The title of Plath's novel, The Bell Jar, evokes the image of a human being enclosed in glass, being able to see, but not touch or be touched by the world. Esther, the main character of the novel, speaks of what it is like to be on the periphery of relationships, to only observe, not participate:

It's like watching Paris from an express caboose heading in the opposite direction--every second the city gets smaller and smaller, only you feel it's really you getting smaller and smaller and lonelier and lonelier, rushing away from all those lights and that excitement at about a million miles an hour (14)

Rushing away from life, from people. Rushing into darkness and madness.

In Ingmar Bergman's magnificent trilogy of films--Through a Glass Darkly, Winter Light, and The Silence--people are continually failing each other. In the first film, a young woman is psychotic, and is treated only as a medical problem by her doctor-husband, or as novelistic material by her writer-father. No one talks directly to her, no one turns toward her with warmth, concern, or even honest fear or anger. Everyone keeps her at arms' length. She eventually

draws her younger brother to her in a desperate, incestuous attempt at relationship, at connection. This also provides no lasting bond with an other person. Finally she is taken off the vacation island where she had been trying to recuperate, and by helicopter returns to the nether-world of the insane asylum, the ultimate haven for outsiders.

Winter Light was originally called The Communicants, but the minister-protagonist cannot relate to his parishoners, to the woman who loves him, or even to God himself. He is full of doubt and self-pity, his words are hollow, the religious service he performs, aimed at providing a sense of unity with God and man, is a decrepit ritual, a second-rate theatrical company's last night in town before a sullen and sparse crowd. The film is set in a bleak, snow-bound Swedish village. The stark, cold light of winter reveals a society of people who stand near each other like great, barren trees in a winter's forest, but who cannot reach out to each other or begin to understand one another.

The ultimate portrayal of loneliness and alienation occurs in The Silence, where two sisters are passing through a strange and foreign country. They can't speak the language, they can't relate to each other, they are totally alone. Imagine yourself as the "stranger" in a foreign town, not knowing the meaning of the words or actions of its "different" populace. Is this what the schizophrenic experiences living in our world? If so, the terrors, confusions, and suffocating privacy of psychosis becomes more understandable.

Other examples of works of art dealing with alienation and isolation would be very easy to find, for these have been themes that have had great appeal for all people. The reason for this, I believe, is that being an outsider is an experience we have all faced in many situations. Our separateness from other persons leads to instances of our vividly experiencing our "selves" and our differences from others. Perhaps these instances are less extreme or pathological than those depicted in novels or films, but they are comparable experiences of the heavy weight of individuality and the failure of relationship. It is therefore quite important to understand the nature of the world of nonexistent, mechanical, or unsatisfying relationships.

Buber called the world of separation the domain of monologue, of I-It relationships. By monologue, Buber primarily means any form of conversation in which the participants are not essentially concerned with each other or interested in understanding the experience of the other. A debate, an exchange of words in a business transaction, talking to make an impression on the other, any form of communication which is primarily "self" conscious can be considered a form of monologue. In all these cases, inner experience has a greater importance for the individual than the other's experience. The "movement" of the life of monologue, says Buber, is one of "reflexion," a turning inward of the self, back onto itself, away from others.

A relationship based on monologue, emphasizing separation, is termed an I-It situation by Buber. The realm of I-It is one of



experiences, facts, things, and utility. People are dealt with in a shallow way, shallow in that there is no effort made to come to any genuine understanding of them. The self is not disclosed and available in this type of relationship, but is distant and guarded. Binswanger, in conceptualizing different "modes" of human existence, described a "plural mode" and an "anonymous mode" that both parallel Buber's term I-It. The plural mode is the world of social existence, of "small" talk, of commerce, of casual acquaintances. The anonymous mode exemplifies the "masked" life, the life of the persona, a life where both self and other remain not only foreign to each other, but disguised. This is the world of the false-face that eventually begins to fool and confuse even the wearer.

An important aspect of the structure of the term I-It is that a connection between the "I" and the "It" is affirmed. Any form of relationship has its effects on both participants, and when a human being treats another in an objectified, impersonal manner, he himself also suffers the consequences. When we treat others as "its," as "objects," when we "experience" them or "have" them or "measure" them, we help create an interpersonal atmosphere of distance and monologue. We too become immersed in objectification. We feel like "things" and wonder how others are measuring us.

If presented in its extreme form, the I-It situation takes on the painful and destructive qualities of alienation described earlier. A less exclusive diet of utilitarian, functional relationships or moments of relationship is the more common human experience. Certain aspects of life are mundane and practical, and demand little in the way of personal contact or understanding. A close relationship with

one's mailman is not a prerequisite for successful living. At times any relationship operates on a "maintenance" basis, with the partners keeping their distance and going through the motions. The I-It experience is a basic substratum of life, and it does provide valuable predictability and order for our lives. But the point that Buber, Gabriel Marcel, a French Catholic philosopher, and others would strongly make is that people cannot live exclusively in a monologic atmosphere. There exists a need for fuller, deeper, more dialogic encounters. The interpersonal philosophers believe that it is possible to complete "distance" with "relationship," that people can come to know each other and escape from alienation. Their descriptions and faith in this I-Thou world, the world of confirming relationships, is the essential alternative they offer to loneliness, anxiety, and manipulation.

The I-Thou encounter is one marked by mutuality, immediacy, openness, respect, and dialogue. Dialogue, according to Buber, can be spoken or silent, but requires that each person turn towards the other in a particular situation with the intention of relating in a concerned way to the unique being of the other. In a dialogic relationship, an individual feels confirmed for his unique value, rather than judged, measured, or compared by some "objective" standards. Here one is more than accepted, one is invited into an intense mutual experience. In dialogue, whether verbal or non-verbal, the spirit of the relationship is one of caring. Mayeroff (1972) succinctly describes the process of caring as that of helping another grow and actualize himself.

An essential theme of these interpersonal philosophies is that



something powerful and special takes place between one person and another. This realm of "the between" is a unique aspect of human life. For these philosophers, what is most important does not occur within each of the individuals making up the relationship, nor does it occur in the broader social context of which they are a part. The crucial fact of relationship is that it is specific. It lives between the two participants only. It is available to them, but only in concert, only together. They do not own it; they exist in the relationship they have created. A relationship is more than the sum of the two partners. When you "add" people to each other you produce a crowd. When you direct people toward each other, you can effect intensely personal encounters, relationships that are con-joint productions, not independent performances.

One of the frustrating aspects of describing relationships is that they are intangible. If we remain addicted to viewing things only in a materialistic perspective, then we will never acknowledge the existence of something that is, as Cowburn, Marcel and others have said, "bodyless" and without physical manifestations. But something doesn't have to be seen to be real, and who has not felt the force and impact of relationship? Language is one of the tangible aspects of the "between"--words help bridge the distance from self to other. And words can also be of help in illuminating the world of confirming relationships.

There are some terms that vividly point up the unique qualities of relationships. Buber employed the word "between," and Marcel adds the French "avec" or "with" to our inter-human lexicon.

Objects, Marcel says, are never "with" each other, they are merely "juxtaposed." A lamp is by a chair, a flower-pot is on a table, and so on. The word "with" implies a mutual presence, in Marcel's terms, a "co-presence." This concept of presence is adequately expressed in colloquial usage of "with." You ask someone "Are you with me?" and you do not mean "Are you standing next to me?" You mean "Are you in relation to me, are you present, real for me, are you concerned about me?"

In a relationship based on objectification and distance, the other is dealt with in a way that presupposes no bond between persons. If we consider a relationship from the point of view of emotional space rather than physical space, we can better understand the difference between "being next to" someone and "being with," "being there for" someone. Mayeroff (1972) discusses the fact that "being with" another represents the experience of caring. What is it like to be with another human being?

Being with another implies an effort at understanding the world of the other. This can sound so simple, but the basic principle of human separateness and individuality makes understanding another an accomplishment and a triumph. One meaning of understanding is appropriate for the world of "things." There, we can view something or someone as a specimen, "pinned and wriggling," and probe, weigh, and measure it. This is I-It understanding, aimed at solving the "problem" posed by the other who remains at all times removed and foreign to us. To truly understand another human being, we have to enter into relation with him, enter his world, see the world through his eyes and feel it through his senses. As Marcel says, people are

mysteries to be confronted, not problems to be solved. Being rooted in a shared reality, each person can imagine the world of the other without losing his own perspective or pole in the relationship.

Buber calls this "inclusion" or "making present." It is the living of both poles of the relationship, the experience, for example, of both caressing and feeling the caress, of stroking and simultaneously feeling that stroke. Schopenhauer (in Campbell, 1968) calls this phenomenon "immediate participation," and describes how distance is completed by relation through this experience:

...the weal and woe of another comes to lie directly on my heart in exactly the same way--though not always to the same degree--as otherwise only my own would lie, as soon as this sentiment of compassion is aroused, and therewith, the difference between him and me is no longer absolute. And this really is amazing--even mysterious.  
(pp. 72-3)

Psychologists have hinted at this phenomenon, calling it "role-taking," but have seemed to miss the special, transcendent qualities of the experience. The term "role-taking" denotes a rather limited seizing of only a part of another person. His "role," not his unique person, is "taken," not met, lived, or felt.

By each individual retaining his own identity, it becomes possible for one to both understand and help the other. Each partner can offer something to the other just because he is a separate, different person. Mayeroff (1972) notes that seeing the world as it appears to the other does not mean responding to it in exactly the same way. Fusion or complete identification is not dialogic relation. Distance must be maintained.

The use of terms such as I-It and I-Thou is often unclear. People assume that there is an I-It or I-Thou person, that one can

break away from an I-It personality and move up in class to an I-Thou character. These terms, however, actually describe situations, not personalities, moments of relationship, not never-ending experiences. All interpersonal philosophers agree that the worlds of "It" and "Thou" are both basic and natural parts of human existence. Buber wrote that every Thou is destined to become an It--dialogue is not a permanent state, and few of us would want it to be. The intensity, work, and demands of dialogue cannot be indefinitely sustained.

But relating in the world of It, if done exclusively, can lead to personal breakdown, madness, a deadening of the spirit. Think, for example, of the experience of standing next to two other people who are discussing you, talking "about" you, using your name but not inviting you into the conversation. Such an experience can make you feel like the "object" you are considered in that relational context. Those experiences can be endured if there exist moments of relationship in a person's life. The "I" of dialogue is a different creature than the "I" of monologue, and if one takes one's stand in the world of the between, of co-presence, one can flourish in an experience of being part of a "We" relation, part of a larger, confirming whole. In a relationship basically founded on dialogue, the more mundane, practical, mechanical moments can be valued and enjoyed for their simple pleasures and satisfactions. Both parties know that the capacity exists for deeper engagement, for being understood and cared for, for growth through intimate relationship. For each person, a bridge exists to the world of the other. Each feels in contact, yet intact as individuals.

As a comment about the possibility of dialogic relationships in a person's life, Buber once described a recurring dream of his. This dream would always end with Buber crying out, seemingly in isolation, and being answered by another cry. The second cry was not an echo, but seemed to be a primeval answer to the tortured, inarticulate question of Buber's scream. The answer to Buber's cry was there, waiting for a chance to be heard. It existed before Buber cried out--the cry created Buber's availability to receive the answer and a situation in which the "double-cry" could occur. The one instance in which the response "failed" Buber and did not materialize was when he consciously awaited the answer to his cry. Dialogue cannot survive manipulation, control, and predictability. It is a natural phenomenon.

Similarly, in Hermann Hesse's The Journey to the East, the character H.H. at one time belongs to a League whose members are united by a common spirit and purpose. The League then disappears for H.H., who tries to discover what became of it. Eventually he learns that the League never disbanded, that it has always continued to exist. The only change was that H.H. had made himself unavailable to the League, had ceased to be a part of it himself. It was always around him, but he could not "will" it into existence for himself. That required his opening himself up to relationship and communion again. Relationship is a possibility for human beings. It can be our ground, if we can offer ourselves as relational figures.

All the descriptions of "being with" another, of living the "between," of dialogue, imply a self-transcendence, an overcoming



of isolation. There is a certain majesty in maintaining an identity, an individuality, but of surpassing and expanding this by letting it flower and grow in a confirming relationship with another. Living with another, helping him grow, responding to the other openly and honestly, valuing the other, all these actions lead to self-transcendence. The person is led out of his narrow cloister by becoming involved in the world of the other, and by feeling the other's involvement in his world.

And so, beginning with the paradox of a person's being simultaneously a whole and a part, separate yet connected, these philosophers have created a vision of transcending this paradox through dialogue and communion. Human beings' unique status as conscious, self-contained individuals generates the potential for a powerful meeting between persons, a deep union. In their cognitive models for understanding human relationships, these authors have stressed that the essence of being human is derived from relating to other people. They have described how this relating is achieved and how it is suffocated. And in discussing the self-transcendent quality of dual, dialogic relationships, they have led us to the threshold of the world of love. Love logically comes to mind when mentioning deep, mutual, confirming relationships. The major focus of the present work is on the world of love, specifically heterosexual love. Perhaps the best way to begin our discussion of love is by seeing how love is viewed from the intersubjective approach that has been the philosophical foundation for my research efforts.

## C H A P T E R   I I

### THE RECIPROCAL REALITY: LOVE AS A FORM OF RELATIONSHIP

I should begin by confessing that I spent a great deal of time studying interpersonal philosophy without ever considering the experience of love. I am amazed when I think of how long I overlooked the importance of love for my work in psychology. I dealt with relationships, with dialogue, with personal and interpersonal failures and successes, but the word love never entered into my work. It was only as I re-immersed myself in intersubjective philosophy that the obvious finally struck me. Love is the culmination of an interpersonal philosophy, the pinnacle of interhuman fulfillment.

Why, then, hadn't I considered or studied it before? I think that for me love was an overpowering concept, too embarrassing, too humbling to take on. I could discuss anger, or hatred, or alienation, or communication, but love was another thing altogether. As a psychotherapist I was exposed to the problems of life, interpersonal difficulties, so I was used to working to overcome them. I personally felt that I was handling these problems well enough in my own life. But love? Was I succeeding here, did I feel fulfilled in the world of love? Threatening questions. Are you loved? Do you love? Who are your lovers, your friends? These were, and still are, sensitive questions for me, and I believe this sensitivity led me to abstain from a close study of love itself.

Additionally, I was held back because of love's unwillingness to tolerate definition. What is love? This question made my head



spin. Can love be researched? Should it be? These questions plagued me, but I came to feel strongly that psychologists who deal with human relationships should attempt to explore the nature of love. One point was very clear, however. Love is complex, powerful, and mysterious. A research effort might very well distort or inadequately represent love. It is vitally necessary, therefore, to clearly establish the perspective one is taking on love, to map out a broad working definition of the boundaries of love.

The major principle of my research on love is derived from the interpersonal concepts discussed earlier. I consider love to be a form of relationship, rather than a personal feeling, character trait, or any individually possessed entity or action. Emotions, attitudes, behaviors and the like are a part of love, are aspects of love, but love goes beyond these to include two persons in a specific encounter. Two individuals can create a loving relationship; they do not separately "own" it or control it. Love exists between persons, not only within them. Feelings come and go, fluctuate and change, but a loving relationship can continue to exist. One cannot understand the whole, love, by looking exclusively at its constituent parts, the persons involved. The interaction between lovers, their reciprocal relationship, must be understood if love is to be comprehended.

Love is a unifying concept in an interpersonal philosophy. In a love relationship, the self is not lost but confirmed. Dialogue is not avoided but exalted. Love is the unique experience of the full interpenetration, the mutual fulfillment, of distance and

relation. Love nourishes the uniqueness and autonomy of both partners, while directing them toward each other in a spirit of concern, respect, and sharing. Love can be seen as a unique form of dialogue, possessing the attributes of a confirming relationship discussed earlier, but going further in mutuality, responsibility, and self-transcendence. Love is the most pronounced form of the I-Thou relationship, in which the participants live not only with, but for each other.

Several of the distinctions made previously between different forms of relationship, particularly between the I-It and I-Thou relations, are helpful in broadly conceptualizing love. If our thinking is guided by the philosophy of distance, of objects, of things, then love has a very specific meaning. It is then possible to write about the world of love as if it were analagous to the world of economics and finance. Love becomes the trading of personal resources--one gives in order to get, and attempts to maximize gains while minimizing losses. This is a love founded on caution, on fear of loss. The lovers can be pictured as two armored cars, wheeling physically near to each other for an exchange of treasure. Very little of the persons involved shows through the slits in the car's armor. The lovers are "relating," but all the while are fearing exploitation and theft and are motivated by a desire for personal gains and satisfactions.

I believe that for most people this will seem an inadequate portrayal of love, but it is a philosophy of love that has its proponents in the world of social science. My point, which I cannot

state too strongly or passionately, is that this definition of love is not enough. It does not do justice to the experience of being in love that we all have had. Just as the I-It experience represents one level of relationship, so too do notions of personal needs and interpersonal exchange describe a part of love, one level of loving experience. But people can relate more intimately, more altruistically than the psycho-economists seem to realize.

The barriers separating self and other can be crossed in the spirit of love, crossed not for plunder or annexation, but for discovery and understanding. If we admit the possibility of persons understanding each other, coming to know the experience of the other as if it were their own, then we acknowledge the existence of love. And this love is also a gift, for one cannot order another to offer their love in this deep way. Mutual love requires two free and committed partners. It is neither person's creation alone.

With this grounding in the principles of dialogue and intersubjectivity, perhaps we can now begin to take a closer look at the love relationship itself. But which "kind" of love, what "type," what "form" of love are we to examine? There is the love between parent and child, between siblings, between friends, and between men and women. How can these categories of loving relationships be organized and presented? John Cowburn (1967), a contemporary theologian whose work has been referred to earlier, begins by differentiating between what he calls Cosmic and Ecstatic Love. Cosmic love is based on a oneness in nature, on seeing one's own nature reflected in the personality of the other. It does not require dialogue or intimate mutual understanding. This type of

love is represented by paternal and maternal love, filial love, and fraternal love. Cosmic love relationships are not based on equality, do not begin at any explicit moment of meeting, and are permanent forms of love. The connection between a parent and child cannot really be broken, even if the two persons outwardly reject each other. This is very different from a friendship, for example. These "cosmic" relationships are not made by events, but are based in nature. Von Hildebrand, a twentieth century Catholic phenomenological philosopher, adds that parental love can be conceptualized in spatial terms not as a "face-to-face" relationship, but as one in which the parent "stands behind" the child. Mutuality is not a primary constituent of this form of love.

In contrast to Cosmic love is Ecstatic love, represented by friendship and "sexual" love relationships. As the name indicates, ecstatic love involves a "going out of oneself" to meet another separate and different individual. In this case, the other is not loved "for the nature which he has but for the person he is ... " (Cowburn, 1967, p. 60). Personal communication, dialogue, is crucial in ecstatic love, because people create their own relationships with friends and lovers freely and intentionally. These are voluntary unions, based on reciprocity and concern for the other as a "subject." These are historical relationships, built up over time through the sharing of events and experiences. Ecstatic love is based on personal encounters and face-to-face meetings. While Cowburn clearly differentiates the two basic forms of love, he is aware of the possibility of their co-existing simultaneously in a given human relationship.

For example, fathers and sons can also be friends, but paternal-filial love and friendship still remain quite distinct relational structures.

My own interest in human relationships is currently centered in the ecstatic love experience. The works of the intersubjective philosophers are based primarily on the possibility of free, mutual, dialogic encounters. The nature of the ecstatic union embodies the paradox of intersubjectivity described earlier. The person you love is definitely different from you; he or she is "someone else," not an image of yourself. This research project will, therefore, be aimed at the world of ecstatic love, the world of friendship and heterosexual love.

Friendship, as a term, does clearly denote a particular kind of relationship, but there does not exist a clear-cut accurate label for the form of love that has always received the most attention and interest--the love between a man and a woman. Some terms that are commonly employed are conjugal love, sexual love, romantic love, Eros, physical love, and married love. The terms that stress the sexual aspect of the relationship seem incomplete, focussing on only one part of the total experience. Those labels that emphasize the marital nature of love seem inappropriate, because this type of love can and does exist without the social and religious sanction of marriage. I will be making selective and careful use of many of the above terms as they are often referred to throughout this book. But I would like to present two other words that have not been frequently employed in defining forms of relationships, words that might point



more clearly to the nature and structure of the two forms of "ecstatic" love.

In place of the term "friendship," or in addition to the word "friendship," think of community. Let heterosexual love be referred to as communion. The root of both words (also apparent in "communication") indicates a sense of sharing and participating. Community has a societal connotation. It represents a non-exclusive bond between individuals, a working together in a common spirit. Communion, on the other hand, means a very intense, deep, and specific encounter between two persons. In communion there is an intertwining of souls; in community a joining of hands and minds.

The religious connotation of both terms is intended and appropriate, because the spirit of religion is relational. The word "religion" means "to bring together," and our needs for connection with others have always been reflected in the principles and format of religious life. The relationship between members of a religious congregation is one of community. The intense, sacramental relationship between each "believer" and his God is one of communion. On the plane of interhuman relationships, the latter experience symbolizes love's depth and significance. In this connection, it is interesting that Buber always affirmed the ties between religion and relationship. He called God the "Eternal Thou," and stated that persons relate to God through their own relationships with other persons. We glimpse the Eternal Thou, he said, through our interactions with the "real" Thous in our world. Any attempt to concentrate on "communing" with God, while ignoring or bypassing our responsibilities

and involvement with other people, was, for Buber, futile and solipsistic.

Carrying the power of religious metaphor, the words community and communion help stake out the two basic forms of ecstatic love. As a psychologist, I was interested in exploring these forms of love, particularly as they existed in the lives of married couples. Marriage, with its huge promise and awesome problems, seemed a potentially rich source of knowledge about love and lovers. But how does one proceed to research love relationships? Before discussing the practical problems of attempting a research project involving married couples, some broader, more basic questions about the nature of research must be confronted. Research methodology is not an esoteric area of concern only to professional social scientists. An approach to research reflects one's approach to human existence, and the inter-relationship between research and philosophy cannot be ignored. What research approach is most relevant and appropriate for a study of love, and what research techniques actually distort the phenomenon of love?

## C H A P T E R   I I I

### A PHILOSOPHY OF RESEARCH

The human mind is generally far more eager to praise and dispraise than to describe and define.

C. S. Lewis

There is a German philosopher who tried to work out a way of understanding how we experience the world and instructed us that we should bracket experience, put about it the blinders and curtailments which disentangle it from the riot of connections which implicate it in the existence of everything else. In that way he imagined we could begin to intuit clearly what it is we really see when we open our eyes and know when we put our minds to something. But such errors! We should not want to reduce down to the essence, but to build up toward everything, to embrace and hug as much as we can, to make our eyes wide-angled apertures extending the horizontal breadth of our sight, however much it foreshortens our vertical vision (and that's right too, for the vertical vision is inside a man and what really counts is that he have a broad sight to support his vision),

Arthur A. Cohen from In the Days of Simon Stern

Any effort to research or explore human existence must begin with an intense examination of the means to that end, specifically, the style and method of research to be used. There is a tendency to believe that "science" can be defined as one particular method of acquiring knowledge, a method applicable to various areas of interest. But this seems to me a falsely simplistic, ahistorical, and incomplete notion of science. In its broadest meaning, science is the search for organized knowledge, and a variety of methodologies can serve this function. Behind each methodology, each conception of what is "scientific," are certain philosophical presuppositions about the nature of the world and of man. Gouldner (1970) calls these philosophical presuppositions "background assumptions." Research in the social sciences is oriented by the researcher's view

of the nature of man and society, by his assumptions about human existence. And out of these articulated or unarticulated philosophies come the specific approaches to research itself, the methodologies of science.

Many authors (among them Charles Hampden-Turner, Amedeo Giorgi, Medard Boss, David Cooper, and William Sadler) have noted that the bulk of social scientific research seems to have borrowed the "toolbox" and the philosophical assumptions of the older and more prestigious natural and physical sciences. The approach of natural and physical science, of, for example, physics, chemistry, and biology, has been characterized as rooted in empiricism, determinism, reductionism, geneticism, and in the belief that all things in the world are "calculable" objects. In accepting the measurement orientation of natural-physical science, the social sciences have bought into a conception of man and existence. This "scientific" approach converts human beings into things or objects that can be observed, measured, and analyzed. The majority of social scientific research, obsessed with prediction, control, and the observable, seems to miss the uniqueness and creativity of the human experience.

Much research in psychology, for example, falls in the province of I-It experience. The experimenter has an idea, called a hypothesis. He constructs an artificial, laboratory situation into which come the "subjects," who then are allowed to express themselves only in carefully controlled and limited ways. These responses are then analyzed by a particular statistical treatment, and the hypothesis is shown to be "significant" or not. During the whole experimental

procedure, the experimenter only wants to know the subject in a limited, external fashion. The human being is treated as a "problem" to be solved, not a "mystery" to be encountered, to use Marcel's distinction. For Buber (1970) the distinction is one between being an "observer" and "becoming aware" of another person. Are we intent on "fixing" the observed person in our minds, on assessing their characteristics, or are we open to him in a spirit of receptiveness, meeting, and with a willingness to learn and be surprised? The difference is one between distance and relation, between measuring and meeting another person.

As was the case in the world of relationships, the I-It experience has its merits and its place. Some research will necessarily treat the subject as an object, scrutinize him from a position of separation and externality, and measure some aspect of his behavior. Monologic research is quite appropriate for studying physiological responses, outward behaviors, certain paradigms of learning and conditioning, and societal trends and attitudes, for example. But there is a place and a need for dialogic research, especially in the realm of such human experiences as values, relationships, attitudes, feelings, and beliefs. If we can accept the premise that a natural-physical scientific philosophy and methodology distorts certain human phenomena and reduces all human experience to the world of objectification, perhaps we can begin to outline a different set of background assumptions and a new methodology for researching human existence.

This research effort is grounded in an intersubjective philosophical orientation. The assumption is that interpersonal relationships



are essential in human life, and that people live "in" the world "with" other people. Individuals can come to know and understand each other, and are complex, creative, purposive organisms. The research approach derived from this philosophy is based on a respect for non-measurable human phenomena (love, for example), and attempts to implement an open, engaged, respectful, dialogic attitude toward individuals and their experiences. In outlining some of the key presuppositions he felt necessary for a human science, Giorgi (1970) stressed fidelity to the phenomenon of man as a person, a special concern for uniquely human experiences, and the primacy of relationship. This latter point is particularly crucial to this project, and Giorgi cites it as being one of the "fundamental insights" of phenomenology.

Phenomenology is basically a methodology, an attitude rather than a precise school of philosophy. Van Den Berg (1955) writes that the phenomenologist wants to see the world the way his subject usually sees it. He does not prejudge events, or create hypotheses to be proven or disproven. Rather, he "listens to what events, life, in short the phenomena have to say to him (phenomeno-logy)" (p. 62). Phenomenology offers a qualitative rather than a quantitative form of research. The phenomenologist attempts to become "at home" in the world of another person, to understand that person's existence in the world. The intense relationship between man and the world is an essential discovery of the phenomenological approach. Natural and physical science is based on reductive analyses, breaking a whole down into its parts in order to better determine causes and effects.

Phenomenology reasserts the importance of understanding the whole, of synthesis rather than analysis, of interconnections between persons. We are not necessarily "cut off" from the world and from others. We are by nature involved in the world, and so the phenomenological orientation does have a place for the I-Thou encounter. In the empiricist-reductionist tradition, only I-It experiences seem possible or permissible.

Although this point is ignored in much traditional psychological research, it is evident that the research situation is a distinctly relational situation. The whole of "experimenter-subject" cannot be separated and the subject's responses then analyzed without severely distorting the experience. If the researcher is distant, non-engaged, manipulative, secretive, and controlling, the research situation becomes one of mistrust and alienation. What is learned about the "subject" in this type of research may be limited to discovering what the experience of being in a disconfirming situation is like. Furthermore, the subject may actively lie in retaliation for disrespectful treatment, or in his anxiety, boredom, or anger may not reveal other attributes that he could embody in a different, more open context. An "objective" attitude on the part of the researcher, as Giorgi has pointed out, is not the absence of presence, but is a very special form of presence. Perhaps a destructive form.

There can be an alternative to the "subject-object" mode of research. First, the subject of the research could be allowed to be completely "present" in the situation. Instead of measuring some physiological responses, or "running" the subject through some questionnaires or measures, an attempt could be made to involve the

subject as a participant in the research. The nature of the research would be fully explained to him, and his help would be requested. Hopefully, the subject could respond in a personal and authentic way. Why trick people if we indeed want to learn about their experiences? They can tell us about them quite directly if we make it possible for them to do so.

Second, the researcher can come out from behind his mask of non-involvement and enter into a "dialogue" with the subjects of his research. Being involved in a common situation, trying to be open with each other, each can better comprehend the other's thoughts and feelings. Both parties are now susceptible to being changed by the experience. Each can be surprised. When research is rigidly controlled and is merely trying to prove some a priori hypothesis, then surprise, novelty, or innovations in the research situation are not greatly appreciated. Replicability and invariability are the goals, and the options for discovery are severely limited. In dialogical research, the goal is to learn about a human phenomenon, not prove a theory, and surprise and change and variety are welcomed as essential aspects of reality. The research grows as it goes on. It can be altered in process, and its questions and areas of concern can be elaborated, deepened, and extended based on what has been discovered before.

The concern of this study is to understand, in a more sensitive and thorough manner, the love relationship between a man and a woman. Few other topics have received such ongoing interest in the history of human society, and yet few other topics have been as problematic for "scientific" research. Love has often been the subject of

philosophical essays, works of literature, songs, and psychological theorizing, and I shall be referring to many such sources later in this book. But what of research that has tried to involve "real people" as subjects, that has attempted to learn something in a direct and organized way from the lives and experiences of people other than the researcher or author?

The measurement-oriented scientists grind out research on love, mostly for professional journals rather than public consumption, and, by my standards, their efforts have generally been dismal and trivial failures. These psychologists (who can be represented in three particular studies by Rubin, 1970, Wright, 1969, and Driscoll, Davis, and Lipetz, 1972) autonomously define the phenomenon under consideration, for example, "friendship" or "romantic love," and then set about creating measures, frequently questionnaires, that fit their definition. These researchers yearn for the trappings of "real" science, and so they must have a snappy terminology that is all but incomprehensible to the average person. They balk at using a commonly understood word in their articles, so instead they create a new term, and, joy of joys, a new abbreviation for the cognescenti--therefore "friendship" becomes "voluntary interdependence," VID (see Wright, 1969).

These authors have, in their minds, already discovered what love is, and are looking for empirical vindication and clarification of their hypotheses in their research. For that reason and others, their findings are often shocking in their lack of discovery. For example, where is the addition to our knowledge in the statistical



determination that loving is different than liking? Couldn't anyone who has ever been in love provide us with that insight, and also tell us a great deal more about those two kinds of experiences? Unfortunately, in research obsessed with measurement, no one is ever really asked. They can only fill in the blanks provided by the pre-conceptions of the researcher.

Also, where does one get subjects to run through these questionnaire-type studies? Frequently, university-based researchers rely on college undergraduates to take part in their "experiments." They are available in large numbers and are usually free. However, their experience is confined to that of their age-group. Much writing has been done about romantic love, young love, about new relationships, because this has been the life situation of the subject population. Questions about the later, perhaps more complex, years of a heterosexual love relationship have been left largely untouched by formal research.

I set out on this project to learn about the love relationship between happily married men and women. In the phenomenological tradition, I consider married people themselves to be the "experts" on their lives and marriages. Perhaps through in-depth conversations with couples of varying ages it is possible to discover some things about the world of love. This general approach, in various different forms, has begun to assert itself in research on love and marriage. Rogers (1972) uses both interview material and written statements of "lovers" in his recent work on heterosexual relationships. Cuber and Harroff (1965) interviewed approximately four hundred individual married persons about their lives and feelings concerning marriage,



and organized their findings into descriptions of several styles of marriage. I shall be drawing upon these and other sources on love and marriage throughout this work, but at this time I want to point out the ways in which this research project is different from previous studies.

First, in keeping with the relational orientation of the project, my interviews were conducted with couples. I spent some time with each spouse individually, but the majority of time was spent seeing a husband and wife together. If the relationship is what is under study, then it should be directly encountered. Second, the focus of the study is on love, on confirming relationships. I did not want to spend time interviewing couples who perceived themselves in marital trouble or who were thinking of divorce. I consciously directed myself toward "happily" married couples. It is very difficult, it seems, for social scientists to write about health rather than sickness. For example, three of Cuber and Harroff's "five kinds of relationships" are less than successful forms of marriage. And contrasting what they call "utilitarian" and "intrinsic" marriages, those authors spent twenty-six pages describing the former, while only thirteen pages were devoted to outlining the latter, successful, type of marriage. I wanted to learn about "healthy" marriages, and what makes them work.

Third, along with spending a good deal of time with a limited number of couples, I also intend to integrate theoretical and literary material with couples' statements in a synthesis of views and conceptions of love and marriage. I did not intend merely to

present the couples' verbatim statements, but rather hoped to organize that material and "scholarly" material around certain key issues or themes that developed as the research developed. Finally, a major goal of this project was to illuminate that "never-never land" of the "mature" marriage, the marriage that has moved beyond the honeymoon-newlywed phase.

In essence, all of the preceding pages represent a broad review of my philosophical orientation and my research approach and goals. Now it is time to move on from this foundation to the specific nature and findings of the study itself. And the best place to begin that task is with a description of how I went about beginning the project. To use a perhaps more familiar phrase, let's move on to "methodology."

## C H A P T E R I V

### A BEGINNING

My first important task in planning this research was to determine the kind of couples I would be interested in interviewing. I wanted to talk to couples who perceived themselves as happily married, and who were not contemplating either divorce, separation, or some form of marital therapy. Although it is impossible to have a sample of ten couples be a representative and balanced microcosm of all marriages, I did want to try to include as much variety as possible among my couples. Men and women of different ages, years married, and personal backgrounds could provide some interesting insights into different experiences of love and marriage. Most importantly, I needed couples who would be willing to meet with me approximately four times, and who could agree to spend a total of eight to ten hours in conversations with me. I needed couples who would be interested in my project, and who could express their thoughts and feelings in an interview format.

The question then became, Where do you find these couples? I rejected the idea of advertising in the local newspapers, because there would be no way of knowing the motivations or type of marriage of the couples who answered the ad. Some people might be seeking a form of marital therapy or some "lessons in love," and I might have to spend a good deal of time selecting the suitable couples from the total number of respondents. Additionally, since I was not offering any money or other compensation for participation in the

project, and since an ad could only say a small amount about the research, there was a chance that many couples would not respond at all. My expectation was that the older, perhaps busier, couples would not respond to an advertisement, and so I might be left with another college-age sample for my research on love.

Because I wanted a small number of "select" couples, I decided to ask people I knew and respected to recommend couples to me. They would be in a position to at least externally judge the success of the marriages of their friends and neighbors. They would also have some idea as to whether those couples would be at all amenable to becoming part of the research project. There were only a few drawbacks to this procedure. One was that most of the people with whom I discussed the project and asked for recommendations were associated with the University world, most being faculty members in the Department of Psychology. Their friends and acquaintances tended also to be connected with the educational institutions in the area. I did not want all of the couples in the project to be members of the academic community, and I thought it especially important that no participants in the study have a professional background in psychology. I wanted to avoid "expert" testimony. So, I could find some suitable couples by asking friends and colleagues for suggestions, but I needed other sources to fill out the list of participants.

Through conversations with colleagues and my own thinking about finding couples, I eventually decided upon the idea of contacting local clergymen and asking for their help. The clergy know the married couples in their congregations, often have some professional interest in marriage and marital counseling, and could be in a

position to make useful recommendations of "well-adjusted" couples. Also, I felt that having a clergyman as a referral source could be very helpful in influencing couples to take part in the study. Psychologists are often not trusted by the public, particularly in their role as researchers, and the support of the clergy for my project could induce some very interesting but wary couples to indeed take part in the study.

I eventually contacted five local clergymen, who were recommended by colleagues or friends of mine who knew them personally and/or as members of their congregation. These clergymen, I was told, might be interested in helping me in my study of love and marriage. I called each of these men, introduced myself and explained the research project. I particularly asked for their help in finding happily married couples, preferably outside the academic community, who had been married for more than five years. I received varying responses. The Episcopal minister was extremely interested and helpful, and soon sent me the names of eleven couples. A Congregational minister gave me the names of five couples, and an ex-Congregational minister provided me with two possible couples. The two rabbis I contacted were, for some reason, relatively disinterested and unhelpful. One said that he currently had little contact with couples, and the other asked that I send him a written description of my research which he could show to couples. I mailed the description and never heard from him again. None of the ministers actually mentioned my project to the couples he suggested to me, but each gave me his permission to use his name in my initial contact with the couples. In addition to the eighteen potential couples provided by the ministers, I also



had eight couples suggested by three psychologists whose assistance I had requested.

Of the psychologist-referred couples, about half were told about the study and asked if their names could be given to me, and one couple even agreed to participate before having heard from me. The rest were treated in the same manner as the minister-referred couples--their names were given to me and that was all. Of the twenty-six names that I had received, I decided to contact eighteen couples who seemed most suitable in age, occupation, and years married. I chose to initially contact by mail all couples but the one who had already volunteered. The letter read

Dear Mr. and Mrs. \_\_\_\_\_:

I am a doctoral student in clinical psychology, and I'm beginning a research project aimed at exploring the relationship between husbands and wives. I am particularly interested in talking to married couples about love and their relationship with each other. I have been asking (local clergymen/faculty members in the University's department of psychology) to recommend couples who they felt had a loving relationship and who might be interested in spending some time in conversations with me. \_\_\_\_\_ mentioned your name to me, and I'm writing this brief note to give you an opportunity to begin to think about participating in this project. I will be calling you in a few days and can at that time say some more about the research. Thank you very much for your consideration.

I should give some indication here of what my feelings were at this stage of the project. I was aware of the skepticism of many researchers about having subjects become "part" of a project. Without offering any money or any course credit or other compensation, would people be interested enough to give their time and become collaborators in the research? I was very anxious and uncertain as I mailed off my first words to these couples. I expected

to phone the couples during the week following receipt of my letter, but I was contacted by two couples even before I could call them.

The wife of a forty-year-old businessman wrote me a brief, but definitive, note:

Dear Mr. Strauss,

We must decline your invitation to discuss our relationship with you. We have always felt that one very basic ingredient of a successful relationship is privacy.

Sincerely,

---

The other letter was received later, in fact a day after I had tried to call the couple. I called around seven p.m., and, before I could get farther than giving my name, I was informed by the husband, a sixty-three-year-old professor at a local college, that I was interrupting his dinner and he hung up the phone. Here is his letter:

Dear Mr. Strauss,

This is to acknowledge your letter and the fact that \_\_\_\_\_ had given our names to you. We are in principle willing to converse with you to assist in your research; but I must warn you at the outset that as middle-aged conservative people we have definite reservations. The juxtaposition of 'clinical psychology' and 'talking to married couples about love and their relationship with each other' conjures up visions of a Ph.D. mock-up of another Kinsey report, in which we are definitely NOT prepared to cooperate.

If, however, you are prepared to limit your enquiry to the factual externals of our married life, and specifically to send us in advance a written questionnaire so that we may decide in advance what we are, and what we are not, willing to discuss with a stranger (neither our physician nor our spiritual advisor) we may grant you an interview.

I repeat, we are conservatives and middle-aged and we have our reticenses--even from Ph.D. candidates in clinical psychology.

Yours faithfully,

---

Luckily, my phone contacts with the other couples did go very well. I had initially thought that the rejection to acceptance ratio would be three or four to one, and that I would eventually have to muster up another list of possible couples. But of the seventeen couples who I phoned, eight agreed to meet with me to discuss the project, while only nine said they didn't want to take part. The reasons given by the "decliners" were the very expected type of responses--no time, not interested, would feel uncomfortable, and illness in the family. I was greeted with interest on the phone by the other eight couples. Several of these couples were affiliated with the local colleges or public schools, and stated that they were open to the idea of my type of research. It is significant that only one of the nine couples who rejected participation were "school-connected," while six of the nine who accepted were part of the academic community. People who work in an educational atmosphere seem to be exceptionally open to the idea of researching human life, and the existence of a large group of such people in this community helped my research considerably.

Over a period of weeks, I managed to make contact with a total of nine couples. One of these couples, surprisingly enough, was the same "conservative" couple that had sent me the long letter requesting an advance look at the "questionnaire" I would be using. I felt I had to respond by mail to that letter, to correct some misconceptions about my research. My letter made it clear that my study was not a "sex" study in disguise, that I was interested in learning about love, and that the conversations I intended to hold with couples were

not tightly structured or based on a questionnaire. I regretted their inability to participate, but said I understood and respected their position, and thanked them for their time. To my amazement, a few days later I received a phone call from the husband, offering me a variety of times to choose from for our first session. The exchange of letters has cleared the air, and reassured him about the nature of the project. This couple, I should add, eventually made a huge overall contribution to the research. They were both eloquent and sincerely interested in the study.

I asked all couples for permission to interview them in their homes. I wanted to understand how they lived, and where they lived was a part of this. Also, to have seen them in a professional setting, and office, for example, would have instilled a "clinical" tone to the project. Part of being let into these couples' lives was being accepted into their homes. All couples willingly agreed to this arrangement, and my first session with each couple was set up to be an opportunity for me to explain the project more fully and ask for their help. I arrived for the first few of these meetings full of uncertainty, anxiety, and excitement. I explained my interest in understanding what a loving marriage was like, my hope that they would become co-researchers in the project, and my wish for an extended contact including approximately four couples' sessions and some time with each spouse individually. All nine couples wanted to continue with the study. I did not expect to begin the "serious" interviewing that very night. But I soon learned that after hearing my explanation of the research, the couples wanted and expected to get on with it. After all, why waste that particular



evening? So, the study was underway.

When I began the project I did not have a highly detailed list of topics to discuss with the couples. I knew I would begin by asking about their meeting and early courtship, and their decision to marry. Some other major issues were: the style of the marital relationship, coping with individuality and relationship, friendship, and the meaning of love. As the conversations continued, new themes arose and were then brought up with all couples, and I gradually refined my presentation of specific issues. For example, the abstract concept of stages of a love relationship did not communicate well to the couples, but questions about the effect of children on the marriage, about the careers of both partners, and about outside friendships yielded some rich "developmental" responses. I began to inquire more about threats to the relationship, crises, risks and pains, areas of disagreement and mutual adjustment, and this helped correct what I feel was perhaps an early bias of the study in the direction of "perfection." Even though these couples had been selected because of their successful marriages, I needed to actively open the way for a discussion of the difficulties of relationship. I did not want any of the couples to feel they were failing me, themselves, or the study if they admitted to problems and anxieties. Most couples had no difficulty presenting this more complete picture of their lives together. Some issues were really discoveries coming out of conversations with specific couples. One such discovery concerned the "work ethic" of relationship, another was the couples' attitude toward heterosexual friendships. The results of all my conversations with couples have been organized around the thirteen or so topics soon to be discussed.



Each session with a couple lasted from one-and-a-half to two hours, and I conducted from three to five of these sessions with each couple. They generally took place in the evening, but in certain instances I saw a couple in the afternoon. I also saw each spouse individually for a one to one-and-a-half hour session, devoted primarily to family and personal history. In all sessions, we would be either in the couple's living room or basement-den, and I was frequently served some refreshments during the evening. The interviews took place over a period of three months, and I had to be very flexible about arranging and postponing appointments, last-minute cancellations of sessions, and occasional interruptions and shortenings of sessions. The approximately one hundred hours I spent conducting the interviews required nearly every Monday-Thursday evening for three months, plus some times during the days, and was a very demanding, eventually exhausting process.

I used a cassette tape recorder in all sessions, and also took fairly detailed notes during the conversations. While I shared my feelings and experiences on occasion with couples, overall I tended to hold back and listen. Time was short, the couples were fascinating, I did not want to interfere with their responses, and I felt more secure in my role as an interviewer-moderator. I would present an issue at the beginning of the session, and then follow the couple in their responses to it. If they ranged away from the topic, but to another interesting area, we stayed in their new direction. When digressions or story-telling began, I felt free to bring us back to a more specific question or issue. When a topic was exhausted and the couple looked for direction, I would provide it.

Now that I have outlined the planning, inception, and structure of the project, it is time to meet the nine couples who are its focus. Before we hear various couples' statements about the major themes that emerged from the study, it would be helpful to have some idea of who these people are individually and as partners. Some feel for the character, life-style, and life-situation of each of the couples will provide a perspective on their feelings and beliefs about love and marriage.

## C H A P T E R V

### AN INTRODUCTION TO NINE COUPLES

Because this study revolves around the lives of nine specific couples, I feel it is essential that the reader have some sense of who the people are who will be commenting later on various issues and themes. There are, first, some characteristics of the entire group of couples that are quite important. All couples have Protestant backgrounds, either Episcopal or Congregational if still regularly attending church. Six out of the nine couples were referred to me by ministers, the remaining three by psychologists. Their ages range from early twenties to early sixties, with the following distribution: two couples in their twenties, four in their thirties, two in their forties, and one in their sixties. As for a general description of their occupations, for six couples one or both partners are involved in the teaching profession at some level. The remaining three couples are not associated with the local public schools or colleges, and work in the business world. The number of years each couple has been married ranges from two to twenty-two, as follows: one couple married two years, two couples married from six to ten years, four couples married from eleven to fifteen years, and two couples married twenty years or longer. A survey of the number of children per couple shows that two couples had no children, four couples each had two children, and three couples had three children each. In a very broad and basic way, that is the group that participated in this study.

For reasons of confidentiality and privacy, I have disguised the identities of the individual couples in this study in a number of ways. I have, of course, changed all names, and changed occupations in cases where these alterations would not affect an understanding of a given couple. Ages and years married have been only slightly altered, and certain background information on each spouse has been modified when necessary. Changes in the physical description of participants have helped to preserve anonymity without detracting from a realistic portrait of these couples. In all instances, my major goal was to disguise all personal information that was highly revealing in a way that would not affect an appreciation of the particular character of each couple. Some facts and situations could not be changed without a severe loss in knowledge about the couple, and I hope that the end result of my "disguise-work" will prove satisfactory and faithful to both the readers and the couples involved. My aim in this chapter is to give some brief picture of who these people are, and, from material obtained in individual interviews, what each of their own family backgrounds were like. I am presenting the couples in the order in which I met them for the first time.

#### Steve and Jean Barrett

You have to picture me driving in the night towards my initial couples' appointment. I'm not familiar with the couple's neighborhood, and wind up on a dark road with no street signs. Eventually I see a house that is lit up, and, confident that I'm a good mile from my

destination, I pull into this driveway and walk to the door to ask for directions. A nameplate on the door informs me that I am at the home of Mr. and Mrs. Steven Barrett, the couple I have been looking for. A fateful meeting, I decided at that moment. Most of the "I don't know where I am, I'm late, and the couple is waiting for me" tension left me as I entered their living room.

In that initial session and those that followed, the Barretts were very open and friendly to me, exceptionally interested in the project, and were able to work together very effectively in the interviews. They shared the talking-space beautifully, and were able to carry on themselves with most issues I raised. They are an intellectual couple, and so frequently we would drift off into theoretical discussions of various issues, but the Barretts had no difficulty in coming back to earth. I always sat alone on the large couch in the sessions, and the couple sat on the two chairs that faced the couch, one huge leather recliner, and one small hard-backed model. In the first session, Steve took the white recliner, and I assumed this was his "seat." But in the later sessions, as we began to discuss some conflicts about respective roles in the marriage, Jean consistently occupied that position.

Both Steve and Jean frequently distracted themselves during the interviews with some minor activity--for Jean, needlepoint, for Steve, preparing his pipe, shucking some peas. While both were involved in the project, Jean seemed more serious about the commitment while Steve was more casual in his approach to the sessions. It was a reasonable enough position, but I always got the impression from



Steve that I would have to fit myself into his schedule and not interfere with any of his, perhaps last-minute, plans. Jean seemed more available.

Jean Barrett, age thirty-three, is a young-looking, athletic appearing woman, with long black hair and a modest figure. She is somewhat heavy, but looks strong, not flabby. Although rather plain, she is surprisingly attractive. Her voice is warm and deep, inviting, and she smiles easily, sometimes nervously, and often. Steve Barrett is thirty-six, tall, sandy-haired, and wears a full beard. He is solidly built with large, powerful-looking forearms. His voice is forceful, yet high-pitched, a tenor. Their living room is furnished comfortably and neatly, and a wall of bookshelves reflects the couple's intellectual nature. Steve is a sociology professor at one of the area's colleges, while Jean, who has taught elementary school, is currently a housewife. They have two children: David, age eight, and Laura, age four. They have been married for twelve years, and were referred to me by their minister.

Steve's father was a businessman, his mother a housewife, and he has one sister who is seven years his senior. His family seems to have encouraged both closeness and independence, and Steve states that "they took seriously a belief system in the value of honesty, thrift, diligence, and integrity." Education was considered very important in their household, and both his parents read for pleasure and attended lectures and concerts. Steve describes his mother as being "upfront" about her emotions, and his father as even-tempered and gentle, "his own man." Because she seemed less "perfect" than

his father, Steve felt closer to his mother and could share with her more of his day-to-day failures and successes. His father expected a lot of Steve, and gave him "tremendous freedom" through high school and college. His sister married when Steve was still in high school, and he has a close relationship with her, her husband, and their three sons.

Steve attended public school through one year of high school, and then decided he wanted to go to a prep school. He found prep school more challenging, and living away from home helped him "grow up." Steve discovered that he did have some talents and abilities, and he realized that "there were some religious dimensions" to his life. His mother's father was a minister and was a strong influence on Steve. Steve eventually went to a men's college and on to Divinity School, became a minister, but didn't like the social-professional role or duties of a minister in the community. So, he re-entered academia at age thirty, obtained a Ph.D. in sociology, and began college teaching. Socially, Steve felt "square and shy" in high school, but he came to realize that his family heritage and beliefs were different but appreciated by a number of people. One of these people was Jean, whom he met while both were in college.

Jean is the middle child of three girls in her family, each separated by more than five years in age. Her father was a businessman, her mother a social worker. Jean's relationship with her older sister was quite competitive. This sister was very attractive, outgoing, and self-confident--"she pleased people." Jean, who felt inferior in these qualities and considered her sister somewhat of a

phony, tried to create a different impression and was "ornery" and often upset her parents. Her mother was the dominant force in the family, and Jean says her father was warm, loving, and weak. Jean felt much closer to her father. Mother made most of Jean's decisions for her, and Jean grew up with "a slight lack of self-confidence." The family as a whole, Jean recalls, was "dishonest" in that conflicts were suppressed and avoided. As a reaction to that atmosphere, Jean says she now possesses an explosive temper.

Like Steve, Jean attended public schools but switched to a private girl's school in high school. This, however, came about less out of Jean's own desires and more from her mother's "ambitiousness." Her mother always had higher aspirations than her father, and Jean says her mother's "romantic" nature helped create her own "realistic" approach to life. In private school and in the women's college she went to, Jean sees herself as a perfectionist, someone who gave the impression of self-confidence, but who really felt inadequate and incompetent. She majored in English, minored in Religion, and taught elementary school for one year after graduation--an experience she did not enjoy. Steve was her first serious boyfriend, and she met him in her sophomore year of college. Jean had never felt she was "immediately popular" with boys, she was no "teen-queen." It took her longer to establish a relationship with someone, and she was able to accomplish this with Steve.

#### Bill and Nancy Joyce

Bill and Nancy have been married for ten years, and have a

nine-year-old son, Tom, and a five-year-old daughter, Cindy, who is adopted. Bill is thirty-one years of age, is tall, stocky, with dark brown hair and a walrus mustache. He is employed as a financial consultant for an insurance agency. Nancy is thirty-two, tall, has short blond hair, wears no make-up, and has bitten fingernails. She looks young and trim, and has an active, eager-looking expressive face. Nancy was trained as a nurse, but is presently a housewife who is beginning to take some college courses again. All my sessions with this couple took place in the furnished basement of their small home. They also were referred to me by their minister.

The Joyces were always friendly and gracious toward me, and Nancy served coffee and home-baked cakes at almost every session. As a unit, this couple is exuberant and optimistic, but somewhat guarded and tense. They radiate togetherness, mutual warmth, and respect. They laughed frequently, sometimes anxiously, and there were also many pauses in our conversations, reflecting dead-end discussions of issues. Bill tended to be reflective, quiet, and prone to sarcastic jokes for which he would be mock-scolded by Nancy. Nancy was always enthusiastic, talkative, leaning forward in her chair, a smile or a comment usually near the surface. Bill and Nancy preferred to keep the discussions on an impersonal, general, external level. They related many facts about their personal lives, but seemed anxious and defensive about discussing problem areas and sources of tension. They would not use the word "crisis," for example, preferring "mini-crisis." In the sessions they frequently interrupted each other, thereby preventing a discussion from progressing

or getting too deep. I sensed this as their style as a couple, rather than purely a reaction to me and this project. They are genuinely friendly and giving, but keep their emotional distance from others, and, in some ways, from each other as well.

Bill is an only child, and his parents were around thirty-five years old when he was born. Five years earlier, his mother had had a still-birth. For his father, a printer, and mother, a housewife, Bill was "the apple of their eye" and was "doted" on. Bill says he had a positive relationship with his parents, but not an overly personal one. In his family, personal issues and feelings were not discussed--the family did not like dealing with stressful situations. Bill saw his father, who is now deceased, much like a big brother, and the family was very closely-knit and private. His parents very rarely socialized.

In high school, Bill was quiet and didn't do much dating. He was a good student, enjoyed sports, and had a number of close male friends. At that time, Bill was shy, overweight, and had a low opinion of himself. Going to college was a milestone for Bill and his parents. He was the first in his whole extended family to attend college, and for Bill himself, college was an "eye-opener." The world of mixers, blind dates, dormitory living, and being away from home was new and challenging, and when Bill found he could handle these situations, his self-evaluation went up. He gained confidence, realizing that "you could open your mouth and someone won't laugh." He met Nancy in his sophomore year at college.

Nancy is the oldest of three children, and her parents are now



divorced. She says her father was a dynamic man, self-educated, a forceful head of the house who used to spend a lot of time with her. His major flaw was that he never followed through on plans and goals, and eventually ran away from most conflicts. Although Nancy picked up a number of interests (politics, for example) and attitudes (being outgoing) from her father, he was never one to talk about personal feelings or problems. Nancy's mother comes across as a sweet, quiet, shy woman who was left behind by her more reckless father. She was a "perfect" mother, giving and worried about her children, but like most perfect mothers was a bit of a martyr. Nancy's brother is three years younger than she, has always been quiet, and now is a bachelor living with his mother. Her sister, nine years younger, seems never to have been terribly involved in the family, and now lives out west.

High school was a happy time for Nancy, and a major quality in her personality in this period and afterward was her enthusiasm. She did an average amount of dating, and eventually chose to go to a nursing school rather than college because it was less expensive. In nursing school, Nancy's first experience away from home, she was more self-conscious, conscientious, idealistic, nervous, "high-strung," and demanded a lot of herself. Socially, she perceived herself as a "big girl" and was slightly awkward. She was unofficially engaged early, at age nineteen, to a high school boyfriend who was five years older than she. But this "quiet, dependable" young man broke the "engagement," and that event, says Nancy, was a "blow to my ego." Nancy's values while she was in school were aimed toward becoming a

wife and mother. A capsule commentary on Nancy is that she is a woman who doesn't sink into her insecurities, but tries, usually successfully, to overcome these through a bright outlook on life and through her own enthusiastic, vivacious style.

### Ellen and Hugh Farmer

Hugh, age forty-three, who works as a consultant to public school systems, and Ellen, age forty-one, who is a high school English teacher, have been married for twenty years. They have three children: Paul, age seventeen, Linda, age fourteen, and Janet, age 11. Hugh is a dapper, pleasant, attractive middle-aged man with a smooth, twinkling demeanor and tone of voice. Ellen is a tall, plump woman, with a loud, laughing voice and somewhat sad eyes. In our sessions together, Hugh was quite modest, self-effacing, and task-oriented. He frequently asked me if he and Ellen were answering my questions in the proper, helpful manner. In a warm way, Hugh was quite attentive to my needs in the project. Ellen was more given to brief humorous or mock-angry outbursts, and, once involved in an issue, was a non-stop talker. Her narratives often drifted off the subject and away from feelings and descriptions of their personal lives. Ellen would also walk away from the interview for a period of time on the slightest provocation, usually something to do with the children. This couple is highly involved in the teaching profession, and their "academic" attitude helped make them both eager to help in the research and susceptible to staying on a factual, theoretical level.

In relating to each other, Hugh relied on Ellen for all the

important dates in their marriage, and she immediately and glibly provided these. We sat in their living room for the interviews, a room that was sparsely and uncomfortably furnished in Early American antique style. Except on one occasion when I arrived while the Farmers were still finishing dinner, I was never served any refreshments in their home. I contacted the Farmers on the recommendation of a psychologist-acquaintance of mine who is a neighbor of theirs.

Hugh is the oldest of three children in his family, and has a younger sister and brother. His father came from a poor, immigrant family, while his mother was the daughter of a prominent small-town family. Hugh's father was a minister, and was impatient and had a "heated temper." A perfectionist, he spent much time working alone in his study. Hugh's mother was the peacemaker in the family, as well as the family business manager. Given his father's inaccessibility, Hugh was very close to his mother, who died in the early 1950s. His father died some ten years later. The relationship between Hugh and his siblings was described blandly as "congenial."

Hugh attended private schools and boarding school at the insistence of his mother, and he resented this arrangement. He had a few close friends while growing up, but seemed cut off from the other children in the community because of his special schooling. He joined the Navy for two years after prep school, and this experience helped considerably in his moving from child to adult status in his family. This was a difficult achievement in his household. Hugh says he felt inadequate and ineffective with girls, and was painfully inhibited socially. In college, Hugh studied anthropology and even entered graduate school for a while, but realized that he wasn't

interested in that as a career. What he enjoyed was the field work, the contact with people, and so Hugh then began his career in teaching, first in elementary schools and then on the public school administrative level. Later he received a doctorate in education, and became a consultant to public school systems.

Ellen grew up in the home of her maternal grandparents. Her grandmother was the matriarch of an extended family that included Ellen's mother and father, Ellen and her younger brother and sister, and a few female boarders. Ellen says she was the "apple of all the adults' eye," and her role in the family was that of the little adult, the capable one. Her brother, on the other hand, four years younger, was always perceived as "the dummy." Ellen's grandmother filled the role of mother for her, but Ellen and her father were very close. Ellen was never close to her mother, and her brother and sister seem to have related more to each other than to Ellen. Her parents had very little responsibility in that house, and the grandmother did not "approve" of Ellen's mother at all. Ellen's mother is still alive, but their relationship is not very close.

In her early years, Ellen sees herself as a tomboy, and she says she didn't physically "develop" until her junior year in high school. She didn't date very much, but at age seventeen she met a young man whom she dated consistently for the next three and a half years. This was a very pleasant, safe, but not very intense relationship, and Ellen says everyone assumed they would eventually get married. She broke up with this boy, however, after she met Hugh in her junior year at college. Ellen was the first in her family to



go to college, and being away at college revealed a whole new cultural-interpersonal world for her. After years of being a housewife, she is now a high school English teacher. Ellen seems like the kind of person who has always had two simultaneous and conflicting images of herself. She has always been seen as capable, intelligent, responsible, but, especially in the social sphere, saw herself as not measuring up to competition. In her bright, bubbly style, she appears to have compensated for her insecurities by taking charge, rolling "happily" along.

#### Betty and Stan Robinson

The Robinsons stand out in my memory primarily because of the difficulty they had in being on time for or keeping our scheduled appointments. They never gave indications that they wanted out of the project--it was just that "something" would always come up at the last minute that caused the postponement of our session. When we did get together, I met Stan, a forty-four-year-old electrician, and his wife Betty, forty, a housewife. Married for twenty-two years, they have three sons, Bruce, Tim, and Michael, aged seventeen, fifteen, and twelve respectively. The couple was recommended to me by their minister.

Stan and Betty are not overly animated or articulate people, but they were considerate and open in the sessions. Stan is a short, compactly-built man, with greying hair and a slightly ruffled appearance. He radiates durability and constancy. In the conversations, Stan was taciturn, lethargic, prone to small-talk and digressions,



and frequently mumbled. Every now and then, however, Stan would bring me up short by commenting cogently and insightfully on a particular issue. This was the danger for me as an interviewer with Stan. He would lull me into thinking my questions would get nowhere, and then change pace and surprise me with his perceptiveness. I began to feel that Stan lulled himself to sleep occasionally, and wasn't consistently working hard throughout the sessions.

Betty did respond with more feelings and personal statements, but she relied heavily on Stan and looked his way often for a comment or support. She is a small-framed, greyish-red haired, casually dressed woman, whose large eyes communicate interest and nervousness. When Stan would drift away, Betty would try to retrieve him, and she was clearly bothered at times with his complacency toward the questions and toward her. She herself was very polite, formal, and was quite concerned with going about the interviews in the right way. I always interviewed the couple in their living room, which was musty and dank, with all the furniture covered with loose-fitting slipcovers. The Robinsons usually stayed on the surface of an issue. They are a private, conservative couple, and although we spent a good deal of time together, I never had a sense of their digging into a discussion. They seemed to only "light" for brief stretches on each topic.

Betty is the oldest of two daughters. Her mother was in her late thirties, her father in his early forties, when she was born, and her sister is seven years younger than Betty. In her early childhood, Betty's father traveled, and the family resided with her maternal grandparents. Betty's parents were extremely protective of the children, and with few children in the neighborhood, there was

an "older" atmosphere around the house. Her mother was a pleasant, quiet, unassuming woman who never complained. She leaned on her husband, who was a worrier, had a temper, and would frequently clash with Betty's grandparents over religious and social beliefs. Betty felt closest to her mother, and only recently has developed some close personal contact with her sister. Her parents, says Betty, were overinvolved in their children's lives, never had babysitters, and displayed no open affection around the house. After Betty's marriage, her parents moved nearer to the newlywed's home. Betty enjoyed school, but because of a lack of money went directly to work after high school graduation. She met Stan soon after, when she was only eighteen.

Stan talked only briefly and superficially about his family, stating that he has two brothers and two sisters who flank him evenly in age. His family moved around a great deal in his childhood, minor moves of a few miles, but sufficient to cause Stan the difficulty of frequently changing schools. His father worked on farms at that time. The family was very close, and Stan says he was always the type of person who made friends easily. He never wanted to go to college, but has always valued and enjoyed working for a living.

#### Bob and Laura Johnson

One incident characterizes for me the home atmosphere of the Johnsons. In my first session with the couple, their oldest child, Dinah, age eight, was saying goodnight to her parents. She kissed

them goodnight, and then Laura asked "Aren't you going to say goodnight to Mr. Strauss?" Dinah then walked toward me, kept getting closer, and kissed me on the cheek. I was floored--a kiss goodnight for the interviewer. It was a very warm, enjoyable moment.

Bob and Laura have been married for thirteen years, and have three children--Dinah, eight, Richard, six, and William, three. Richard is severely retarded, and the couple has decided to keep him at home with them as long as they can. Bob is thirty-six years old and is a junior high school coach and guidance counselor. He is young-looking, has short, slightly curly hair and an even-featured, relatively unexpressive face. In the sessions he did not make much eye contact with me, talked slowly and methodically, and gave the impression of being strong, stable, steady, private, and aloof. Laura, age thirty-four, teaches Italian at a local college. She is an average-looking woman, with short bond hair and glasses, and a vivacious personality. She was the volatile, more spontaneous member of the couple, and she demonstrated her own sharp intelligence in the sessions. Laura used my name often in the interviews, and also made personal contact by looking at me from time to time.

All our interviews took place in the Johnson's living room, which was warmly and tastefully decorated. I initially contacted them on the recommendation of their minister. The couple was exceptionally articulate and engaging, and were quite hospitable to me. Coffee and cookies or the like were almost always served, as was some heart-warming brandy on occasion. Laura seemed to frequently follow Bob's lead in the conversations, almost intentionally allowing him to direct or initiate a discussion. Together, they communicated a strong and deep sense of family, and a somewhat formal,

reserved attitude toward life.

Laura's family history is dramatic and interesting. She was born in Austria, and has two older brothers. During World War Two, her father was imprisoned by the Nazis, and the family came to the United States in 1946. Her father died of cancer in 1949, and her brothers began to assume the father-role with her. The family had a difficult time financially at that time, and Laura says she greatly admires her mother's ability to cope with that situation. In 1954 her mother remarried, "beneath her" and only for financial security, according to Laura. She intensely disliked her stepfather, and home for the seven years until this man died was "a mess."

In school, Laura was lonely and felt different than the other children. She read a great deal, and was a "live-wire" in school activities, but did almost no dating. She graduated from high school at age sixteen, and went to Italy for a three-month educational program the following year. In Italy she was a great social success as the foreign and exotic American girl. When she returned to the United States to enter a prestigious women's college, she was more confident and eventually began to date one boy fairly exclusively. In her junior year, she returned to study in Italy for a year, and she fell in love with a young Italian man. This relationship, Laura says, was the "most powerful" relationship she's had with a man besides her husband. After graduation from college, she went back to Italy, and became more aware of difficulties, primarily cultural differences, in her relationship with this man. She discovered that she loved the country, not just this one person, and they warmly



ended their relationship. She entered graduate school in the U.S. and met Bob.

Bob comes from a well-to-do, well-educated family. His father is a physician, his mother a college graduate very involved in cultural activities. He has one brother, five years older, with whom he had little to do as a child. Bob greatly admired this brother, who was socially smooth and successful. With his father away during World War Two, and after that working long hours, Bob had a more profound relationship with his mother. Also, he and his father were very much alike, both stubborn, and so they easily irritated each other. Bob's relationship with his father really disintegrated when Bob was twenty-one, and his father, after a heart condition, began to become an alcoholic and act like a complete invalid. Seeing his father, formerly a strong individual, deteriorate just at the time when Bob was trying to become a mature, confident, independent man was very difficult to accept or understand.

Throughout his school career, Bob sees himself having to work hard and wanting to do better than he did. He was a slow reader, but good with numbers and mechanical activities. He eventually became a success in his small-town school system, but then was sent to prep school where he sank to the bottom of the barrel again. This was a blow to his self-image, and Bob felt inept and unsuccessful. This pattern repeated itself when Bob left some hard-won success at prep school for a highly competitive men's college. Socially, Bob was quite self-conscious, and couldn't relax or speak easily to others, especially adults. Bob says, "I didn't feel I made friends quickly or easily," but he did have ongoing friendships in his home town.



He didn't do very much dating until his senior year in college, and he always had the feeling that there were a lot of men who were socially, intellectually, and athletically his superior. Gradually, he began to be able to accept this fact, accept himself, and discover what his own interests and abilities were. By his junior year in college, Bob had decided to pursue teaching as a career, but says that initially he "was not led by sharply defined ambition." His professional interests have clarified considerably since that time.

### John and Sarah Pierce

You may remember a letter I quoted earlier from a gentleman who was suspicious of Ph.D. candidates in psychology and their "mock-up" Kinsey studies. That gentleman's name is John Pierce, and he and his wife Sarah were a fascinating couple to meet and get to know. John is sixty-three years old and is a professor of English at a local college. Sarah, sixty, is a housewife but before her marriage was a social worker. The Pierces have been married for fourteen years. For Sarah it is her first marriage, for John his second after fifteen years of being a widower. The Pierces have no children, and John's first marriage was also childless. I learned of the couple from their minister.

I was intrigued from the beginning with the Pierces' agreement to participate in the project after that icy letter and abortive first phone call attempt. When I met them, their style became more apparent and their actions more comprehensible. John is a sturdy-looking man who has white hair and wears horn-rimmed glasses. He is Australian, and came to the United States in the late 1950s. Sarah

is a tall woman with short grey hair. I should say at this point that while I refer to the Pierces as "John and Sarah" in this book, I never felt comfortable using their first names in the interviews. I neatly slipped this problem by not using their names that frequently, or mumbling a "Mr." or "Mrs." on occasion.

Along this same line, the Pierces were quite nervous in our first few sessions. When I arrived for our first meeting, for example, I was quickly ushered into the house and pointed to a chair. John then stated that there was no need for formal introductions, and Sarah, seemingly thoroughly engrossed in her needle-point, asked if I needed a table to write on. When I said I didn't, John launched into their history as a couple. I was sitting there, not having had a chance to more fully explain the project, set up my tape recorder, or take out my pad and begin to take notes. I had to interrupt John, and tell him that I needed a moment to get prepared for the interview. All through these early moments, neither of the Pierces ever looked my way. Most of their pre-meeting coldness and abruptness was reflective of their nervousness and their style of initially keeping their distance from others. They are a formal couple, and their voices, John with his Australian accent and Sarah with her slow, New England style of speech, seem gruff or angry at times. But the Pierces are not really cold or aloof. Luckily, I had the opportunity and the time to come to know them more fully.

The Pierces' home is a small, solid-looking, older one in a quiet, established neighborhood. Their living room was austere, with little color or furniture, and was dominated by small piles of

books and by the loud ticking of a pendulum, bell-jar clock. We always sat in the same positions: Sarah in an easy chair, John in a facing one, and myself off to one side between them on a folding chair. Their dog spent the sessions sleeping behind Sarah's chair. Sarah and John are exceptionally close and involved with each other, and were very attentive of each other's feelings and point of view in our conversations. They clearly enjoyed each other's company. Over time, they came to enjoy my company a little more, and were able to talk "to" me and to listen to my personal statements and experiences. John probably did more of the talking in the interviews, and he was eloquent but susceptible to long digressions. At times, it seemed as if he were lecturing in an auditorium rather than conversing in his living room. Sarah made important contributions, rarely digressed, but at times did not fully elaborate on more personal disclosures. By the time we had concluded our interviews, there was a feeling of warmth among all of us. I felt that in our own formal, structured way, we had come to like each other.

The personal histories of both of the Pierces are complex and interesting. John came from a lower-middle-class family, and has a sister five years his junior. His parents didn't marry until they were thirty, and John was born four years after the marriage. John says that his birth was a partial cause for the onset of his mother's arthritis, a disease which killed her when John was fourteen. His father never married again, and their home was managed by a succession of housekeepers. In his early years, John was overly protected, undersized, and underweight, and his parents feared he would inherit arthritis. John's mother encouraged him intellectually, and John

says his was "a not unhappy family." When John left home to enter the University, he "went beyond the realm" of his father. John has had no contact with his sister for the past eighteen years. She still lives in Australia, and John says he hopes someday to re-establish contact.

In school, John was small, wore glasses, and "over-compensated" intellectually and was first in his class. He was never a loner, had male acquaintances, but did no dating. Absorbed in his studies, John did not become involved with a woman until he was in his late twenties. It was the eve of World War Two, and through a common interest in archaeology he met his first wife. He was thirty at the time, and through his contacts with associates in the Army, was feeling like the "odd man out" because of his lack of heterosexual experience. He met a forty-five-year-old woman (he wasn't aware of the actual difference in their ages until after their engagement), found her interesting, and in the turbulent and insecure atmosphere preceding the Second World War, they decided to take a chance and marry. John says that "perhaps I was looking for someone with more social savoir-faire." He suspects that in a calmer period, she would have seen their difference in age as too great an obstacle and would not have wanted to get married. This marriage ended in tragedy with her death from cancer in 1946. John became resigned to his widower status, although he gradually made social relationships with women more of a part of his every-day life. He had friends and colleagues at work, but lived a fairly private life. After coming to the United States in the 1950s to pursue his teaching career, he



eventually met Sarah.

Sarah was the only child of her father's third marriage. He was a civil-war veteran, and had outlived two wives. Her mother married for the first time in her forties, and was forty-eight when Sarah was born. Sarah had three half-brothers who were all twenty-five to thirty years older than she. She was raised on a farm, in a rather solitary upbringing with older people. The family was devoutly religious, Baptist and conservative, and her father seemed more like a grandfather to her. Her mother was more flexible and demonstrative. Sarah was "very much treasured" by both parents. The family was affectionate, but reserved. Her father died when she was eight, and she and her mother left the farm and moved in with Sarah's aunt, who was living alone. Although she continued to see her half-brothers and their children (who were her age), Sarah says "a reserve grew up between us, a reticence." Her family now consisted of her mother and aunt.

Sarah says she was a late maturer physically, but intellectually successful. She sometimes wondered whether she was living up to the family's academic standards. She did no dating before college, and was sure she was not attractive to boys. Sarah became depressed over this, but always felt things would turn out alright. She expected to be loved as a person at some time in her life. Although she could be very nice to those less fortunate than herself, with her peers she tended to be slightly self-centered and pompous. She had few close friends.

When Sarah was in her late thirties, her mother died. Around



the same time, Sarah had an unhappy love affair that, she says, was "contrary to everything I believed in." She would say no more on that subject. She began to suffer from migraine headaches, was anxious because she was getting old and was still unmarried, and began psychotherapy. Sarah was well-versed in the world of psychology, having been a psychology major and a practicing social worker. Therapy helped her to accept herself, and Sarah continued to live with her elderly aunt, whom she both loved and resented. Gradually, when in her forties, Sarah began to become more socially involved with men. It was around this time, which also was the period in which her aunt's health was failing, that she met John through a common interest club activity.

#### Susan and Richard Lewis

Susan and Richard are both thirty-three years old and were married twelve years ago. They have two children, and Margaret, the oldest at age seven, is adopted. The Lewis' other child, Barbara, age five, was born to the couple. Richard teaches sixth grade and Susan is a housewife who has taught elementary school and currently is involved in a variety of local social service activities. Susan is a slightly plumpish woman, with a child-like appearance, and very short hair style. She wears little make-up, has bitten fingernails, and has an expressive face. She ranged from a puzzled, perhaps nervous stare, to a quick, self-deprecating laugh. Richard is a tall man, dark-haired, and has a full beard. His facial expression did not change often, and he seemed serious and reflective.

They live in a modest home which is furnished casually and seems cluttered and a trifle dingy. I was given their name by a non-practicing minister who is friendly with them.

Their behavior in the sessions demonstrated their differing personal styles. Susan was quick to respond to most of my questions, and often would make short, emotional, sometimes cryptic remarks. Richard tended to lie back, physically and emotionally, and maintained much tighter control over his emotions. Richard was more taciturn and responded selectively. His language was more erudite, while Susan expressed more confusion, laughed and giggled more, and talked in a more down-to-earth manner. Both were very interested in the project and took it very seriously. They had been exploring some similar issues in human relations laboratories they attended in the past, and their language was colored by the "human relations" vocabulary. The Lewis' struck me as people who were sincerely committed to each other, and to discussing and understanding their relationship.

Susan is the oldest of four children, and her three siblings range from four to ten years younger than she. She doesn't remember much about them during her childhood, but says she got to know them better after she left for college. Susan appears to see her three siblings as a group with herself as an outsider, and she says that her family wasn't that close. Her father, who was involved in a variety of businesses, wanted his first child to be a boy, and Susan says, "I discovered recently that I spent thirty years of my life trying to be a boy." There was little agreement between Susan and

her father about anything, and they argued frequently. Her mother, a housewife, wasn't a source of tension for Susan, but wasn't a source of emotional intimacy either.

During her early school career, Susan was a top student, a "teacher's pet," and a social isolate. She had high self-motivation, wasn't friendly with any members of the school cliques, but managed to become President of the Student Council in high school. She won prizes at a science fair, and was the "all-American girl" except for her lack of close, personal relationships, especially with boys. Susan was afraid she wasn't acceptable to men, and so she defensively maintained that she didn't want to date and criticized "boy-girl" relationships. She remembers being lonely a great deal, and wishing some boy would ask her out.

An ongoing issue for Susan was her role as a woman. Her interests tended to be "masculine" in her eyes and those of her family--physics, astronomy, oceanography. She seems to have been seeking her father's approval, while paradoxically assimilating his view that no one would want to marry her if she seemed too intelligent. Her relationship with Richard began when they were both freshmen in college, and he was also involved in a relationship with another girl. In her sophomore year, Susan had an "identity crisis" and, in an attempt to affirm her "femininity" and appeal to boys, specifically Richard, she changed her major from physics to elementary education. She sees this now as a mistake, but at that time she desperately feared becoming an old-maid and remaining on the outside of social life. Her college experience was painful and unsuccessful, almost

wholly dependent on Richard's attitude toward her. Her brief career as a teacher was very unsatisfying, and as Susan's own sense of herself developed she rejected teaching as a profession. Home and children are no longer the main values in Susan's life. She is currently exploring new, more self-accepting directions.

Richard was raised as an only child, since his brother and sister are eighteen and sixteen years older than he. While very close to both his parents, his mother was the one more responsible for his upbringing. She worried about him, while his father, an electrical contractor, had "a tremendous sense of humor" and exposed Richard to the world of scientific interests, music, and railroads. Richard says, however, that he didn't share his feelings particularly well with either parent.

In school, Richard did not feel successful and was aware of taking longer than other children to get things done. In junior high school he had more success, but was quite conscientious and had to work hard for moderately good grades. He attended a prep school, and "grew up a lot" in his four years there. Richard later discovered that he was a predicted "flunk-out" on admission, and he attributes his eventually graduating cum laude to hard work. He gained self-confidence in these years, learning that he could handle a challenge.

Socially, in early years Richard was close to a number of neighborhood kids and didn't feel isolated. At prep school he didn't feel "in the same world" with many richer boys, and didn't do much dating. He was a "task-oriented" person, who "sat on" his feelings, and did not look like he was having very much fun. In college,



Richard discovered that he could enjoy relating to people. He pursued an engineering degree, and he began to formulate his plan to build a career in teaching. He met Susan in his first year of college, and was also seeing steadily a girl from "back home." The oscillating between these two girls continued for three years, and during that time Richard was consistently unsure of what to do about his feelings for the two of them.

### Alice and Michael Davis

A female psychologist I knew was acquainted with several local women through a "support group" she participated in. She mentioned the project to two women in particular, and because they were interested, gave their names to me. Both the Davis' and the next couple, the Turners, were referred to me in this way.

When I arrived for my first appointment with the Davis', I found only Alice Davis at home. She is twenty-eight years old, tall, blond, attractive in a comfortable, natural way. Her husband Michael was not home yet, but had stayed at work and was drinking with some co-workers. Alice had called his office a little while earlier and discovered that he had forgotten the appointment. Michael said he would be right home, but did not arrive until an hour and a half past our scheduled time. Alice said that although Michael was usually very conscientious, every now and then he did something irresponsible like this. I stayed and talked with Alice because she clearly wanted someone to talk to. She was worried about her husband, angry, felt alone, and enjoyed getting into a conversation with me.



I didn't mind, but felt awkward about being in the middle of an embarrassing family situation.

Michael, twenty-nine, and a local businessman, finally arrived slightly drunk and totally apologetic. He has short hair, symmetrical, clean features, and was well-dressed. He berated himself, said what a "great girl" Alice was, and repeated the point that I should learn something from this experience. Michael said that he and Alice respect and enjoy each other, but do not make a "fetish" out of each other's foibles and do not have unrealistic expectations for the other. Alice smiled a lot at Michael during his comments, but said little. I had the sense that she was consciously holding back some of her angry feelings toward him. They both showed good senses of humor and strong interest in the project. We arranged another "first session."

The Davis' home is tastefully and comfortably furnished, and they have two children in their eight-year marriage--Phillip, age seven, and Nancy, age five. In the sessions, Michael was more of a lecturer, expounding, sometimes theoretically, on various issues. Alice was quieter, patient, usually sewing or hooking a rug, and responded to the more personal, emotional, challenges of my questions. Alice touched Michael frequently in the sessions in a warm, easy way, but Michael rarely reciprocated. They were both quite friendly and helpful to me, and I enjoyed being with them. They trusted me enough to make some very difficult personal disclosures, and I appreciated this.

Alice says she had a "great" childhood. Her father was a "self-made" man who became very wealthy on Wall Street. She thinks

of him as rational and even-tempered, her mother as more irrational and sporadic. She was the youngest of three girls, and her sisters were eight and ten years her seniors. It was "like being an only child," and Alice was spoiled with attention, not physical things. When Alice was sixteen, her twenty-five-year-old sister died, and when she was eighteen her father died. Alice felt cheated and hurt that "everyone died off so soon," and never became close with her other sister. She says her happy family life was "good while it lasted." Her mother never re-married, and moved out West a few years ago.

In her early school years, Alice says she was quiet and a good student. She always liked school, but became very insecure in her teenage years. She felt she was "gargantuan," was uncomfortable with boys, and didn't gain admittance to a high school sorority she badly wanted to join. Near the end of high school, Alice began to date more steadily, and had her experience with someone falling in love with her. She gained some self-confidence, and in college, where she had more difficulty with the course work, she obtained a reputation of "being fast." Alice's philosophy at this time was a hedonistic "eat, drink, and be merry," and she had a couple of unsuccessful and painful love affairs. Her self-image slowly improved, she says, in her last two years of college, but this time was a chaotic one emotionally for Alice. In the midst of some personal crises, she met Michael during her senior year.

Michael is also the youngest of three children, and has two sisters nine and ten years older. His parents were older than his friends' parents, and were "set in their ways." Michael says he

never had a very close relationship with his family, and feels that his parents have devoted their lives too much to their children. His mother was domineering, and passed on her own anxieties to her children. His father was more of a conciliator, slightly hen-pecked, and Michael had the feeling that there was the possibility of he and his father understanding each other.

School was very enjoyable for Michael, and he was socially and academically successful. He always had a great deal of difficulty accepting the fact that he did as well as he did. He never studied hard, but succeeded. He was an inept tennis player with a winning record. It didn't seem as if he earned his accomplishments. Although he began college, Michael was fascinated with the idea of working. College courses did not excite him, he lost interest in the fraternity social life, and he had no focus to his education. He transferred colleges, began working during the days and going to school at nights. In that way he finished college, and near the end of this process he met Alice.

#### Dan and Janice Turner

The Turners were my youngest couple (he's twenty-six, she's twenty-five), and they have been married for two years. They have no children, and live in a rented cottage near the river. Their home has few creature comforts, and seems dishevelled and dirty. Dan used to be a graduate student in English, but has now left school and has no definite plans for the future. Janice teaches French in a high school. This couple's life-style is considerably different

from the other couples in the study. They hope to move to Vermont with some friends (from Dan's days of living in a commune), and have rejected most middle-class, material values.

The Turners are a bright, intellectual couple, with a stiff, formal style that showed in the early sessions in particular. Dan is a handsome man, with piercing eyes, short brown hair and a mustache. He talked slowly, sometimes confusingly, in a muffled, tentative tone of voice. Janice, tall and slender, with long, dark hair and wide-open, questioning eyes, talked easily but was also fuzzy at points. The Turners exchanged many glances in the sessions, and often made me feel uncomfortable and left out.

Janice was an only child, adopted by her parents when she was three days old. They were in their early thirties at the time, and were middle-class conservatives. Her father was success-oriented financially, and had a heart condition. The home was organized around the principle of shielding him from tension, and Janice never had a close relationship with him. She was closer to her mother, but her mother was naive about sex and drugs and so was not helpful to her in her adolescence. In school Janice was "a little star," but she matured late sexually, not starting her period until she was fifteen. She was self-conscious and felt socially isolated in her teens, but was successful academically. She entered a highly rated women's college, had few close female friends, and was primarily interested in boys. Janice says she lacked self-confidence, and was always an observer and imitator of others. She liked situations where she was not acting responsibly, times when she was intoxicated, interludes from her anxiety. She didn't know how to be



with people, and rarely relaxed socially. She had a few affairs in college which ended badly, one which resulted in an abortion. Her self-image has changed only recently, at the time of her relationship with Dan and her increasing interest and success in a teaching career.

Dan's father died when Dan was five. His mother re-married when he was eight to a man whom Dan recalls as being "bad," and this marriage ended in divorce after a few years. Dan has a sister who is a year younger than he, and a step-brother from the second marriage who was born when Dan was nine years old. The family moved a great deal in Dan's early years, and Dan attended some fourteen or fifteen schools along the way. They had a strong bond as a family, but were never emotionally close and often argued. Dan had good years and bad years in school, depending on whether he would work at it or not. He was labeled an "underachiever." He attended a boarding school for his last two years of high school and was a social success. He and his friends were interested in clothes, "looking sharp," drinking, dating, and having a good time. This attitude continued into college, but Dan began to discover other sides to his personality. He left one small college after one year, worked for a while, and entered a large city university for two years. He again dropped out of school, realized how much time he was wasting in his life, and withdrew from his usual social contacts. He lived alone and drove a cab. Dan became more serious about his life and his intellectual interests, and moved on to live in a commune for a time. While there, he met Janice, who was



enrolled in a one-year exchange program at a nearby college. When she returned to her own school, he followed her to the area, they began to live together, and he eventually re-enrolled and graduated from college. His graduate school experience was brief and unpleasant, as Dan realized that the academic way of life didn't suit him as a profession. He is now involved in a variety of interests, such as gardening and birds, and does not plan to begin another "career" in the near future.

SUMMARY OF IDENTIFYING DATA FOR COUPLES IN THE STUDY

<u>Name of Couple</u>					
Barrett: Steve Jean	36 33	12 yrs.	Professor of Sociology Housewife	2 children: David, 8; Laura, 4	
Joyce: Bill Nancy	31 32	10 yrs.	Financial Consultant Housewife	2 children: Tom, 9; Cindy, 5	
Farmer: Hugh Ellen	43 41	20 yrs.	Consultant to Public Schools High School English Teacher	3 children: Paul, 17; Linda, 14; Janet, 11	
Robinson: Stan Betty	44 40	22 yrs.	Electrician Housewife	3 children: Bruce, 17; Tim, 15; Michael, 12	
Johnson: Bob Laura	36 34	13 yrs.	Jr. High School Coach and Guidance Counselor Professor of Italian	3 children: Dinah, 8; Richard, 6; William, 3	
Pierce: John Sarah	63 60	14 yrs.	Professor of English Housewife	No children	
Lewis: Richard Susan	33 33	12 yrs.	Sixth grade Teacher Housewife	2 children: Margaret, 7; Barbara, 5	
Davis: Michael Alice	29 28	8 yrs.	Businessman Housewife	2 children: Phillip, 7; Nancy, 5	
Turner: Dan Janice	26 25	2 yrs.	Indefinite career plans High School French Teacher	No children	

## PREFACE TO INTERVIEW MATERIAL

All my interviews with couples were minimally structured, and so the couples' statements lack the order and precision that a more limited, questionnaire format would have provided. After reading through my notes of the sessions, I drew out a number of key issues or themes that I thought would yield the most insight into these marriages. Some of these issues were concerns of mine when I began the project, others developed as different couples raised them as points of their own concern. These topics emerged from the interaction of my particular personality and interests with those of the nine couples. Our mutual goal was to understand the marital relationship more thoroughly.

All issues included in the following chapters were discussed at some point, and at varying levels of depth, with all couples. These issues are obviously a condensation of all the topics covered in my conversations with couples, and even within this limited list there are necessary and apparent overlaps and conceptual merging. That is the nature of this type of research--people's lives cannot really be dissected into "pure" parts. My goal in the following chapters is for the reader to gain a sense of the meaning and importance of each of these relational themes, while becoming more intimately involved with each of the couples in the study. Hopefully these twin purposes will feed each other, and the reader will be able to respond to the chapters as both essays on relationship and incremental life histories of nine couples. The next chapter begins at the couples' beginnings--their meetings--and goes on to

include a discussion of their decisions to marry and wedding ceremonies.

C H A P T E R VI  
FROM MEETING TO MARRIAGE

Meeting

All real living is meeting.

Martin Buber

... one can bump into things, or discover them, but one can meet only persons.

John Cowburn

Our lives can often seem dull, programmed, and routine. But there are moments when our lives are suddenly changed, shaken by chance, touched by the unpredictable. One of these moments is meeting a person we will come to love. In this context meeting is a very special word, and is not applicable, for example, to the experience of "meeting" a colleague for lunch. I am using the word to describe the beginning of a deep, intensely personal relationship. The term "meeting" covers the first contact and early relationship between two former strangers. Meeting, as Cowburn (1967) says, is the discovery of another person. It is finding and being found by another person. It is an experience in which one accepts and understands the other, and has a sense of being accepted and understood by this different person. It is also an experience suffused with grace, because we did not know it would happen and we ourselves could not make it happen. Chance, and the wonder of the specific interaction, are pre-eminent.

The element of chance is an obvious and yet fascinating aspect of the meetings of the nine couples in this study. The Johnsons and the Lewis' each met at a party, the Pierces at a hobby club, the



Barretts at a student-Christian conference, and the Joyces met on a blind date. The Robinsons met when Stan was helping paint Betty's house, the Farmers saw each other for the first time in a college classroom, the Turners met while both were walking in a park, and Michael Davis first met Alice when he was dating her college roommate. These are the humble beginnings of some presently mature and complex relationships. I frequently heard a husband or wife say, speculatively, something like "You know, if I hadn't gone to that party that night, we never would have met," or "If it weren't for our both belonging to that club, our paths would never have crossed." Two lives are changed by accident, by a moment. The initial meetings of these couples seem, for the most part, quite commonplace, and yet in retrospect remarkably dramatic and decisive. This combination of the "everyday" and the "once in a lifetime" seems to be, as we will continue to see, one of the primary characteristics of the marital relationship.

A striking feature of these couples' recollections of their beginnings together is the emphasis they placed on the "natural" development of their relationships, as opposed to describing an overpowering juggernaut of passion and sensation. While feelings of infatuation, intense physical attraction, and "blurry" romance were described and valued, this came within the larger context of comfort, warmth, compatibility, easy communication, and the gradual merging of their two lives. For a variety of reasons, these relationships grew after the moment of meeting, and most did so in a smooth manner. John Pierce said "There was nothing that jarred, nothing that put one

off. There was a gradual convergence of interests and affections, and that's been true ever since." For Jean Barrett, "the development of our friendship was easy and natural, with no stumbling blocks." Laura Johnson told me that "it felt good being with him. My relationship with Bob settled quickly into a pattern. There was no tension of 'will he ask me out again?' It was open and honest, and we were engaged quickly." The Turners talked about their intense, "idyllic" infatuation during the summer of their meeting, but even then there was a sense of something deeper and a willingness to wait for this to develop. "I guess I felt very strong feelings," said Dan, "but I wasn't completely swept over and bowled over by them. I felt that there was time, that I would take time to see how things developed. It didn't take too much time, about three months." Most couples were also able to describe some of the ways in which their relationships were special in their gradual development.

I was impressed by the recurrence of the word "comfortable" in couples' descriptions of their relationships. They felt "comfortable" or "right" in each other's company. The Joyces reminisced about their first, "blind" date, which was arranged by Nancy's best girlfriend. It was an exceptional date because of the lack of formality and the degree of acceptance that characterized the foursome. Everybody felt they could say what they wanted to, and it was easy for the "new" pair, Nancy and Bill, to begin to feel "together" as a couple. Nancy summed it up by saying, "It was funny, because I always felt as though I knew you well, even from the first date we had." Other couples employed colloquialisms to describe this sense of comfort. Hugh Farmer said to Ellen "you

wear well," and she reacted warmly to this. For Hugh, it was "a way of saying it was fun to be together, and not just when there were exciting things to do or a gang of people around." Dan Turner said he felt "totally at ease" with Janice, and this was special and liberating.

A hallmark of the early encounters between these men and women was their ability, from the very beginning, to talk with each other. The sense of feeling comfortable enough to talk honestly to another person, and the experience of being listened to and understood is a remarkably rare occurrence, it would seem, in people's lives today. Perhaps for people of any era or society. When I think of what psychotherapy offers to people, "communication," a place to talk, listen, and be listened to, seems basic and primary. In many ways, these couples' relationships were built on their initial ability to share words, ideas, and feelings.

The Pierces were quite eloquent about the importance of "language" in their early relationship. Sarah said, "He talked my language. We had the same background in literature, and we cared about the meaning of words. We had the ability to communicate with each other, because words meant the same things to us." Similarly, a concern for words and ideas was a significant factor for the Barretts. They met at a week-long student Christian conference, and Steve said "I liked the way she said things. She paid attention to ideas and to me." Jean went further, telling how "my life changed by meeting Steve. He can articulate ideas. I had longings to do this, but felt tongue-tied and inarticulate. I found in you a patient

sounding-board for intellectual and spiritual questionings. I hadn't found that before. My college experience was enhanced by our relationship."

Laura Johnson clearly stated that she "liked most being able to talk to each other, being comfortable. That was besides being physically and sexually attracted to Bob, but that wasn't the overriding consideration. There was much more to it. There just were never any great silences ... we had an unending ability to talk to each other." The Lewis' had a chaotic early relationship, because of Richard's vacillating between Susan and another girlfriend. His eventual decision to marry Susan was greatly influenced by their capacity for "dialogue." Richard said he was "really comfortable and happy about a lot of time we talked together. There was a lot of joy in that sharing. That was special about our relationship, and Susan put a lot of initiative into that. We never pressed to maintain a conversation, it just flowed." Susan added, "there was always more to talk about than we ever had time to." Bill Joyce remembered that "right from the beginning Nancy and I were able to talk about anything. We were interested in hearing about each other. I had the feeling that I could tell her anything."

A related point made by a number of couples was that their senses of humor matched. They "amused" each other, and for the most part found the same things amusing. The Turners and Pierces commented directly on the importance of a shared sense of humor in their early relationship, but other couples also discussed this issue in reference to later stages of their lives together. It is interesting that a



sense of humor does signify a view of the world, and can be part of a common language. If two persons' senses of humor are compatible, this can add considerably to their comfort with each other. If you find the same things funny, perhaps you also take the same issues seriously. Humor is often overlooked in discussing relationships, but can be a major element of a couple's sense of mutual enjoyment, comfort and identity.

In the history of literature on heterosexual love, of "communion" relationships, there has always been a great deal made of the rather simplistic question of whether "opposites" or "likes" are attracted to each other. One resounding impression from my conversations with couples is that personal differences must be maintained for relationship, but that "bridging the distance" is greatly aided by a common background and view of life. This issue will be dealt with later in greater detail, but in describing the very beginning of their relationships, couples pointed out the importance of commonality.

The Barretts and the Pierces were clearest in describing the strong foundation their shared approach to life provided for their early time together. Jean said

We had so much in common. Our families liked each other. We had similar interests and attitudes .... We were at the same point intellectually, in philosophical questionings, about religion. We were raised with similar religious backgrounds in the Congregational church. We were at a simultaneous point of questioning things. We shared an interest in literature, books, sports, and music, the same kind, and we had a compatible group of friends in common, mutual friends. This common background made our meeting easier. Our families were compatible and that was important to us. We weren't trying to get away from our families.



Sarah Pierce mentioned that she and John experienced a "close parallel in social class, interests, very many things in common." She from New England and he from Australia shared a common cultural heritage which facilitated their encounter.

These couples generally had similar cultural backgrounds and basic value systems when they met. They tended to be "compatible" with each other's friends, and to share a "common language" and understanding of life. Partners differed from each other in personal style, temperament, and many specific interests and attitudes. When these people looked at each other, they did not see a mirror image, but did recognize a familiar face. This "familiarity" allowed the individuals to more fully reveal themselves to the other, to "be" themselves. Bill Joyce said that he was often perceived as quiet and shy on first dates or in new social situations, but knew "inside" that he could be more talkative and outgoing. With Nancy, he could express the "more positive, noisy side" of himself. "I didn't feel like I was in a shell," he said. "I felt like I was, I could be myself."

It could be speculated that as partners made themselves known to each other, each person's unique nature could slowly begin to be seen and appreciated. This process could also allow for a gradual discovery and acknowledgement of differences between partners that may have been overlooked in the early, formative phases of the relationship. The process appears to be cyclic and may exist throughout the duration of an intimate relationship. Minimal distance allows for meeting, which in turn allows for greater knowledge of

the other. This increases a sense of autonomy and difference, which is maintained but incorporated in the relationship, providing for an even stronger bond. The entire cycle is one of increasing knowledge and appreciation of the "distinctness" of both self and other, while maintaining and strengthening the mutuality of the intimate relationship.

Couples shared many interests, and they also discovered the joys of doing things together and of exploring the different pursuits of their partners. Bob Johnson recalled that he and Laura "were doing a lot of different things together and getting enjoyment from them. It was just being interested in what the other person was doing, which were quite different." Dan Turner said, "we were both curious about what the other person was doing and their interests. We found pleasure in doing together what one person happened to be interested in." Michael Davis commented that he and Alice "enjoyed so many things so fully together, there was an intensity level of life, it was outstanding because it was unusual. We were two people exploring doing different things together, and getting a kick out of it. You enjoy the old things more, and do new things. The sharing has an exhilarating effect." These couples found they enjoyed doing things together, whether these were conjoint or separate interests. The "doing it together" overshadowed the specific activity. "Interest" is an important word, because to have interests means to become involved in the world. These close relationships broadened and deepened the interests of these individuals, intensified their involvement in life, and exposed them to a wider spectrum of concerns, values, activities, and goals.

For some couples, honesty was an especially important element of their developing relationship. Interestingly, three husbands were the ones who emphasized the unique honesty of their spouses. This is, perhaps, partly a comment on a difference in style between men and women frequently encountered in this study and in much literature on marriage; namely, that the wife is enthusiastic, clear and direct about her feelings, and honest in relationships, while the husband is more rational, reasonable, diplomatic, and controlled. Although a stereotype, it does seem to apply to a number of couples as a general description of their contrasting styles.

But another view of honesty focusses less on the "personality trait" and more on the behavior in the specific marital interaction. In the "new" couple's relationship, honesty is an expression of openness and trust. It can enhance and deepen mutual closeness and acceptance. It says, "I can talk to you without any masks, any games. I will let you see me and I will try to see you." Michael Davis, Hugh Farmer, and Dan Turner commented on their wives' honesty, Dan saying

I really never thought I'd meet a person who I could get as close to as Janice. I don't think I'd met anybody who tried so hard to be honest about herself. And honest in showing her feelings about me. I had a sense that I'd found somebody very special. I'd never felt that close to anybody as I did that summer.

One other point of similarity between and within couples was the emotional situation of the individuals at the time of their meeting. Many of these people were at points of crisis or stress at the time they met and dated their future spouse. The Pierces

both had experienced a good deal of loneliness, and their relationship developed during the terminal illness of the elderly aunt with whom Sarah lived. Sarah stated

My aunt had a stroke, we had supported each other emotionally. I was left alone, and John moved in emotionally. We were doing more and more things together, and he bolstered me up .... I remember a sharing of emotion very definitely. My fears about my aunt's health, about loneliness .... I don't know why he was the person I burst out to of all my friends, but we talked for a whole day about my worries and what was important to me. I knew then that this is the person I could care for.

John responded by saying

We've both known a good deal of loneliness. It was something we had in common, it helped to bring us together. I'd been a widower for fifteen years, I was reconciled to it. I had acquaintances, I had no very close friends .... I'd made a kind of life for myself, an emotionally starved one. Particularly after my first wife's small dog died, she acted as a kind of emotional substitute. I wasn't all the time in sorrow, but it was a solitary life.

Both John and Sarah say that before meeting their lives were incomplete, but that they were not looking around for partners. They just found each other, and are filled with wonder and gratitude that this happened. After their marriage, Sarah's aunt entered a nursing home. She died a few months later.

Early in her relationship with Bill, Nancy Joyce was trying to cope with the strain of her parents' divorce and her mother's subsequent nervous breakdown and psychiatric hospitalization. She recalled

When we were going together, a key thing about why we felt so close was what happened when my mother had a nervous breakdown and was hospitalized. You came to take me out, and I just burst into tears. I had only known you since April, and that was the first time we deeply shared something. We were walking, and I broke



down, and it was the best catharsis. It was an amazing help to share this experience with him, to know that he cared and tried to help. I felt better right away.

Nancy cannot pinpoint the reasons she told her "secret" worries to Bill. It remains a mystery to her. But her relationship with Bill was transformed by the experience of sharing deep concerns and anxieties.

The Davis' also met at a time of crisis. "We both ran into each other at a time we were growing a lot, finding ourselves, having problems and going through some soul-searching," said Michael. "We helped each other along." He had been dating Alice's roommate, and was "two-timed" by her. Alice, who had as a teenager experienced the death of both her father and an older sister, practiced an "eat, drink, and be merry" philosophy at college and paid the price for it. She said, "Michael found me at the end of my emotional tether." A senior, she had been jilted by an "artist-type," and had then rushed into an affair with a younger boy. She became pregnant and had criminal abortion. Alice was very upset about this, and fell apart academically and emotionally. She told Michael about the abortion, and "he was tremendous, supportive, understanding." Soon afterwards, while her date was driving her sports car, she was involved in an accident. Her date was not injured, and soon left the area during a school vacation. Alice, however, landed in the hospital with serious facial lacerations. Once again, Michael was there, and their relationship began to grow. Michael was confused about his career plans and goals at this time, but involvement with Alice helped him find direction. As he put it,



"Duress has always done something for me. There was an attachment to Alice there. It made my problems insignificant, it was a healthy thing for me." Alice's enthusiasm for literature also helped Michael find more meaning in his own college work.

About a month after she met Dan, Janice Turner discovered that she was pregnant as the result of an earlier, casual relationship. On a night when a boy she had been counseling at an orphanage had run away to come and see her, Dan also stopped by. She told him she was pregnant, and he responded calmly and reasonably. Most other people were treating her "oddly" at this time. Dan was "running from all the confusion" of a college student strike at that period, and found peace and tranquility with Janice. Furthermore, Dan was living in a commune when he met Janice, a commune fraught with power struggles and rivalries. Dan felt alone in that "communal" atmosphere. Janice said, "I remember your saying at other times that I was like a really special person, a friend of your own, a real friend. I wasn't anybody else's friend in the commune." She was a special source of intimacy for Dan, someone he could become close to and not share equally with other commune members.

In the beginning of their relationship, Hugh Farmer relied on Ellen to help him through some doubts about his professional competency, and through a number of serious and eventually terminal illnesses in members of his family. She was "there" in the midst of all that pain and change. Stan Robinson, in his quiet, unassuming, sometimes tactless way, told how he noticed that Betty was a lonely and private girl. He had recently lost a close friend, and said

that Betty also "seemed to need a friend at the time." At times of emotional difficulty or pain or emptiness, these people seem to have become available to each other, open to beginning a friendship. As I think back to the beginning of my relationship with my wife, Stan's sentence certainly applied to me. I also "needed a friend at the time."

The "meetings" of these couples illuminate a number of fascinating issues which will be elaborated on later in these chapters. Gradually, these nine relationships continued to develop. The couples then faced the decision of whether or not to marry, and this turning point was handled differently by the couples. So let us turn now to the couples' transition from dating to engagement to wedding ceremony.

#### The Decision to Marry and the Wedding Ceremony

... he was reputed one of the wise men that made answer to the question when a man should marry: 'A young man not yet, an elder man not at all.'

Sir Francis Bacon

I considered not including the above quotation in this chapter because its spirit is so plainly contrary to the perspective of this book. But it is such a delightfully cynical statement that I could not help but think about it for a while. It conveys the view that marriage is a "woman's arrangement," a trap for men. I imagine that today if you substituted "woman" for "man" in Bacon's statement, you would not be without some female supporters. Marriage can also be seen as a "man's arrangement," slipping the noose of

domesticity around the neck of a woman who is being told that it is a beautiful necklace of love and romance. Marriage can be humorously, cynically, or depressingly viewed by both men and women as a prison, an end rather than a beginning. Yet people still marry willingly and optimistically, as did the couples in this study. As to the question of whether men or women take the initiative in wanting to be married, these couples provided an equal number of examples of both styles of "the chase." Marriage is a complicated arrangement that belongs to neither partner individually, but is built and created by the couple. It begins at their point of meeting, but really commences to take shape when the couple begins to define the seriousness of their commitment to each other.

The couples I talked with varied considerably in the length of time they dated before either becoming engaged or actually marrying. The Robinsons met and married while Betty was still quite young. She was eighteen and Stan was twenty-two when they met. They were engaged seven months later, and married a year after their meeting. Neither of the Robinsons went to college, but for many of the other individuals interviewed being at college was a major transition point in their lives. They allowed the college years to provide them with separate experiences and independent lives, and consideration of a marriage date was often postponed until the end of college or beyond.

Both Steve and Jean Barrett and Susan and Richard Lewis met early in their college careers, and their relationships continued for close to four years before they married. For the Lewis', Susan was sure about her feelings toward Richard from the very beginning. She dated him exclusively in college. Richard was less definite,

and dated another girl as well until his senior year in college. He then chose Susan, and they were married after a brief engagement. Steve and Jean seem to have eased into an exclusive dating situation from the beginning of their relationship, but Steve left for a year in Europe during Jean's senior year in college. She taught school for a year after her graduation, and they married when he completed his graduate studies in religion.

Hugh Farmer also spent some time out of the country while Ellen, his wife-to-be, began her teaching career in the U.S. Their relationship, however, was not as clearly established as the Barrett's. Hugh left to visit a married sister who was pregnant and living in a foreign country partly out of family responsibility, and partly because of his mother's and his own concern that his two-year relationship with Ellen was "moving too fast." When his mother became ill with cancer, Hugh returned to the U.S., and he and Ellen became engaged after his mother's death. They married shortly thereafter, at a time when his grandfather was very ill. Their year separation was painful for Ellen who was eager to be married and who had always taken the initiative in the relationship. It was seen as a test of the relationship by Hugh, and also as a time when his own sense of himself as competent and independent could develop. His first year of teaching had gone badly, and Hugh did not want to rush from this sense of failure into Ellen's comforting arms. He had found his own family difficult enough to break away from. Ellen now does see the advantages for herself in her year of separate, independent living after college graduation. She also gained some social and work



experience and confidence. The Barretts, too, talked about their separation and the year that followed, when he finished graduate school and she worked, as being helpful in establishing their own separate identities.

While Susan Lewis and Ellen Farmer can both be seen as ready to get married from the very beginning of their relationships with their "slower-paced" and more tentative husbands, the situation was slightly reversed in the cases of the Johnsons and Davis'. Bob and Laura Johnson met in the fall while they were both in graduate school, became engaged in the winter, and married in the summer. For Bob, the decision to ask Laura to marry him was "an entirely emotional thing," and they had not discussed it before. Laura did not say yes right away. She immediately asked about being able to continue her graduate work and career, and Bob was very much in favor of that. Laura did not want to face the alternative of marriage versus a career. After thinking it over for a week, she said yes to Bob's offer. She decided that she was happy with him, and was ready to get married, but was reflective about her final choice.

After a year of dating, when Alice was finished with college, Michael asked her to marry him. He told me, "this one (meaning Alice) didn't want to get married. It took pressure. Her sister is a career lady. I practically had to shove the ring down her throat." Alice said

It was nice to be so avidly pursued. I was only twenty-one .... I was hooked on Michael, but didn't want to get married. Marriage was a dreadful, awe-inspiring step to take ... a contract for life, an incredible commitment. But I wasn't effective in stalling you.



While Alice stressed the powerful, interpersonal meanings of marriage, Michael seemed to downplay the force of the "institution" of marriage. He said it was "like a mortgage, the biggest thing I've ever done." I believe this represents Michael's approach to life, an approach based on the principles of reason, good intentions, and hard work. He did not seem to feel the personal or emotional challenge of marriage as intensely as Alice, but tried to look on marriage as a manageable, long-term commitment. This attitude is represented in even more extreme fashion by Stan Robinson, who said "getting married was sort of like deciding to take a steady job."

Janice and Dan Turner are interesting to consider here, because they are the only couple I interviewed who lived together before becoming engaged or married. After a summer romance, Janice and Dan lived together for a year, and then became engaged "to placate" Janice's parents. A major theme that will be recurring throughout this chapter is that the formal structure of the institution of marriage does have its effects on people. Commenting on his life with Janice pre- and post-engagement, Dan Turner said "maybe engagement made some difference. Before that we didn't talk much about marriage. After we were engaged we talked of it as a real possibility." Engagement, even entered into for "family" reasons, had its impact in moving the couple in the direction of a more serious bond.

About marriage itself, Dan said

It did make some difference. I felt a lot of relief. It was an initiation into becoming, a rite of passage. I thought I'd be taken a little more

seriously by almost everybody. It was difficult as an unmarried student. Married, I was more like a lot of the people I'd be dealing with, taken as being more settled.

Janice added, "At my shower, I felt I was being initiated into a sisterhood of understanding. It was sort of neat and traditional." Engagement and marriage for the Turners and for other couples signified the solidifying of their relationship, its grounding in social tradition. The more transient-seeming "living together" could not achieve for this couple a sense of community with other, "married," couples. For the Turners, and perhaps for others, marriage changed their relationships with others in the world as much as it did their own relationship together. Becoming a "couple" meant that people would view them differently and treat them differently. This, then, would have its effect on their lives separately and in relationship to each other.

I remember John Pierce discussing his first marriage, and saying that as a single, "unattached" man in the Army he felt the "odd man out." Being married helped connect him to the social world around him, as well as to one particular woman. In Hermann Hesse's novels, "The League of Eastern Wayfarers" is composed of people each with their own individualized goal, with a common, uniting direction and purpose. There is a bond between the very diverse members of the League, and this seems to parallel the world of marriage. When couples allow their relationship to deepen, and when they follow the prescribed route for the development of their relationship, they do join a league of fellow travelers. The structure of the journey of marriage provides a common experience

for people which can lead to a feeling of involvement in the world, permanence, and community.

Paradoxically, while marriage joins the individual in a global way to the world of the "married," it also separates the couple from the rest of the world. Marriage usually signifies that the relationship between husband and wife is the most profound and significant relationship in their lives. They are special to each other, available to each other as they are to really no one else. For some people, being engaged or married provides security and a rationale for "cooling off" and structuring relationships with other people, particularly those of the opposite sex. Laura Johnson said, "When I became officially engaged, I felt a relaxation with other guys. I felt, 'they won't ask me out' now." Other people react less enthusiastically to marriage's potentially isolating nature. They are trying to maintain intense individual and couple friendships, and in some cases, even sexual relationships that will co-exist with their marriages. Even in these cases, the marital relationship is usually given top priority. Later, we will look more closely at these different ways of dealing with the "exclusivity" of marriage and outside relationships.

The issue of the establishment of a "couple identity" is also tied to the couple's relationship with their two sets of parents. This is highlighted in the Joyce's engagement and marriage. Bill met Nancy while both were in college. They were pinned in six months, engaged fifteen months later, and eventually married five months after that, in May of Bill's senior year at college. They

really wanted to get married in November of Bill's senior year, but did not because of objections from Bill's parents. While originally scheduled to be married after Bill's graduation, Nancy discovered that she was pregnant and their marriage was moved up one month. The Joyces had known each other for a long time, had quickly settled into an exclusive dating relationship, and found the time from engagement to wedding quite difficult. They felt that being engaged and not married was an incomplete experience. Bill stated

I think the whole business about finally deciding when you're going to get married and going through the whole business of getting married is probably a greater strain than anything else that a couple has to face from the time they first know each other and they first really decide they like each other, and then love each other, and getting married just doesn't fit into the whole ball of wax .... When you get engaged, by then it's a real commitment. I mean it's not something that's done lightly, and then you have a six or nine month wait before you actually get married, or even years in some cases. It's sort of like the time between the election and the inauguration.

This "lame duck" period is caused by the formality of the preparations for the wedding, or by the couple's own desire to ease more gradually into marriage, but on occasion occurs because of parental pressures and demands to wait. While engaged, Nancy and Bill felt married, but were not treated that way by others or allowed to live together as a married couple. Both were close to their families, and it seemed difficult for them to break away from their family homes to form one of their own. They finally accomplished this through the accident of Nancy's pregnancy. Her pregnancy really established the Joyce's credentials as a couple, and led them into the creation of their own, separate family.



Nancy recalled that

It wasn't really like most instances where you so-called have to get married. You know, we had been going together so long and we felt so close to each other, that really it was just a matter of pushing our wedding up a month.

Bill added that "it put a lot more strain on us too. We just knew each other so well, we acted and thought and felt married, and yet we weren't really. It just made for a lot of awkward situations. We faced the awkward situations together." Although their parents were shocked, particularly Nancy's mother, the independence of the couple could no longer be denied. Nancy's pregnancy was very significant from another point of view as well. In the years after giving birth to her first child, she found that she could not become pregnant again due to some complications from the birth control pill. If she had not had that first child, the Joyces would have had no children of their own.

The time of the wedding, for some couples, was a time when the couple clashed with their parents. Specifically, the women frequently argued with their mothers about the nature of the wedding ceremony and reception. Janice Turner, Ellen Farmer, Susan Lewis, and Betty Robinson all fought with their families around the issue of who the wedding was for--the couple or the parents. The arguments concerned the location of the wedding, the nature of the ceremony, and the style and tone of the reception. In instances where there were disagreements, the mothers usually won out. The husbands tended to stay on the periphery of these discussions, and went along with the final decision.



Several of the paradoxes discussed earlier come into play in conceptualizing these couples' separations from their families of origin through the wedding ceremony. While establishing their identities as separate couples, these marriages also brought the couples into the world of the extended family, into the realm of the family system and family relationships. Even though in separating from their parents these couples differentiated themselves and established their independence, they also became a part of a larger, whole family through socially and familiarly approved procedures. And once again in the wedding itself one can see marriage's characteristic fusion of the everyday and the dramatic. The moment of taking one's vows and joining one's life to another is a powerful and vivid experience, but it is also couched in a ritual and social format that is predictable and mundane. All weddings, I feel, carry this dual spirit of both "another big party" or family gathering and a transforming moment in the lives of two, specific people.

I have left mentioning the Pierces for the last because their situation, getting married in middle-age, is very special, and because they are the couple most eloquent about the significance of the religious ceremony of marriage. After knowing each other for two years, the Pierces' relationship intensified during the six-month period when Sarah's elderly aunt was very ill. They were very sure of their feelings toward each other, and as John said

It was a smooth convergence, as if it were fore-ordained. We learned we could spend a whole day together, we didn't lose our tempers, we liked the experience of being together. The idea of marriage hadn't crossed my mind before that.

Sarah said, "it was just inevitable. Everything fitted together." These statements echo the point made in describing the early courtships of these couples. These relationships were highly characterized by comfort, ease, and natural development. For most couples, marriage seemed, as John said, the "next logical step" in the progression of their lives together. Dan Turner stated that "there was no reason not to get married." But couples differed in the manner in which they approached this next step of becoming married.

Some couples found great meaning in the religious context of the wedding ceremony. For Sarah Pierce

In marriage, as distinct from a roommate, or a friendship, or a love relationship outside of marriage, the fact of having made a commitment in a religious ceremony is important. It lays down a contract, recognized by many people, of certain conditions under which this will continue. The contract is a foundation, and sets the relationship as different from any other. It is a shaking thing .... If it is only a social commitment, if society changes what happens to the commitment? The same is true for family or friends. As a sacrament, we brought something to creation, something that was more than either person involved.

John concluded that "there's a sense of responsibility. It's not a thing to be lightly entered upon."

Laura Johnson believes in "taking your vows seriously," and Bob maintained that

if there is a broader license of sexual intimacy, what kind of commitment can you make to your partner (speaking of unmarried couples)? There's no public declaration or taking of vows. There should be a lasting, strong, definite commitment to such a union. I can't condone laxity in commitment. If you take religion seriously, and are married in a religious ceremony, you can't continue to consider yourself married in adultery.

The Pierces, Johnsons, and Barretts all stressed the importance of the religious foundation of their marriages, and the meaning their marital vows had in their lives. Other couples also went through religious ceremonies, but these were not discussed as being exceptionally important to the relationship. Bill Joyce even said that "the wedding was the least part of it. It was just a nice sending-off point." These other couples each seemed to share a positive feeling about marriage and its significance, although these were largely secular feelings.

The Davis', however, expressed more confusion and more of a disagreement about the nature and seriousness of marriage. I mentioned earlier Alice's sense of marriage as "awe-inspiring" and Michael's thinking of it "like a mortgage." In my final session with this couple, we were discussing fidelity, an issue that has been a difficult one for the Davis' as we shall later see. Here is a brief excerpt of that conversation:

Alice: I can't promise absolute and total fidelity for the next fifty years.

Michael: Don't get hung up on the sanctified vows.

Alice: It blew my mind when I got married. Making the commitment scared the devil out of me. I'm not goal-oriented. It bothers me that my life has been undirected.

Michael: You're not in jail. The vows weren't for me.

Alice: They were sort of ....

Michael: The whole bit (marriage) was for somebody else.

Alice: You're the one who wanted to get married.

Michael: That was my manifestation of societal and family demands. I was getting sick of commuting. I married to get rid of the hassles more than anything else. I wanted to be with you, I didn't want any crap.

Alice: Is that a dumb reason to get married?

Michael: I didn't memorize and hold you to the vows.

Michael seemed very defensive throughout this exchange, saying that he was not holding Alice to any set of expectations. Those marital vows, he claimed, were all for the benefit of other people. But Alice felt that they were for Michael, and they frightened her. Whether or not the religious aspect is emphasized, the act of getting married is one of significant communication. It is an exchange of promises, perhaps articulated, perhaps implicit. It is a "shaking" event, and I feel there is a danger in treating a powerful emotional experience casually and practically. Although most couples eased into their decision to marry and their actual wedding, that decision did change their lives. For all its joy and wonder, marriage is also a serious matter, an enormous commitment, challenge, and risk.

In reviewing the early relationships of these nine couples, several common patterns emerged from the interviews. These relationships began in a comfortable, accepting, natural, and gradual manner. The partners appreciated their ability to communicate with each other: to talk, to listen, and to be listened to by the other. They felt that they shared a common personal language, the result of having a similar approach to life. Couples also met at times of emotional strain or crisis in their individual lives. Their

availability or readiness for relationship seemed enhanced by personal and environmental stresses and difficulties. Perhaps the special comfort that a close, confirming relationship can provide appeared especially attractive and necessary at such times.

The institution of marriage also had its effect on couples. Becoming engaged and then married moved the couples along a socially approved and established route of increasing interpersonal intimacy and community involvement. Marriage was seen as a communal as well as a "couple" ritual. One joined a community of married people, was treated by them as married, and began establishing roots in life. Permanence and commitment are two of the pledges many people make or imply when they marry. There was a sense in these couples' statements of marriage representing the creation of an entity larger than its two creators. Couples appeared aided in this act of creation by the previous work each partner had done to establish his or her own identity. This was achieved in part by the years before marriage that several couples spent living and working separately. All of the above themes and issues arose in conversations about the couples' meetings and marriages, and they will continue to be developed in succeeding chapters.



C H A P T E R VII  
THE ROLE OF RELIGION AND THE  
SENSE OF "BEING AT HOME"

Marriage represents the solidifying of a relationship in a context of family and community involvement. The pledge inherent in the ceremony of marriage is one of continuing commitment. The couple begins to build a life together, and this ongoing act of creation depends heavily on the "foundation" of the marital union. The realm of personal values reveals what an individual holds to be most important and meaningful in his or her life. Two value-areas that were emphasized by couples in this study were religion and the concept of "home." These particular values continue to amplify the importance of a couple's establishing their "place" in their spiritual and social worlds.

Earlier, each couple's shared approach to life was discussed. An essential element of that sense of seeing the world in a similar way is the sharing of religious values. Each couple evidenced, from the very beginning of the relationship, a basic agreement between the partners about the importance of formal religious tradition in the marriage, and about the philosophical and ethical beliefs that are the basis for religious systems. For some couples, church attendance and organized religious involvement were not seen as important. Alice and Michael Davis both disliked what they termed "organized religious nonsense," and stated that involvement with other people, commitment to other people, was their "level" of religion. Janice Turner also felt that a feeling of community was

"religious," but that organized denominations did not support that spirit of unity. For the Turners, family and friends are primary sources of community. Although Bill Joyce has served on several committees at his church, the Joyces made a clear distinction between "faith" and "religion." They said that they both had a great deal of faith, but did not consider "formal religion" an important part of their lives.

Perhaps because many of these couples were referred to me by ministers, several individuals were very articulate in describing the meaning of religion in their lives and marriages. I have already mentioned the Pierce's sense of the "sacrament" of marriage, the foundation provided a marriage by the contract of the religious ceremony. A relationship can be ephemeral, but a shared purpose or belief can help establish the existence of a couple. Sarah said that in a religious wedding ceremony, "you pledge not only to yourself, but in the presence of God and this company. There are witnesses there. This conceptualizes your marriage. It puts it in a framework that is significant to you. It gives the relationship roots."

Within this framework of "a marriage in the church," the Pierces have maintained certain attitudes toward marriage and religious ritual and belief. Feeling married in the eyes of God has helped the Pierces "work harder" at their marriage. They feel a great sense of responsibility, a responsibility to continue being helpful and loving toward each other. As John said, in their meaning of religion,

... sharing a spiritual exercise is more to the point than belief in the abstract. There is a sharing in a specific ritual, and that helps. It's a kind of grooming, a spiritual hair-brushing ... I think the church has given an added dimension to our married life. It provided an additional set of routines we go through together. It helped to strengthen our sense of togetherness.

John and Sarah go to communion twice a week, but also make use of their religious tradition in day-to-day affairs. Sarah recalled being

... in the process of saying prayers one night, and I remembered some minor inconsideration of John's. I thought, 'that's what forgive their trespasses is all about.'

Because of the religious framework of their marriage, the Pierces have certain well-defined ways of dealing with frictions or antagonisms in their relationship. Both are able to confess to "sins," and to say they're sorry. For John

In a religious tradition, you can regularly acknowledge your personal imperfection as a sinner. This is a help in close, personal relationships. When I've felt a passing annoyance at Sarah, I've tried to remind myself that I'm not all that perfect.

In Sarah's words, "when you are married for eternity, small irritations aren't that important." She and John see a value in avoiding "the tangle of talking everything over frankly." The Pierces see their relationship as being very important, not only to themselves but to "God and this company." This provides them with humility and with a broad dedication to maintain the relationship. Smaller, passing problems can be seen as such in the context of a higher, religious purpose and tradition.

Stan and Betty Robinson both believe in the "love of mankind,"

and share the same moral and religious values. Betty, however, is more deeply involved in formal church-going and church activities. She is able to rely on the church at moments of crisis or difficulty. If she has a problem, she will go to church and pray, and this "relieves a lot of the pressure." Betty belongs to a prayer group that she calls "a steadying factor" in her life. Stan is not a person who will spend a good deal of time discussing problems, and Betty seems to have managed to avoid continuously running up against his complacency by dealing with her problems at church. They do discuss important problems, but for the more minor obstacles "prayer" alone is Betty's answer. As was true for the Pierces, in certain instances religious procedures manage to circumvent potentially aggravating and petty discussions.

The Robinsons are a couple that have not become involved in many close outside relationships. But they have met most of the couples they do know through the church. The Lewis' also talked about the sense of community they have found within the church. Richard felt that "outside of our jobs, the major ways we've gotten to know people have been through the church and service activities." Susan said that

... a very significant thing is having a basic Christian understanding of life. I can't think of any good friend who isn't in that category. Mostly, I tended to fall in love with ministers first. Most people I know are involved in working at the Christian faith. They are ministers or are in there struggling. I went out with three men who were going to be ministers and became teachers. We share a basic assumption that Jesus Christ makes a difference.

Although Richard and Susan share the same religious concerns and

values, they do so at different levels of intensity. Richard said that "Susan enjoys struggling with the fundamental issues of life. Through the church, she gets fired up. I'm not incapable of it, but she's more that way than I am." Religion can serve to place a couple's relationship in a total system of belief, and also provides some couples with a connection to others whose world-view they share.

Although some couples have changed their values over the years, they have done so in harmony. Susan Lewis pointed out that

Our value systems are the same. They're not the same as they used to be, but they've changed together. It's interesting that they've changed together .... Our religious beliefs are the same and have changed. We belong to the same church. We've participated in 'growth experiences' together. Our church experience is very important to us .... Now we're into more of an underground church style .... I've become more of an activist. We've both been socially concerned all along. We support each other in whatever the cause happens to be.

The Lewis' have moved from a more traditional religious commitment to one that stresses social activism and community involvement. They have traveled down this road together, supporting each other's efforts along the way. Interestingly, they have become more involved in human relations training laboratories as a part of their religious experience. A few years ago, Susan took a course at her church on the changing role of women in our society. This was a crucial experience in her gradual realization that she wanted more out of her life than the roles of wife and mother. Clearly, church involvement has been a continuing central experience in the lives of the Lewis'.



The Farmers also were aware of a "cultural common denominator" in their relationship, even though their family backgrounds seem externally different. Ellen's family was lower middle-class, while Hugh's was well-educated and establishment upper middle-class. They both shared an appreciation for "things intellectual" and believed in the value of learning. The Pierces, who "talked each other's language," also found a common bond in their love of words, literature, and learning. The same can be said of the Barretts. It should be noted at this point that these nine couples are a very special group, in that they sincerely value education or family life over material possessions and stress their faith in and concern for other people in their world.

The Farmers claimed that their shared religious values had contributed greatly to the success of their relationship. Hugh, whose father was a minister, said that "church attendance is very important to us. We've been mutually satisfied in a series of different churches. We grew together in evolving values around religious matters, and from a liberal Protestant tradition we've embraced Unitarianism." Ellen affirmed the extension of religious activity to social concern, saying "we both have a sense of the worth of individuals. This carries through in our daily work, in the racial area for example." This commitment to other people was the unifying theme of the couples who had rejected formal religious involvement.

Both the Barretts and the Johnsons have had strong religious traditions, but are currently uncertain about their religious lives.

Steve Barrett was a minister himself, as was his grandfather, and Steve and Jean met at a student Christian conference. They were questioning things then about formal religion, and Steve eventually left the ministry. Now, although they still attend church, they are once more in the midst of questions. Curiously, when I brought up the area of possible threats to their relationship, Steve mentioned religion. Here is that exchange:

Steve: Maybe the religious dimension is a threat.

Jean: I don't see it as potentially threatening to our marriage.

Steve: Neither of us is satisfied with our formal religious life. It's not as full as it should be. We're thinking of joining up with another religious group. We're longing for something that's missing.

Jean: We're not ready to divorce ourselves from religious involvement, but I'm questioning my religious life.

Bob and Laura Johnson both feel that it is important to take their marital vows seriously, and have always attended church regularly. But in response to my question about topics they find difficult to discuss, they brought up religion.

Laura: We haven't talked about religion, and we always mean to.

Bob: Because we've been going to church together for a long time, the conversation is more implied than actual. We have a vague feeling of what the other one thinks. Unless pushed, I feel comfortable with that.

Laura: I'm not sure what it is I believe; it's hard to talk about.

Bob: I don't want to probe around. It may be kind of threatening.

These discussions were not overly grim or serious, but the religious area is important for the Barretts and the Johnsons. It seems to represent for them a major shared view of life and responsibility. At a time when many other aspects of life are changing for couples, I feel that these people want to keep the religious area stable, if not well-discussed. The thought of changes in religious belief is a mildly threatening one for these two couples. In a busy life-style, sometimes the most basic and fundamental issues can get overlooked and exist as a dull ache of potential concern.

Another basic value that is frequently ignored in studies of marriage is the sense of home, of having a place in the world. In the I-It mode of experience, the predominant themes are those of alienation, the stranger, and homelessness. Individuals are seen as drifters, interacting but not turning towards each other in mutual interest and concern. When two people achieve a more personal, dialogic connection, they are more tied to the world of others, more involved in life. The structure of marriage and the family intensifies the formal intertwining of self and other, of the individual to another person and to the larger world of couples and families. Mayeroff (1972) comments on the relational foundation of the sense of "being at home," writing

In the sense in which a man can ever be said to be at home in the world, he is at home not through dominating, or explaining, or appreciating, but through caring and being cared for (p. 2) .... we are 'in place' in the world through having our lives ordered by inclusive caring .... Place is not something I have, as if it were a possession. Rather, I am in-place because of the way I relate to others. And place must be continually renewed and reaffirmed .... (pp. 54-55)

A basic element of a "caring" relationship is constancy, the continued presence of the other person. A number of couples also described the importance to them of some stability and continuity in where they lived. Our society is blurringly mobile, and I was intrigued to listen to some couples emphasize the value they placed on having a sense of belonging somewhere. The Johnsons are clear exponents of this philosophy. They spent the early years of their marriage working in Europe, and came back to the U.S. when they decided to have a child. Currently, they have lived in one community for five years. Bob said

We wanted to become established somewhere. Our backgrounds are quite different in that respect. My family had always lived in Indiana. Home had a very real meaning to me. (You may remember that Laura was raised in Europe during WW II, and came to the U.S. at the age of eight.) There was a mutual feeling of wanting to be established in a community.

Laura contined by saying

We crave a sense of permanence, and we want to impart permanent values to our children .... There was nothing I wanted more in college than to go home and see old friends. Only in this town have we built this nucleus. Here, we can relate friends from other eras of our lives. Now we have a home base.

Before their last move, life had a temporary quality for the Johnsons, and they did little long-range planning. Since they have been "settled," said Bob

Both of us have begun to emerge as individuals. Since we came here, we've been in a stable situation that has permanence attached to it. We can relax, and not anticipate another move in three years. We're over the trial period in this location and things are beginning to make some sense.

Steve Barrett had a strong family background and sense of home, something that Jean had always wanted in her own family. They both feel that family stability is valuable, and after some years abroad and in other locales, are now becoming established in their present community. Jean said, "I feel very much at home here," and Steve added, "I'm pleased to be living here, putting down roots ... I enjoy the notion of having long-range ties with people and institutions." Although the Farmers have moved around a great deal, and do not pay much attention to their present, physical home ("the house houses us"), they have received satisfaction from owning an old farm in Vermont that belonged to Hugh's family. As Ellen put it, "with our Vermont roots, we felt free to transplant for a while. We knew we had the farm .... It belongs to you. It's a retreat."

Sarah Pierce capsulized the sentiments of many of the couples I spoke with by saying, "we like to feel a continuity in life." Before his marriage, John had moved around a great deal. Sarah, although she had spent many years in the same locale, seemed to be lonely and emotionally isolated before her marriage. She had a physical home, but one deprived of its central strength--close, personal relationships. A sense of permanence can nourish relationship, but permanence alone can lead to emotional atrophy and stagnation.

From the statements of the couples in this study, it appears that the early years of marriage are often characterized by mobility and a gradual growth in understanding of self and other in the relationship. The desire for permanence, for roots, seems to become



prominent after a number of years of marriage, and certainly the addition of children to the relationship is an important factor in valuing a "home." As the marital relationship deepens through experience and knowledge, as the individual lives of the spouses become more directed and coherent, and as the children begin to get older, some couples begin to work towards a feeling of permanence, "place," and continuity in their lives.

Associated with the feeling of being at home is a sense of tradition, of an ongoing family history. In marriage, two people can develop a common tradition, or, as the Turners phrased it, "one tradition for the two of us." Hugh Farmer credited Ellen with maintaining traditions in their family:

Ellen has a very strong sense of tradition. That's a conventional or traditional role for womenfolk, I suppose. She's started our family traditions, and sees that they get perpetuated. Sometimes they represent a denial of her family's traditions, sometimes they're a carry-over from my family. They provide a sense of continuity and stability. I value it.

In other couples, this tradition-building and maintaining function was not only the wife's responsibility.

One potential danger of tradition and a strong sense of home is that the couple can become insulated from the outside world. The extension of home as a retreat is home as a fortress. A few couples had experienced the inhibiting and suffocating potential of "home," particularly the Farmers. Ellen was "concerned that our relationship with family is so close that there's no room for anyone else." Ellen was upset when she said this, upset partly at herself. She has a concern for social propriety, and is formal and nervous about

entertaining guests. Hugh has found this inhibiting, and has decreased his attempts at drawing people into their home. As a result, Ellen has felt more isolated and anxious. As Hugh noted, a sense of tradition can also cause an adverse reaction to any new situations.

There is a definite tension in life, and particularly in marriage, between the old and the new, between the established and the unknown. Nancy Joyce moved around often in her childhood, and appreciated Bill's more stable upbringing. She said

I like change, yet I do like roots. I'm torn. I've thought of returning to Bill's old family home-  
stead in Connecticut. I'm a sentimentalist family-  
wise and tradition-wise. Yet I like new places and  
new things too.

It is difficult to achieve both stability and excitement in a relationship, and this is one of the areas that requires some effort on the part of the couple. If a balance is not attained, the relationship loses its spirit through either fossilization or disintegration. In the Davis' marriage, Michael seems to have been the spokesman for home and family. He was "oriented to a settled way of life" when he was twenty or twenty-one years old. Alice was always hesitant about marriage and its sometimes confining commitment. The fact that Alice has looked for excitement in relationships outside of her marriage is indicative of this difference between her and Michael. She finds satisfaction in marriage, but wonders about the possibilities for excitement beyond marriage. Michael does not experience this conflict as intensely, and does not make it an easy issue for Alice to discuss with him. As a result, a tension exists near the surface in this couple.

These nine couples' varying religious values and conceptions of "home" helped provide them with a center for their lives together. Some found much structure in religious ritual and participation and family traditions, others had less delineated and more implicit senses of what was important in their lives. Each person, however, had a clear sense of their own values, and did not feel that these were imposed on them by others. In contrast, I have seen husbands and wives in marital therapy who also share value systems. In those cases, the couple often resents or rejects their own values, which they feel are unsatisfying and the result of external (often parental) pressures. Their unity in approach to life is not a source of strength, but a bond of self-contempt and powerlessness.

One theme came through consistently in discussions of religion and home. These people took their lives, marriages, and families very seriously. Not grimly, or compulsively, or joylessly, but seriously. As a group, they treated their spouses and their marriages with respect and concern. They felt a connection to other people, to their society, to the world around them. Most importantly, many looked below the externals of life and tried to encounter some basic meanings and truths. To do this together, to share mutual dilemmas and discoveries can be a binding force in marriage. Religion and home can be values that provide a foundation for everyday life, that provide some permanence, some "standards" in a time of emotional and relational chaos. But this serious approach requires an effort on the part of the couple. That effort, in its broadest sense, can be seen as the "work" of a relationship, an issue that is the subject

of our next chapter.

## C H A P T E R VIII

### THE "WORK" OF RELATIONSHIP

If you consider love to be a form of relationship then descriptions of the workings of that relationship are also statements about love itself. I spent some time talking with couples specifically about "love" and its meanings, but they also told me a good deal along the way of how they managed to live successfully with each other. As is true for all topics covered in the interviews, their comments reflected on love as well. This chapter deals with the "work" of relationship. It looks at some elements of confirming relationships, some key attitudes and actions that make these couples' marriages work.

Before discussing the processes of these actual relationships, I would like to explain why I am using the word "work" in this chapter. Although I intended to question couples about what contributed to their love, what was helpful to their marriages, I noticed with interest that a number of couples expressed a belief in a particular orientation toward relationships. This could best be summarized as a "work ethic" for personal relationships. It is a belief that it is important and necessary for two people to consciously work at living together. They felt strongly that relationships, marriages, did not just happen, but had to be both attained and maintained. And that takes work.

Dan Turner told me that

... a lot of our good relationship is trying to live up to an ideal of what relationships should be, or ideals about how we think our lives should be, ideals of feelings for each other. We try to make reality match up to our



imaginations and emotions. It takes some effort to be conscious of that, it doesn't come easily. It's a continual effort. Things don't work out nicely by themselves. We try to be sensitive to the other person. Sometimes it's hard to see where the motivation comes for doing that.

Janice continued Dan's thought, saying

... it's a decision to support the relationship and really try to understand why the other does certain things, why things happen the way they do and not how you'd expect. The good things in the relationship make it attractive to do this.

Laura Johnson was disturbed by "the reluctance of couples to work at relationships. It's important not to take the easy way out, to take your marriage vows seriously, to accept responsibility. I find the divorce rate staggering." "It's essential to work on relationships," said Susan Lewis, and Richard said he thought the word "maintain" conveyed the type of effort required in a relationship. Sarah Pierce simply said, "I realized that to live with another person for life, you have to work at it."

Like most terms, "work" elicits both positive and negative associations. There is work that is drudgery--lifeless, monotonous, and imposed by others. There is also work that is difficult but satisfying, willingly accepted, creative, and challenging. Bill Joyce pointed to the necessity of some mutuality for the existence of a positive attitude toward working at a relationship. He said

It depends on how you look at it, whether you have a positive or negative attitude toward work. The work aspect could be confused with giving. Giving of yourself is working in your marriage. There should be an even balance, because if you're giving too much, you'll feel that you're working too hard ... we seem to take turns giving. That's how we make our marriage work.

If both partners sense that their working, their giving, their love is not one-sided, then perhaps there can be a mutual dedication to work at the marriage. And anyone who is married, I feel, has experienced these two kinds of work. At times, you feel oppressed, drained, and weighted down. On other occasions, you feel a sense of achievement and purpose, perhaps even elation, as you see the relationship grow and mature.

The clear, overall impression from these couples, however, is that they see their relationships as being their responsibility, their task, their project. This work ethic (interesting that these are Protestant couples) seems to contribute to a sense that their lives are in their control. Without mechanizing or de-mystifying marriage or love, the work orientation appears to add a necessary spirit of rationality and order to an otherwise chaotic domain. These couples agree with C. S. Lewis' succinct statement about love: "We must do the works of Eros when Eros is not present." Intense feelings, spontaneous moments are a part of love, but so also are conscious effort, planning, and wisdom.

Connected to this work philosophy, this rational spirit, is an attitude of confidence, of faith in the relationship. It is a belief in marriage, an expectation that things can and will work out. Stan Robinson, terse as usual, said "we came from fairly stable families, we expected it to be the same with us." Jean Barrett went into greater detail on this point, saying

We made a commitment to each other to work out a relationship. There was an agreement, a mutual trust that we'll be able to work out a happy marriage relationship. It may change. It's quite different from when we started. The underlying assumption is that

marriage is a good thing. We've chosen, we're going to stand by it. It means working at problems as they come up, trying to anticipate problems, be honest about things, be honest before things get to the point where they're hard to explain. It's a sense of confidence that human beings can work things out.

Both the Lewis' and Davis' expressed a view commonly held among these couples: that it is important to face problems together and to demonstrate that these problems can be both understood and overcome. Richard Lewis said that he and Susan "became convinced that if there's a hassle, as long as we'd really talk about it and work it through, we'd be able to handle it." Michael Davis said of his marriage that

We both place a high premium on working out differences. We're both upset at the idea that there's anything we can't come to an understanding about. We have a need to work things out, to solve problems. We don't function well on an antagonistic basis, we want to handle things quickly .... It's important to us to try to get at differences, to try and work together in some spirit of cooperation, not arrogance.

Alice continued

You praise the person, give support, back what they're doing. We've always tried to be positive with each other. I don't know how a relationship can survive a lot of carping, although you've got to disagree too.

The general philosophy of this group of couples seems to be one of optimism, rationality, and dedication. With a confident belief in their future as a couple, they seek to quickly and thoroughly deal with problems and restore order. And, they seem to derive renewed faith in themselves as a couple by successfully doing so. These couples stressed a number of different ways of working at relationship, and these descriptions are the living examples of their work-oriented philosophies.

One major aspect of these relationships is that over time a couple learned more about each other as individuals, and about their interactions together. Dan Turner's remarks can serve as an introduction to this area. He said

A lot of it seems obvious and sort of mundane, but the longer you live with somebody, the more you know how they live, just from day to day, and what kinds of things affect them and how. You learn to tolerate them and be aware of them and anticipate things .... The longer we spend with each other, the easier it is to know how certain things will make the other feel. It becomes easier to anticipate.

As Sarah Pierce put it,

You have to work at it. We were lucky with our long engagement, so the adjustment in marriage was not as difficult. You keep on learning. You learn how your partner is likely to react to things, sensing if they're feeling upset or unhappy, and trying to make life easier at that time.

Bob Johnson, commenting on what he viewed as stages in his relationship with Laura, said

I don't feel you know each other as well in the initial period. After a time, you gain more realism, you know what the other partner is capable of. We haven't been as demanding of the other as to what they wanted to do with their lives.

Alice Davis addressed the concept of stages of relationship in a similar way, stating that

You're treading on much more familiar ground after living with someone for a while. The marriage becomes quieter, you've already verbalized things, the verbal business slows down. You don't talk as much as when you were initially in love. A lot you can communicate without verbalizing, in a shorthand. You have a better feeling of how someone will react.

Discussing the work ethic of relationship, Jean Barrett mentioned "learning the things which make a person happy, and creating the



conditions to bring this about."

There is an active quality to this learning over time. Each partner seemingly has to try to understand and make sense of the other's actions and feelings. The marital relationship possesses enough structure and potential longevity to allow this mutual education to occur. "Knowing," says Mayeroff (1972), is a major element of "caring." He writes,

To care for someone, I must know many things. I must know, for example, who the other is, what his powers and limitations are, what his needs are, and what is conducive to his growth; I must know how to respond to his needs, and what my own powers and limitations are.  
(p. 13)

A danger inherent in this interpersonal education is that discoveries and learnings can become fixed and rigid, final theories about the other person. I have often heard a husband or wife say that he or she knows the other "like a book," knows their every thought and feeling. I always bristle at the idea that I am so transparent or thoroughly understood by another. I know I am more complicated than that, and that the other person's knowledge of me is incomplete. Perhaps more than breeding contempt, familiarity can naively and abruptly end the process of learning about the other. And without the possibility of discovery, how can any excitement remain in a relationship?

What happens, then, when one's assumptions about the other are challenged by the other's "new" behavior or attitudes? "You don't know a person well when you get married," said Jean Barrett:

There's some predictability, though. As time goes by you can take that part of the person for granted, and feel that you know them better than anybody. Then,



all of a sudden, they do something or you don't respond, and it's unpredictable, and that's where the fragility comes in. The hard time comes. This can cause deep-rooted frictions, and the working out of those situations makes or breaks a marriage. It's a big problem if you can't deal with the new part of that other person. And yet, every marriage needs some predictable understanding.

Jean, I feel, is touching on a central issue in marriage, one we have encountered before. Marriage, for many, needs to be a combination of the new and the old, the familiar and the exciting, the predictable and the unpredictable. People do need to learn solid truths about each other and establish satisfying ways of interacting with each other. But there also can be a flexibility that will allow changes, deviations from the norm, personal growth, and new discoveries to be assimilated into the marriage. The key point seems to be that the "process" of marriage, working at marriage, can never stop. No end point of total conclusions can be reached without suffocating the marriage, suspending it in an interpersonal amber. The end of growth, of change, of surprise, is death, and this is certainly true for relationships. Yet it is hard to live with change. Jean, for example, is very threatened by some of Steve's unpredictabilities, as well as by some of her own. Order and certainty are attractive, and change demands an effort and a new risking of the relationship. Some couples, in this study the Robinsons and Joyces particularly, seem to resist the notion of change and try hard to see the constancies of their life together. Others face the unpredictability of marriage more directly, try to admit to their anxiety and surprise, and then incorporate these new aspects into their continuing relationship.

Some individuals discussed how, through their marriages, they have attained a greater understanding of human existence. As a result of working at an intimate relationship, a person can become more sensitive to the complexities of personal experiences. The couple's relationship can be seen as the laboratory or classroom for this form of discovery or education. Dan Turner noted that

... both of us this year have come to a better understanding of how human beings operate. Now I stop and think about why I'm angry, or what I'm upset about. Our actions have become more deliberate. We're now better at talking things out productively.

Steve Barrett said that he had just recently become aware of "an emotional Newton's Law." He saw his behavior causing an appropriate reaction from Jean. In these instances, the individual felt an increase in knowledge about himself, his spouse, and about other people in general.

The Pierces discussed some of the advantages of a "middle-aged marriage," and one was the fact that both partners had already experienced life. They had been exposed to the world, to other people, and had learned a few things. John said,

I had moved around. You had the experience of meeting all kinds of people in social work. The difference in a middle-age marriage is that without realizing it, you've seen a larger panorama of people in different situations, you've absorbed a little more understanding of human nature. You don't expect either too much or too little. You're perhaps less shocked if somebody you're interested in does something different than you expect them to.

Maturity helps foster a more realistic attitude and a greater tolerance for momentary failures in a relationship. A much younger couple, the Joyces, made a similar point about avoiding unrealistic

expectations of the other. Nancy said it was important "to look at each other as human and having conflict and having anger, and not holding such high expectations of somebody so that when they blow up they're not a part of anything you love anymore."

Another facet of the work of relationship is the couple's ability to reach a compromise on various issues or situations. Two individuals join their lives together, and the question becomes one of how mutual decisions are made, how two people live as one unit. Betty Robinson said, "It's trying to live with each other in mind. There's no real independence. In marriage you are influenced by your partner." Dan Turner spoke of "having to give up some of your own individual plans" in marriage, and Janice said it was a matter of "putting yourself under a certain influence. That requires making a decision." Bob Johnson felt that "when two people live together, even of the same sex, because of the close association you get a situation where one person has to compromise his own behavior and standards in order to stay together." And Michael Davis commented on the "need for general consideration of the other. Before marriage, life all revolved around one's own preferences. You can't do this in marriage. You need a give and take."

The Pierces believe that you have to work at "putting the unit first" ahead of the individuals involved. John described this process as requiring

... a reasonable attitude. It involves choice and the taking on of responsibility. It is the readiness to subordinate one's own particular impulse of the moment to the longer term interest of the marriage. On a lower plane, it's like a partnership in business. You pledge

to retain your investment in the business, and don't pull out your capital for another short-run profitable venture.

Sarah concluded,

You can't have it both ways, marriage and your own way all the time. Priorities, that's what's important .... It's a problem if you think that because you love someone giving up your own will is painless. It's not true, it may still hurt!

John concluded this exchange, saying "it's like a calculus, a matter of less pain in the long run. There have been very few times when either of us has said 'I insist on' or 'No, I won't.'" Dan Turner said that learning to compromise consisted of "knowing when things are worth compromising and when they aren't. In part this depends on the relative importance to each person. You try to reach a decision you both agree on."

Part of this ability to compromise comes from having attained an understanding of one's self and one's partner. This allows for a reasonable assessment of priorities, an ability to know what is really important, and to make a mature choice about whether a compromise is warranted. Communication is also crucial here, and this element of working at a relationship will be discussed shortly.

A striking theme in these couples' discussions of compromise was their talking of their marriage, or the marital "unit," as if it were a third party or an entity in itself. Concessions were not made solely for the other partner, or for one's own benefit, but also for the sake of the partnership. This sense of the tangible existence of the marital relationship makes it something that can be worked for and sacrificed for. In a relationship which lacked this concept of unity, of couple identity, then subordinating or modifying one's



own desires or wishes might seem like a defeat, a loss to the other person. When the other person is seen as being linked to oneself in a conjoint unit, the sense of defeat is lessened or eradicated. Compromise, like so many other words we have looked at, has both positive and negative meanings. It can mean "selling out," abandoning one's principles, or it can mean making a sensitive adjustment in a relational balance. "Giving" can also imply weakness or strength, and when the couple has a strong sense of their bond together, then these terms carry their creative flavor.

Communication is also a prime ingredient of the work of relationship. I am employing the word "communication" as a synonym for Buber's "dialogue;" that is either verbal or non-verbal exchanges that are founded on mutual interest, concern, and involvement. Communication occurs when two people are turned toward each other rather than preoccupied with themselves. Couples vary considerably in their amount of verbal activity, and there are some indications that over the years of marriage "talking" between husband and wife may actually decline. Increased familiarity and experience with each other, and the addition of children were cited as reasons for a quieter marital relationship.

At any event, the ability to communicate with each other was a major satisfaction and strength of the beginnings of many couples' relationships, and continues for many to be an important part of their relationship. Dialogue, as Buber has written, can be verbal or non-verbal, and a quieter marriage can be dull and burned-out or intimate and deeply rewarding. The differentiating characteristic is



whether the partners are each isolated in silence or sense and experience a living bond between themselves. Are the quiet times shared or private? Are the conversations shared or private? Is there monologue or dialogue?

Some couples emphasized the importance of being selective about discussions in the marriage. Specifically, they felt that it was frequently better to avoid talking over "minor" problems or difficulties. Earlier I mentioned the Pierces' and Betty Robinson's use of religion, praying, and forgiveness, as a unilateral way of handling small marital irritations. John Pierce also said, "In a marriage, there is often some minor friction. If you pass it over without comment, in a majority of cases three or four days later the thing has vanished. A discussion would make you both more aware of them." Stan Robinson maintained that "sometimes it's better not to talk," but I received the impression that he was referring to almost any personal or intimate discussion or confrontation; Betty seemed to desire more communication at times of upset.

While Stan is a very quiet man by nature, the Pierces' belief in times of silence emerges in the context of a highly verbal and articulate couple and is therefore quite interesting. I was reminded by their statements of a quotation from a 1938 article entitled "Love in America," written by a Frenchman, Raoul de Roussy de Sales. He wrote that

Married couples seem to spend many precious hours of the day and night discussing what is wrong with their relationship ... yet truth is an explosive, and it should be handled with care, especially in marital life ... the theory of absolute sincerity presupposes that, if love

cannot withstand continuous blasting, then it is not worth saving anyway. Some people want their love life to be a permanent battle of Verdun. (p. 103)

Van Den Berg (1964), a Dutch phenomenological psychiatrist, adds that

Generally, it is true that the more people talk to each other, the worse their understanding is. Our time is a loquacious time; and seldom before have people understood each other so badly. Is not a happy marriage characterized by few words and by silence? Married couples who talk a lot usually use words to box each other's ears with. (p. 68)

A central function of communication is to let each partner know the other's feelings or emotional state. John Pierce described "running up a storm signal" to announce some problematic feelings, and said Sarah was better at doing that than he. The Lewis' have clear ways of letting each other know that there have been too frequent separations in the relationship. While Susan can express herself directly, Richard usually becomes "cranky" when their time apart gets too extended. Susan knows how to read Richard's crankiness. Once again here, the woman is more immediate and open about her feelings. When the Joyces have not had a good talk in a while, they notice some special signs in each other. Nancy becomes "snippy" and cold, and Bill gets very pragmatic. Part of the work of relationship seems to be learning the personal language of the other.

The Joyces continued to discuss what they call their "spontaneously regular communication." Nancy said

I think probably the thing that helps the most is that just about every week we have to sit down and just talk. It's really funny. If we don't, about anything, you know, things that happened during the week, or things that we plan to do in five years or things that we plan to do next week, but it seems that if a week and a half

goes by and we don't have a really soul-searching talk, the barriers start going up ....

Bill said "communication is working at the relationship. It's a matter of trying to make sure to take time every week to clear our minds." Laura Johnson stated that she and Bob have

... conserved a certain freshness together. We enjoy being with each other, and we rush home to spend time together. It comes back to the business of being able to talk to each other. There's no one I'd rather tell it to.

Bob emphasized "being able to talk to each other and realizing its absolute necessity. After a week of frantic activity we say whoa." The Johnsons frequently talk to each other about their individual teaching experiences, a shared area of concern. Sarah Pierce mentioned "a willingness to talk about things that interest us" that characterizes her relationship with John. In an interestingly direct yet indirect form of communication, John used to read aloud to Sarah every evening for one hour.

Couples also communicate through humor, and, as mentioned before, humor is an important part of several of these couples' relationships. Not only does humor serve to lighten the burden of day-to-day living, of the serious work of relationship, but it can also provide a couple with a sense of union, of commonality, of seeing things in a similar way. And humor is a pleasant, non-intense, shorthand way of communicating with and being with another person. The Turners and the Joyces referred directly to the value of humor in marriage, but John Pierce and Jean Barrett were the most articulate about the role of humor in their lives:

John Pierce: What's most important is that we find the same things humorous, comic, funny. We can laugh at the same joke a great deal of the time. One couldn't have taken that for granted considering we had grown up six thousand miles apart and met in our forties .... The things that you can laugh at help compensate for the frustrating or outraging aspects of certain times. We both have a Rabelaisian sense of humor. It's the down to earth things that we have in common.

Jean Barrett: We are able to share things in humor which otherwise would be pretty heavy. One of the things I've always liked most about Steve was that I shared a similar view of life, I thought the same things were humorous. Not just "ha ha" humorous, but profoundly humorous. Not everybody would laugh at those things. People we're the most ourselves with, who support us the most, are all people we can laugh with, who we have a common sense of humor with. It gets you over a lot of humps.

Communication represents a couples' involvement with each other, and mutual involvement is a key component of the work of relationship. One of the real dangers in a relationship is becoming preoccupied with your own needs, feelings, and interests, and not attending to the experience of your partner. We have all fallen into this eminently human predicament, but a relationship cannot seem to stand an excess of this self-concern. Jean Barrett pointed out that "it's important that the other be a sounding-board for important things in the other's life. If I'm too involved in myself, there's really a lack of communication. It's important to take the time, even if you're not especially interested yourself." Being there for the other is particularly crucial at times of urgency in the other's life, whether because of great joy, dejection, or merely fatigue. Hugh Farmer said that "love is developing that kind of empathy. It's a complementary pattern. When the other needs a cushion or a



sounding-board, there's a confidence that you can let yourself go when in that state." Sometimes this empathy or sensitivity can lead to a well-timed withdrawal on the part of one spouse. Nancy Joyce told Bill that "when you're down, I maintain myself. That's not the time I'll fall apart or tell you how miserable I am. It's an unconscious thing."

Supporting the other person in a marriage requires first noticing who they are and what they are doing. It also seems to be enhanced by some direct verbalization of the support. Jean Barrett dealt with these issues, saying

There needs to be a recognition of the other person, support of the things they're doing. That's the hardest thing to remember to do. All of us get tied up in ourselves. You can't assume that your partner knows he's being supported. It's very good to discuss this every once in a while. Usually I bring this up.

Dan Turner made the same point about his wife, stating that

Janice is better at being conscious of what the other person has put effort into doing, and to express that. Often I don't. I notice it, but it's not enough just to notice it. It's important that each person doesn't feel isolated from the other. That's something that I try to work on ....

The Lewis' discussed their mutual involvement, and Susan said "when one of us has had an anxiety or a problem, we've always helped each other in a supportive way. Our first commitment is to each other. It works."

Some couples also described the satisfaction they received from being able to give pleasure to their partners. Jean Barrett spoke of



... delighting when you know that something you can do can make another happy. This could be sexual, aesthetic, intellectual .... It takes a conscious will. Well, not always. There are some great spontaneous things, but sometimes you will to do something. You can get lazy about those things. If you get too lazy, things start breaking down.

Laura Johnson said that there is a need to "make room in the rat-race of daily trivia and do special things for each other, say special things." Bob also felt the difficulty of keeping the special elements in an ongoing, busy relationship. He has to "work harder to keep the aspects that made the relationship back then. The enjoyment of being with each other, talking, sharing excitement, disappointment and frustration. Just keeping contact."

In an earlier description of I-It relational experiences, the concept of "exchange" was discussed. Here lovers did things "for" each other because of the response or action they would receive in return. The economic principle underlying this philosophy of relationship is one of maximizing gains while minimizing losses. This exchange theory certainly does characterize many interactions, even between lovers, but seemed inadequate as a total explanation of the process of a relationship. I was therefore particularly interested to hear Janice Turner spontaneously refute this theory's applicability to her own life with Dan. She said,

I feel that Dan cares about me enormously. The things he does are really kind and thoughtful things. And it isn't as if he wants to trade them for something. I feel as though I've been living with him for an eternity.

The view of love as a basically non-utilitarian relationship is not unduly idealistic or based on a naive sense of altruism. It appears

that people can and do care about other people in a sincere manner.

Additionally, in a close, intimate relationship there seems to be some merging of the individual and the relational unit. Being part of the relationship makes it natural and meaningful to work for that relationship, even sacrifice for it. The work and sacrifices are not done solely for oneself, but perhaps not solely for the other either. If the other person has become a part of yourself through the relationship, then his or her needs and feelings are "made present" in one's own, separate person. The closeness of the relationship allows for a deep understanding of the other. It also establishes a sense of connection that leads to a more intense sharing of experience and mutual giving. This is all theoretical speculation about relationships, but couples do talk of similar phenomena. Earlier we learned of the Pierces' "putting the unit first" in their marriage. Michael Davis, in mentioning the necessity of each partner appreciating the other's needs and interests, spoke of "the other person's needs becoming a part of your own needs." We will return later to this issue of the interconnection between individuality and relationship.

Different couples stressed a variety of elements of a loving relationship. Dan Turner told of the importance of patience in reacting to Janice's anxiety about intimacy in the relationship:

I learned about patience in dealing with her anxiety about physical intimacy. I know Janice feels this way, but it wasn't easy on me. It hasn't come up recently. We talked about it some. It was irritating to me. I showed that, and it didn't help anything. It was hard for her to talk to me about it. I found it best to be patient, and try to encourage us to do what might be helpful. I got out of school, and we had time to spend with each other and do things together, and that helped.

Richard Lewis reacted in the same patient, accepting way to Susan's early anxiety about being seen naked. He did not force her or make demands she could not meet. Richard accepted Susan, tried to be helpful, and tried to understand. Mayeroff (1972) makes the excellent point that patience is an active process, not a bored and sullen waiting for the tide to turn. He writes,

Patience is not waiting passively for something to happen, but it is a kind of participation with the other in which we give fully of ourselves. And it is misleading to understand patience simply in terms of time, for we give the other space as well. (p. 17)

Patience, like listening, can be a dramatic giving of concern.

Respect was another attitude singled out by couples as being especially important in their relationships. Once again Jean Barrett's emphasis on the "recognition" of the other person is a central point. Respect begins with "seeing" the other in an accepting and realistic manner, and then describes the way in which the other's "difference" or uniqueness is confronted. Bob Johnson brought up the fact that he and Laura have always had to cope with their simultaneous careers:

That's run throughout our relationship, and it's been one of the motivating sacrifices on both our parts. We honor the professional commitment of the other. We talk about it quite a bit. This understanding has reduced a lot of conflict and friction that could have entered in.

In this case, each partner respects the other's personal career goals and needs.

Another aspect of mutual respect concerns response to the "character" that the other person has carried into marriage. Janice Turner stressed "respecting the other person's loyalties and weaknesses that they brought into the relationship. It's trying to use what you know about them to help them grow in positive ways." Instead

of trying to change the other person over into your own model spouse, the other is respected just as he or she is and is helped to grow in a natural way. Also respected are the other's feelings or actions that may not match our own desires or expectations. Laura Farmer briefly mentioned that she and Hugh have "respected each other's fatigue and rejection." Either fatigue or rejection could be met with accusations or belligerent approaches, and in fact this is bound to happen in any relationship. But it is possible to at times face the other person with an attitude of respect and acceptance. Distance is then not challenged, but allowed to exist. And this brings to mind another attitude discussed by couples, tolerance. The Davis' and Turners both stated that tolerance was a key to each of their relationships, Dan Turner phrasing it as "a real desire to be tolerant."

Throughout my conversations with couples, I was impressed by the simple, reasonable, humane attitudes they found important or helpful in marriage. Work, courtesy, consideration, acceptance, tolerance, patience, respect, and confidence were all discussed not in a wistful or polyannic way, but in a realistic and practical manner. These couples by no means lived every moment of their lives according to their own ideals or standards, but many did have clear standards for themselves which they frequently managed to meet. They had learned some of the attitudes that made their own relationships work and continue to grow.



## CHAPTER IX

### CHILDREN

In the course of most couples' lifetimes, they will add the roles "mother" and "father" to their roles of "husband" and "wife." The entry of children into the marital relationship is a powerful and challenging experience. It is a major point of transition in a couple's existence, and moves the couple into the complex world of the family. Seven out of the nine couples in this study have children, and their discussions of a number of issues regarding children are important in furthering our understanding of their relationships.

First, how did these couples decide to begin a family? In looking at these nine marriages, three groups of couples are clearly identifiable. Two couples, the Turners and the Pierces, are childless. The Pierces were "too old" to have children when they married, and the Turners, the most recently married couple in the study, have not chosen to have a child as yet. In fact, Janice had an abortion (her second, but first with Dan) while she and Dan were living together prior to marrying. Her first abortion was a matter-of-fact, immediate decision, but Janice had a harder time choosing to end her pregnancy with Dan's child:

I turned out to be pregnant again, even though I'd had an IUD. And that was a little bit hard. I remember that time becoming aware in a very good way of the tenderness between us because initially when I found out I was pregnant I thought "Well, I know what to do, I've been through this before and I'm not going to get caught in it again," but then within maybe eighteen hours I began to think much more of it because I



realized that Dan and I were pregnant. And then it became sort of harder, although it was something we both wanted--not to have a baby.

Janice and Dan want to try living in the country near some close friends, and Janice especially wants to continue her career as a teacher and give herself a chance to grow professionally. For those reasons, they are postponing having children.

The Joyces and the Davis' each had a child soon after their marriages, and these pregnancies were both unplanned and unexpected. Nancy Joyce became pregnant before the wedding, and earlier we discussed the way Nancy and Bill gained increased autonomy and identity as a couple by coping with this crisis and moving directly into their own family life. Alice Davis still seems more resentful and troubled about becoming pregnant shortly after marrying. Previously, before dating Michael, she had terminated a pregnancy through a criminal abortion. Of her getting pregnant after marriage, she said "we were married in February, and in August of the next year there was a little boy in a basinette at the end of the bed. That was not part of a plan." Only somewhat facetiously, Alice told Michael, "You screwed up my career twice." "The first was a mistake," Alice said,

... and I was really unhappy about being pregnant. Michael was very reassuring and supportive. He said it would be great. I'm so glad we went through with it, it was nice. Once we had the first one, I knew I wanted more than one, and shortly after the first. But that also wasn't planned too exactly.

Michael seems to have always been the member of this couple more totally committed to the concept of family and home, and so he felt

positively about the pregnancies. He elaborated his interesting reasons for wanting to have the children close together in age:

I liked having the children close together, because if you have children when you're young, you can be on your own again before you're ancient.

The other five couples in this study waited a minimum of three years before starting a family. The Robinsons waited nearly five years to have their first child, and worked together during their early marriage. Betty said, "We had some groundwork first, we had four-and-a-half years of working together." "We had each other for a while," added Stan. The initiative for the pregnancy seems to have been Betty's, and she simply stated "I felt that maybe I worked enough now. I wanted something else, like a baby." Susan Lewis also was eager to have a child, and at that time her identity revolved around being a wife and a mother. She and Richard planned to wait three years for their first child, but Susan could not become pregnant. After five years of marriage, they adopted Margaret. A year later, to the amazement of her doctor, Susan became pregnant with Barbara. She now maintains that "one reason our relationship is as good as it is is we didn't have kids right away. We waited five years, otherwise there would have been no real base."

Jean Barrett, who waited four years before having a child, said that

The effect of children on a marriage relationship is enormous. It has a very great effect. It can make or break a relationship. It depends on how strong the relationship was before, how much time the couple's had together.

The Barretts were also somewhat delayed in beginning their family, due, it appears, to some sexual dysfunction in Steve. This temporary condition, they said, resulted from two years spent in the tropics as a part of Steve's missionary work.

Finally, the Johnsons had their first child, Dinah, after five years of marriage, and the Farmers waited three years to have their son, Paul. These "waiting" couples spoke of building a foundation for their marriages in the early, childless years together. All wives worked during those years, and this experience helped to establish their personal, separate identities. Along with taking equal roles in the early relationship, these couples had time to spend together, being with and learning about each other. When they had children, it was clearly a case of the child entering into an already established relationship. For the Joyces and Davis', no matter how well-handled, the early births of their children necessitated the simultaneous creation and development of the marital and parental relationships.

Children can put stress on a marriage in many ways, and even the act of conception and the physical condition of the child can be difficult areas in a couple's life. In the small group of people interviewed for this project, four of the seven couples who had children had to cope either with difficulties in the wife's becoming pregnant, or in one case, with the birth of a retarded child. The Joyces adopted their second child after complications from the birth control pill left Nancy unable to conceive. She had five miscarriages before they adopted Cindy. Both the Barretts and the Lewis' had

trouble starting their families, and the Lewis' did adopt their first child. Beginning a family is clearly a risk, and it exposes the couple to many potential traumas as well as possible satisfactions. My wife and I do not have children yet, but when I do think of the time we will decide to have a child I get very anxious. By increasing my investment and involvement in the world, I can also get hurt more often and more deeply. I admire the courage of those couples who sense the significance of beginning a family, but go ahead and face what their lives offer to them.

The Farmers have tried to carefully plan their lives, and have largely succeeded. Hugh said of the birth of their first child, "It was planned, like the playing out of a scenario. It had a small impact on our relationship. But it would have been devastating if we lost the first one." Ellen continued by saying that "having a retarded child would have been devastating. I just think of Hugh's reaction to inferior human beings. Our family had neat, preconceived notions." But what happens when the "neat notions" do not work out, and the couple is tested by the birth of a "defective" child?

The Johnsons faced this situation when their second child, Richard, was born retarded. Initially, said Laura,

... the world just caved in at that point. It took about a year to adjust to it. People don't know how to treat you, and I didn't want to see people. It's all you can think about. It took a year before I could say, 'I have a retarded child.'

Evoking the "work ethic" philosophy of relationship described earlier, Bob said

We could talk to each other, but it was hard to talk to others. In spite of those feelings we didn't consider putting him in an institution immediately.



He's our responsibility. He's ours and we'll take care of him .... We feel we can do as much for him ourselves. But if he became a problem, we need to be open with each other and perhaps place him. If one of us can't tolerate the situation the other one will yield.

The ability of Bob and Laura to be honest with each other about terribly anguished feelings was impressive. When Richard became seriously ill at the age of three, Bob thought about how many problems would be removed if the baby would just die. That kind of a thought, if kept a secret, could become a powerful source of guilt in the future, but Bob could disclose these thoughts to Laura. She had also had some similar, fleeting thoughts, and so they could accept each other and themselves as being human and then go on to try to cope with the situation. Richard is now six, and the Johnsons can see some progress in his development and have experienced a good deal of joy from his love for them.

When I asked Bob and Laura about the impact of Richard's birth on their relationship, Bob immediately answered:

A lot of things didn't happen. We didn't become cynical. We haven't lost our positive outlook on people and the world.

While the immediate result of Richard's birth was "total confusion," Laura feels that she and Bob have grown as a couple by having had "to come up with unexpected reserves or qualities." After Richard's birth, they moved to their present location, a town where they have established "roots" and a sense of permanence. They attribute their planning the move and desiring such stability to Richard's birth, and these changes have been valuable to them as a couple.



When a couple does add children to their relationship, they take on the responsibilities and functions of parents. This can be an uncomfortable role for many people. "Motherhood" is often written about and discussed, but "fatherhood" exists also as a real human experience. In our sample of "happily" married couples, it was interesting to see how many individuals expressed dissatisfaction or difficulty with their roles as parents. The women spoke out most directly on this issue, mainly because for these couples the mother did tend to have the major responsibility for and the most contact with the children.

Susan Lewis originally wanted to be "just" a wife and mother. But as she gained confidence in herself, she has been finding more personal satisfactions outside the home in her service activities and attempts at beginning a career. She said simply, "I wasn't cut out to be a mother. I'm not a very good mother." Nancy Joyce found it especially hard to cope with small children. She felt restricted being so needed by them. "I don't really enjoy babies," she said. "It's exhausting caring for a toddler." After five years of marriage, Laura Johnson had a daughter, Dinah. Although Dinah was a "wanted" child, Laura faced motherhood with conflicted feelings:

I didn't know if I liked the idea of having Dinah. I had a hard time adjusting to motherhood. I was twenty-seven. I loved her and resented her. I felt confined being a mother. My Ph.D. was done, I loved teaching, but I couldn't do it any more. I didn't feel like being a housewife.

Later, Laura said

I have more anxieties about being a mother than a wife .... I've never liked children very much. I enjoy

my own, but not other people's. I would have had a hard time making my home life the center of my existence.

Jean Barrett also is not sure if she can "survive with just a mother role." Many of these conflicts about being a wife, mother, and woman will be treated in detail in a later chapter. What is clear at this point is that a number of the women in this study have had trouble adjusting to being mothers and do not consider themselves maternal "types."

While wives talked a good deal about their roles as mothers, husbands were more silent about being fathers. The wives would often be the ones to bring up their husbands' position as a parent in the family. Betty Robinson, a woman who has found great satisfaction in being a mother, made it clear that "babies" had always been her sole responsibility. Stan became more involved with the children when they were older and could do things with him. "He wasn't a father that was all excited," Betty said. "I had the feeling that the baby was my job, and that it didn't affect him much." She learned by the second child that she would have to "go it alone" as a parent. Only in the last five years, when their youngest son was seven years old, has Stan begun to spend a good deal of time with the children.

Several wives complained about the amount of time their husbands spent at work, away from the family. Betty Robinson felt "a father's place was at home," but learned to live with Stan's distant style. Alice Davis said, "I resented Michael coming on strong about being a father, because in the early years his hours made me a single parent." Hugh Farmer and Steve Barrett are also highly involved in

their work, and spend much less time with their children than do their wives.

The tension between the demands of individuality and the responsibilities of relationship is a recurrent theme throughout this book. Sir Francis Bacon, in an essay entitled "Of Marriage and the Single Life," speaks from the male perspective of the conflict between work and family:

He that hath wife and children hath given hostages to fortune: for they are impediments to great enterprises, either of virtue or mischief. Certainly the best works, and of greatest merit for the public, have proceeded from the unmarried or childless men, which both in affection and means have married and endowed the public.

In the lived experience of most men in this study, there has been an attempt made to fulfill the demands of home and work. Frequently, work has been more consuming and involving, and family life has suffered.

Discipline is a pivotal issue in a couple's efforts to raise children. As might be expected, in some marriages this ongoing educative process becomes the wife's primary responsibility. Ellen Farmer, who said "the discipline for the kids has fallen back on me," Nancy Joyce, and Jean Barrett are all self-identified "disciplinarians" in their families. Jean maintains that "whenever the children are along I always feel responsible for them, and therefore I don't participate in the things that are going on." While Ellen does not overtly complain about this system, Nancy, and particularly Jean, have raised some questions about the arrangement. In discussing her recent "re-evaluation" of her marriage, Jean said

I'm more sensitive to change in the developmental level of the children. I have to bring the kids' needs to Steve's attention. There can be a conflict that arises about parenting. Having to think about your relationship with the children takes time away from your own relationship.

Steve has a very loose sense of time, and is casual about punctuality. Jean told me that

... this does create problems, more than any other single thing. Particularly with the children. There's a fine line in teaching a child a sense of responsibility to others, to time.

An issue that is a source of conflict for the couple takes on even greater importance when the "battle" extends to include the proper way of raising children.

As parents, husbands and wives have an opportunity to observe each other in another role, another situation. Seeing the other person relating to the children can reveal quite vividly his or her personal style and values. Sometimes these attitudes or values are shared by the partners in a positive way. The Davis' discussed the "good feeling" of sincerely presenting a "united front" to their children. At other times, one can see a disliked aspect of both self and other in the behavior of one's spouse. "There are times when, in relation to the kids," Hugh Farmer stated, "when one of us may be insistent on the kids being neat and tidy. The other one sees in that insistence some of the worst feelings about himself. That's divisive, it has a negative impact." It is also possible, as we have noted, for a couple to clash philosophically over the approach each wishes to take with the children. The Lewis' provide an interesting illustration of this phenomenon.



A currently sensitive issue for the Lewis', said Richard, is

The style of how we deal with the kids, to what extent we want them to be free. Susan is more oriented toward freedom, I feel there should be more structure. We debate over that some, and argue ... my recent anxiety is mostly about the kids, our divergence as to what to do with them. We'll be judged by the way the kids interact with the outside world.

Their discussion of this issue continued as follows:

Susan: We don't always agree. If there is a norm, Richard gets angry at the kids, I decide his anger is unjustified, tell him to shut up, and he does or doesn't, depending. I'm much more lenient .... Right now disciplining the kids is the biggest problem .... I want to try to be consistent, but part of my nature wants to fight for justice. Sometimes I shut up and we talk about it later. If Barbara's behavior at home is carried over to school it'll be a mess. Yet she's been good at nursery school.

Richard: You're uninclined to say no. I become partly mad at you, partly at the kids. Barbara can't accept 'No.'

Susan: It's in conflict with my value of being independent and making your own decisions.

Richard: Barbara's not ready to do that yet.

The need to be free seems to be important for Susan as well as her children, and Richard's limit-setting on the children could reflect some of his own concerns about Susan's growing autonomy in their marriage. Nancy Joyce also wants to allow her children a freer rein than she had as a child, but this is not a "hot" issue between her and her husband. Nancy said,

I think the one thing when I started our family, I wanted our kids to be able to be themselves, and now and then it means that they're a little bit fresh. But basically I think they communicate very well, their positive feelings as well as their negative feelings.



That's one thing I never had at home, and I don't think Bill did either.

The only dissension between Nancy and Bill on this front occurs when she complains about being the disciplinarian. She is "more consistent" in disciplining the children, and Bill acknowledges that this is Nancy's territory. She wants it, she has it, and Bill only objects when she bemoans his lesser involvement in handling the children. At the present time, the need for personal freedom in marriage is not a troublesome issue for the Joyces.

Couples can also use their individual personalities and styles to work together in bringing up their children. The Johnsons have noticed their own differences in responding to each of their children at various ages. Laura pointed out that "as the children grow up, you have to respond to different needs, different demands ... Dinah drives Bob bananas at the moment. He's impatient with her. I try to act as a buffer." Bob's impatience concerns Dinah's lack of confidence, but Laura can remember feeling much the same way and so tries to be helpful to her. Laura is much more impatient with Richard, their retarded son. Bob has a "more fruitful relationship" with Richard, and is patient and accepting of him. He dresses Richard and sits with him at meals. Responding differently to the children can allow the couple to come to know and understand each other on a deeper level. Laura always thought she had a "hair-trigger temper," and has been surprised to discover that, with Dinah, Bob can also lose control.

"Children," Michael Davis said, "can become an additional bone

of contention." Couples I talked with were able to elaborate several other ways in which children can put a strain on the marital relationship. The most frequently mentioned issue was the con-  
straining effect children have on the marriage. Mobility and spontaneity are hampered, suspended as elements of the couple's style. The Johnsons raised this issue in one of our conversations:

Laura: We haven't lost that much of the romantic aspect. We make room in the rat-race of daily trivia. We do special things for each other, say things. That takes you back to B.C., before children, an entirely different era. I remember it, but it doesn't seem quite real.

Bob: There's a different degree of freedom and responsibility. There's more time to devote to your own and your wife's interests before. It's easier to move. The transition from idea to action is easier.

Laura: There's the paraphrenalia. Dressing them up, everything takes half as long before children. It was easier with just the first in the beginning. I'm looking forward to the day when the children are self-sufficient.

Bob: B.C., we could prowl unencumbered. There was never that nervous tic in the back of your mind about the kids. That was one dimension of responsibility that didn't exist.

Michael and Alice Davis also emphasized the loss of mobility and spontaneity that occurred early in their relationship with the addition of children. Michael pointed to "one word: mobility. You have to learn to live with less mobility. You have the least mobility when you have the least experience with each other. It takes some adjusting to." Alice added that having children "kills your spontaneity in a big way. Especially sexually. I have more

sexual energy in the daytime. I've resented that part of children."

The Lewis' can also clearly differentiate between the pre-child and post-child years. Susan began this discussion:

Susan: Once in a while we try to do something, like see a movie. Having kids is a real challenge. I remember the first year of marriage with warm, gooey feelings. We did what we wanted. Now, we take the kids with us or get a babysitter. We tend not to do things alone together as a couple. We maintain outside relationships, get out of the house and see some friends, but we don't do too many things as a couple alone. No one ever told me about the constraint of children. If I had known it, I wonder if I'd have had any. I probably would have.

Richard: We had some clues before having children. Our babysitting experience, for example. I can't relax now at mealtimes. I'm trying to maintain standards, and this conflicts with our own need to chat. That's a difference in our relationship, the lost time talking at mealtimes.

Susan: We rarely say anything to each other at mealtimes. It's depressing when you think about it. We can't even talk in the car.

One couple, the Joyces, seem to have been the most willing to rely on babysitters to free them as a couple. Nancy stated that

... a babysitter has a very steady income from our family ... we spend a lot of time with the kids, but at least once a week, or every ten days, we go out. And that's important. And then we also get away once a year with our parents or a girl babysitting.

"I've always felt that the money we spent on babysitters is the best investment we'll ever make," said Bill. Yet even when willing and able to make use of babysitters, the couple with children has to plan and be selective about their time away from home.

Having children can severely reduce the amount of time a couple spends together. As we have seen, the daily routine of living with

with children is demanding and frequently focuses each spouse toward the children rather than toward each other. But the couple can also "trade off" their time with the children, enabling the partner to leave and pursue some separate interest or activity. This can be a loving gesture, but it is also a separating one, especially if the couple spends little time alone together. The Lewis' described this pattern where one partner "stays with the kids," and Richard said that "in the earlier part of our marriage, we had more free time to spend together." Laura Johnson told how in the "B.C." years, "we were doing things together. We do things apart now more than before, out of sheer necessity. It's an act of love toward each other, freeing the other to do things."

It is so difficult to work at a marriage, that the complications added by children should not be underestimated. Alice Davis found it hard to adjust to having both children and a husband:

It stretched my emotional responsiveness. I had two kids and then Michael, and I felt I neglected Michael. I nursed the children, and you can feel isolated from your husband. You and the child are a self-contained unit.

Jean Barrett is also sensitive to this "stretching" of emotions and understanding that comes with building a family. She, more than Steve, is concerned with having all four members of the family spend time together and learn about each other. Jean told Steve,

When we were first married you had me to relate to and I had you. Then we had a son, and then another child, a daughter. We should do things as a family because we need to face the more complex relational pattern. It needs more energy and time, time equally spent.

"I don't see that," Steve responded. He finds just as much satisfaction and value in various one-to-one combinations as he does in whole family activities. I felt that Jean was trying to draw Steve into the family, and was asking him to join her in her intimate, ongoing, and sometimes oppressive connection with the children. In my conversations with the Davis' and the Barretts, the husbands did seem freer, less tied to the children, less in need of time on their own.

Sir Francis Bacon wittily wrote that

The most ordinary cause of a single life is liberty, especially in certain self-pleasing minds, which are so sensible of every restraint, as they will go near to think their girdles and garters to be bonds and shackles. ("Of Marriage and the Single Life")

The couples in this study have felt the realistic restraint of marriage and a family, but do not wish to throw off their responsibilities. They are trying to find the most livable, workable arrangement, and to avoid becoming stifled and suffocated by proximity or frozen by distance. The five couples who talked in detail about the difficulties of coping with children were those couples who still had children ten years of age or under. The Robinsons and the Farmers are both older and perhaps more acclimated and adjusted to living with children. They each have three children, and some are already old enough to function fairly autonomously. But the Robinsons and Farmers do seem like couples who have always made children a central factor in their lives. They seem more tied to the home, less involved in outside interests and attractions.



Hugh and Ellen Farmer, for example, were accustomed to doing "homework" from their jobs at night. As Hugh said,

We were together, but we weren't together in the sense of amusing each other or relating intensely. The kids fitted into that in ways that didn't create lots of change.

The Farmers always took their children with them, and felt that their social activities actually increased after they had children. Ellen would become bored after being alone with the children during the day, and so they socialized more frequently than before on evenings and weekends. The Farmers and Robinsons definitely find value in a marriage with children, and, with all its demands and restrictions, so do the other couples I spoke with. No couple said that they would be childless if they could live their lives over. And they talked with me about the satisfactions of raising a family.

The Johnsons smoothly led the discussion to some of their pleasures in having children.

Bob: Children add a new dimension to the relationship. It was a mutual decision to have children.

Laura: I'd definitely want children again. I wouldn't want to miss childbirth. It adds a dimension to life. The body change is an eerie feeling.

Bob: It's interesting as a husband to watch your wife change. She takes on exuberance, vibrancy. It's very exciting ... If you have a family tradition, spiritually strong ties with both families, then the aspect of a continuum of the family is exciting to witness. How the child develops, for example, who is Billy like? Then there's the expression of love a child has for its parents. Also, as educators, it's exciting to figure out how to be as good a parent as possible ... and the interaction among the children is exciting.

Laura: There are little moments every day. The little progress that a baby makes, starting to smile,

to respond to you, talking. All those milestones are exciting .... The children draw you closer to your own family and give you a sense of continuance. After Dinah, I asked my mother a lot about her grandmother, what she was like when she was little. You go forward with your children and back to your roots. It gives your life a sense of continuity. For example, I'd love to show my children where I was born.

"Children have a saving grace," began Alice Davis.

Having offspring makes you rethink your own values. For example, I stopped saying 'Shit' when I began to think of the effect it was having on the children. We also had a debate about Sunday School. I'm an atheist, and Michael is an agnostic, yet I liked Sunday School as a kid and thought it would be good for our children just for the exposure. Michael thought all of the training should come from us, like how to explain right and wrong.

Bringing up children can also help an individual learn about himself, according to Jean Barrett. Dealing with the child's psychological needs, seeing how they relate to other children and adults, helps the parent become aware of his or her own attitudes and behavior. Through interacting with children, the parent can learn to understand, with greater sensitivity, the behavior of others.

Having children helped the Davis' to examine their own beliefs and values, and as Michael said, "It's another way you have to learn to live with each other. Over time, it's strengthened and broadened our relationship." The Davis' take satisfaction in working together in raising the children, and generate "more of a 'We' concept" by doing so. The Robinsons also claimed that "having children brings you closer." "Having them in common," Betty said, is an important shared aspect of life for she and Stan.

In the context of this discussion of couples with children, it

is interesting to think about what a long-lasting marriage would be like for a childless couple. Both the Robinsons and the Johnsons speculated about the dangers of a childless marriage, and the Pierces gave personal testimony about this form of marriage. These individuals' statements are remarkably consistent and alike. To Betty Robinson, "marriage with children is quite a test. But it gives a more solid foundation to the marriage." Stan said "people without children have more time on their hands," and Betty finished his thought by saying "to get uneasy or bored. You need to branch out, have children, and build something together, set an example." Laura Johnson imagined that

Couples without children could start being very picky with each other when they're older. There'd be nobody else, so they'd turn on each other. There could be an element of pettiness and annoyance with each other. Also, we appreciate each other because our moments alone are precious.

"A childless couple have only themselves to plan and create for," said Bob. "They'd be creating only for their own future. That's limiting." These two couples emphasized that a childless marriage can become a relationship turned back on itself. The lack of children to focus attention on and work for, they thought, could be stifling. The childless couple would be too much with each other.

The Pierces are a couple who have not had children. They discussed this area of their lives, beginning with the role their dog has played in it:

John: This creature has exemplified the fact that for a childless marriage, and ours was childless not

because we wanted it to be but because we were just too old, an animal can become the focus of a good deal, perhaps too much, affection that more normally would be given to a child.

Sarah: I think you need it. I think you can become awfully self-centered .... But I mean that the marriage becomes so turned in that it cannot be good, and of course if the marriage breaks then it's all the more shattering, whereas if you've got something to ...

John: You need a third party to take it out on.

Sarah: I was going to say you need a third party to give a certain amount of selflessness. As with children, so that you do subjugate yourself, you give up certain things for them.

The Pierces, by the way, greatly enjoy entertaining the small children in their neighborhood, and refer to them as the grandchildren they never had.

Children, then, can help "defuse" what is already a very intense and complicated relationship--marriage. A good deal of the couple's energy and attention can be directed to their children, thereby relieving each other of a perhaps too ubiquitous and isolated intimacy. Having children deepens a person's involvement and investment in the world, and exposes an individual to both potential pain and joy. When a couple become parents, they face a new task in their relationship: coping with being mothers and fathers. They need to work out a satisfactory balance in parenting responsibilities, and in this era of changing social roles that is a difficult assignment. But through working together as parents a couple can learn about human nature, and can achieve a sense of unity, purpose, and connection to a continuous, generational flow of family life.

An individual's freedom is proscribed when he or she becomes intimately involved with another person. This must be accepted in marriage, and in becoming parents as well. As is the case in so many of the significant aspects of love and marriage, the person needs to live with "constraint" yet also experience the liberating and satisfying warmth of the family. A life that is without sacrifice or commitment seems bland and hollow to many people, and being married, having children, provides an opportunity for giving our lives great meaning and importance. Living "with" and "for" someone else is an intoxicating, energizing experience. It is also demanding, and can leave the individual exposed to threats, pain, and crises. In the next chapter, the couples in this study discuss these difficulties in relationship.



## C H A P T E R X

### THREATS AND CHALLENGES TO RELATIONSHIP

It is apparent from couples' discussions of the "work of relationship" that it is both demanding and difficult to succeed at marriage. Couples must cope with a variety of threats, problems, challenges, and crises if they are to survive intact. In a previous chapter, we learned how a number of couples expressed confidence in their ability to face and overcome obstacles in their lives. It was important for them to see themselves as capable of solving relational problems, and those couples talked about how they worked at maintaining their marriages.

In this chapter, we will turn towards a more detailed examination of the actual threats and challenges to a marital relationship. These threats can be broken down into three major categories. First, there are those problems that exist primarily between a husband and wife. These include breakdowns in communication, coping with differences in personal style and temperament, and the management of time. Second, there is the threat to marriage posed by an outside relationship of one or both spouses. Couples can be threatened by a partner's close, individual friendship or a sexual infidelity, as well as by merely living in a social atmosphere of dissolving marriages. Finally, there are certain external events or realities that can challenge the strength of a marital relationship. Both physical moves of the family and the eventuality of death are such challenges. The chapter concludes with an examination of the risks of being close to

another person, and a discussion of the couples' attitudes towards the concept of threats to their relationships.

#### Problems in Interaction

Communication was referred to earlier as an essential element in working at the marital relationship. Similarly, a major problem may occur when the couple's ability to communicate becomes impaired. Several couples brought up instances of blocks to dialogue that they had found threatening. In some cases, it was difficult for an individual to discuss a painful issue or a negative feeling with his or her spouse. Ellen Farmer said that one of the biggest problems in her relationship with Hugh was his "not talking out angers and letting them brood." Later, Hugh continued this thought:

I don't do it as much as I used to, but I didn't tell Ellen things of a negative nature, things that would upset her. I found myself getting confused about what I told her and what I hadn't. This was anxiety-provoking.

Both partners agree that Ellen has the more volatile temper and is more open about her feelings. Hugh describes himself as "the sort of person who will let it go. I'm more patient." He chose to withhold things from Ellen to avoid her explosions of either anger or distress, but in doing so distanced himself from her. That special treatment led to the isolation of each spouse. In one session, while discussing their lack of social relationships, Ellen became quite upset and began to cry. Hugh tried to continue the conversation with me, ignoring Ellen. It was as if he were hoping that her tears would vanish. I had to comment on her tears, and ask what was wrong. Confronting his wife's open expressions of emotion is threatening for

Hugh, and he tries to avoid such situations.

"I felt my not expressing myself directly was threatening,"  
said Janice Turner:

I avoided direct communication on touchy issues. This might have been because of the newness of being so intimate. It could have distorted the relationship, but now it's just a tension. It's something I have to work on.

Alice Davis also has held back from disclosing angry or painful feelings to Michael. She said, "I wish I could be more open. I sulk, brood, and then explode at some time two weeks later. I'm too defensive with Michael." There are potential dangers in the optimistic, positive outlook on life that was discussed earlier as characterizing this group of couples. Problems may be bypassed to avoid trouble or conflict. Indeed, conflict or anger may be feared by a couple intent on working out a rational relationship. For some couples, this anxiety concerning open conflict or painful interactions can lead to secrecy and become a threat to the relationship.

Betty Robinson has tried to talk about her problems, angers, or anxieties with Stan, but has frequently been received with disinterest and ridicule. She said:

He makes very little of things like this. I get mad, and wish I could run away, but he would laugh and say where could you go? I'd get mad, but I didn't figure it would do me any good (laughter). I don't say some of the things I'd like to say, because I don't know what he'd do. Men think differently than women, their nervous systems are different.

When Betty does not get an "understanding response" to her feelings from Stan, she seems to get angrier but also less communicative. She gives up for the moment, avoids a more serious or heated confrontation, and, as Betty says, "it passes off." "Stan's taught me

that it's silly to carry problems from one day to the next," she added. In part, Betty appears to have accepted Stan's relational philosophy of benign neglect. She was looking for a concerned response to her fears, worries, and feelings of loneliness, but this has not been offered. Betty seemed fearful of Stan's possible reaction if she pursued her angry feelings and resentment toward him, and so she allows the issue to pass undiscussed and their relationship to continue apparently unruffled. As a group, the women in this study tended to have more trouble with the direct expression of anger than the men. This sex-based difference between spouses points, on a more general level, to another basic challenge in marriage.

One ongoing task in marriage is to succeed at living with a "different" person. For all the similarities between spouses, these individuals are different from each other. Each came from his or her own family, and were raised as either boys or girls. When the adult man and woman come together in marriage, some accommodations must be made for their differences in temperament and personality. Personal differences can provide the spice in a relationship, but they can also become irritating and upsetting.

People vary considerably in their needs for privacy and their comfort with social relationships. In the Turners' marriage, Janice said,

I tend to talk about my feelings more than Dan does, and sometimes I get really frustrated with that. I think it's partly the male-female thing ... sometimes this year I've been frustrated with Dan because he seems to go along so evenly, and I'm not often aware

of his feeling a lot of his life with the intensity with which I experience mine .... I think we're very different because he's much more private and quiet and he's not very verbal and he doesn't, isn't interested in a lot of self-awareness and I tend to be much more caught in the moment ....

Janice is trying to adjust to Dan's more withdrawn, self-directed style of living. At times he becomes a mystery to her, but at other moments his consistency and stability are comforting for Janice. She said, "I feel things more intensely, but I can go on to feel another thing. And I feel as though you are much more consistent. I feel more like soup and you're bread."

Jean Barrett sees herself as more private and self-conscious than Steve, who, she said, "could be with people constantly." She admires his "free-wheeling" style, and has learned to loosen some of her own too-tight controls through living with Steve. But his ability to meet people is at times threatening to Jean. It puts demands on her own social capacities, as well as makes Steve more available to possible outside relationships. He, on the other hand, is somewhat frustrated by Jean's social inhibitions:

It troubles me, her sense of withdrawal, shyness, being socially uncomfortable in new situations. She can be very unsure of herself, and that makes me sorry.

Early in their relationship, Ellen Farmer was more the extrovert and Hugh dragged his feet about "large-group socializing." Ellen accommodated herself to Hugh's more private style, and as a couple they cut back on their outside relationships. Although she sees this change as Hugh's "fault," Ellen's anger is quite subdued and she merely says she has "given up" on the issue. Recently, Hugh has



shown more interest in socializing with colleagues at work, but Ellen has become anxious about how isolated she is in their close family life. She wonders whether she now prefers to be alone, and appears to be making demands on Hugh to become re-involved in the family and to include her in his increasing openness to other relationships. These differences between partners in relational style, in expression of feelings and desire for social relationships, can strain the marital relationship. Partners can also change over the years, and their points of difference should be viewed "in process" rather than as static patterns of relationship. An individual can feel inhibited or intruded upon by his or her spouse. Additionally, availability to others can become an intense threat to a relationship, as we will soon discuss.

Another point of difference that can pose a problem for a couple occurs in the area of consideration and thoughtfulness. This is highlighted by several couples' statements about "living by the clock." Throughout the interviews, I frequently heard couples describe how women were sensitive and attuned to feelings, while men were the more reasonable, rational creatures. It was interesting to hear, then, how three wives contrasted their husbands' inability to live according to the clock with their own more structured, ordered existences. This acceptance of structure by these women may have been the result of their greater sensitivity to other peoples' feelings. They were "considerate" and therefore punctual. But one could also speculate that these husbands were compensating for the order in their work lives by relaxing their

reliance on schedules at home. For the wives, home and family represents their place of work.

Both Betty Robinson and Jean Barrett said that their biggest adjustment in marriage has been learning to live with Stan's and Steve's unpredictability about time. They are often late, and are not apologetic about it. Stan was consistently late for our interviews, and just seemed not to be concerned with schedules or routines. Steve missed one session altogether, and did not even let Jean know he would not be there. He merely became caught up at a school meeting, and stayed much longer than he planned. Jean predicted how Steve would act when he returned home. She said that she envied his "charm" and his ability to make people overlook or accept his lateness. In fact, he was smooth and natural about his two-hour lateness, and made it clear that he felt no guilt about it.

The attitudes of Stan and Steve, and Hugh Farmer as well, clash with the more disciplined and self-conscious styles of their wives. Betty, Jean, and Ellen were all raised to be "on time," and place a high premium on being considerate of others. Perhaps part of feeling things more intensely is being more sensitive to the needs of others. In extreme form, this is restricting and inhibiting, but in more moderate doses such consideration plays an important role in living with others. These wives clearly felt some of the rigidity of punctuality, for they all said they did value the flexibility they have assimilated from their husbands. Friction is caused, though, by a difference in concern for others' feelings. I felt that when these wives were speaking up for other people's feelings and

needs, they were also indirectly asking their husbands to be more attentive to them as individuals. Differences in personal style manifest themselves directly in the spouses' relationship with each other, as well as in the interaction between each spouse and other people in his or her world.

The tension in marriage between predictability and unpredictability has already been briefly discussed. There is a desire for order and constancy in a relationship, and so challenges to that order are frightening. As Jean Barrett said, "Anything unknown frightens me." Yet for a relationship to grow and remain vibrant, change is necessary. Steve Barrett replied to his wife, "But you don't want me to be that predictable." Confronting the unpredictable aspects of the relationship can be a threat to a couple, and can tax their willingness to lose some "control" of their lives.

Betty Robinson, for example, firmly stated that Stan is more moody than she. He can surprise her with his varying emotional reactions to other people. He is often not gracious, according to Betty. But Stan's lack of consideration for others and aversion to socializing are by now fixed notions in Betty's mind. She autonomously avoids social obligations because, she says, of her expectations of Stan's reaction. In the interviews, however, Stan seemed to be trying in vain to tell Betty that he was interested in spending time with some other couples in certain situations. Betty quickly closed off this discussion, and maintained her theories about her husband's personality. She preserved order in her life, but at the cost of more fully understanding her spouse. Additionally, she seemed to have some anxieties herself about relating to other couples. So, her

catering to Stan's hypothesized style served to keep her from those situations without having to acknowledge her own hesitation and uncertainty about them.

When one person becomes intimately involved with another, their lives are no longer as completely under their own control as they once were. No one ever totally controls his own life. There are too many outside, even unknown, forces that affect us daily. But joining our life with another's involves a conscious and potentially threatening "loss of control." Buber was aware of the power of mutuality when he noted that one person alone could not will another to enter into dialogue with him. An I-Thou encounter requires the active participation of both individuals, and so is in the possession or control of neither one alone. Involvement in the world means that many things, people, or events can have an impact on you, and these occurrences are partially out of your hands. Marriage, as has been noted, is a process of ever-increasing connection to another person and to society.

Janice Turner seemed particularly sensitive to this issue of "control." She said that

Actually becoming intimate with a person in a way where you're not always in control of what's open and available and what isn't--that's a very scary thing. And I still find myself aware of intimacy now in a way that I can become a little bit frightened. It's still a fresh thing. It's not something I'm used to .... Physical intimacy frightens me. I used to be able to relax in relationships where I had control .... Sexually, sometimes I've felt aggressed against. I felt a need, a wish that I could be more physically separate ... I don't know the limits of the relationship I have with Dan.



Some control is needed to maintain a sense of individuality in the relationship. But intimacy implies a connection to another person and a sacrifice of some personal control. The potential does exist for feeling controlled, constrained, and threatened, and the issue of balancing self and other in marriage continues to be a crucial theme.

In the face of all these challenges, the complacency of one partner can be threatening and upsetting to the other. Janice Turner was frustrated by Dan's "going along so evenly," and wondered whether anything was threatening to him. There are a variety of possible meanings for a person's seeming to be unthreatened. One, the person may be concealing his true feelings from his partner. Second, the individual may not be living the relationship as intensely as the spouse, and so is less threatened by specific occurrences. Third, differences in personal style may mask the mutuality of concern over the relationship. People express their anxiety in different ways. The important point seems to be ensuring that both partners are aware of the other's serious involvement in the relationship. Although they may find different things threatening, and may express their feelings in diverse ways, they both need to be aware of a shared concern for the relationship. The sense of "being on the same side" is, as we will continue to see, a major component of marital love.

If one partner is genuinely apathetic, then the relationship faces the crisis of "taking the marriage for granted." After building up some consistencies and patterns in the marriage, some confidence



in its future, it is possible to put the relationship on "automatic pilot." The route is determined, the destination known, but the pilot is absent. Perhaps instances of a "mutual automatic pilot syndrome" could be uneventful and without crisis, but a unilateral phenomenon is also a common occurrence. One spouse feels the other is taking the marriage for granted. This seemed to be the case for the Robinsons, and Betty stated that there was nothing she could do that would make Stan jealous or anxious. He had total trust in her, and Betty appeared to be upset about this. She would not prefer him to be jealous, but in their early marriage, when she worked nights, she would have appreciated his waiting up for her to come home. He was not worried or outwardly concerned about her. The Joyces laughed about having become "too predictable" to each other, but Nancy expected a response from Bill when she lost fifty pounds. She was disappointed when she did not get one. Being taken for granted is a danger for each partner in an ongoing relationship, and so the complacency and consistent comfort of the other is a potential threat to the marriage.

Again and again in my conversations with these couples, the concept of "time" was discussed as presenting problems in a marriage. The interpersonal meanings of the use of time, and the management of time in the marital relationship are highly significant areas in the lives of these couples. Most apparent is the problem posed by time being spent away from home by a spouse. Usually, this issue revolved around a husband's intense involvement at work and subsequent "neglect" of his family. In their early marriage especially,

Betty Robinson felt extremely lonely because of Stan's long hours. She complained, but received little response from Stan. Gradually, the children came to take his place as companions. Now that they are older, she and Stan do more together as a couple with them. Betty learned to live with Stan's absence.

A similar situation exists in the other "twenty-year marriage" in the study, that of the Farmers. Hugh said

One adjustment I haven't been good about, and Ellen did a lot to cope with, is the inordinate amount of time I spend in job-related activities. She has resented this with justification. Her accommodation is to be supportive of my time away.

Ellen added, "I'd like to think he'd give more time to the family, but that's not the way he is. He'll never give more time." Another aspect of her "accommodation" has been to build a career of her own, so that she finds satisfaction in time spent away from home. In a similar vein, Jean Barrett said that she was "jealous" of the time Steve spends at work. She finds herself confined at home and responsible for the children. Alice Davis expressed the same attitude toward Michael's time away from home. For many couples, the pattern has been one of the husband's working long hours and the wives accommodating themselves to his schedule. On a broader level, Jessie Bernard (1973) summarizes a host of social scientific literature indicating that "wives make more of the adjustments called for in marriage than do husbands" (43-4). That impression is supported by my conversations with married couples.

These couples seemed very busy. They were involved in many activities, and often both husbands and wives were working hard at their careers outside the home. A couple has to achieve some mutually

satisfying agreement about the use of time, or else time spent separately can become a threat and challenge to the marriage. Bob Johnson spoke forcefully to this issue:

The only thing that brings friction is the whole aspect of time. What is it that's demanding what the other considers an unreasonable amount of time. We sit down and talk it out. That's the potential to sabotage a relationship, if you're committed to more time away from your family. That's most frequently where we blow the whistle and say stop .... Our biggest challenge at the present time is keeping a sense of reality with our own physical strengths, so that we aren't totally exhausted and so that we can enjoy each other and the family. You try to do so many different things that there's not enough hours in the day to do them ... the challenge is to do the ones that are most important and live with the fact that you're not going to do this other thing as well as you'd like .... I'm frustrated with the lack of time to find out how we feel about things. How do you resolve the conflict of self, partnership, and the rest of the world around you?

Bob is trying hard to fulfill his own high expectations of himself as a teacher, husband, and father, and feels stretched to the limit.

Steve Barrett also described his struggle with meeting his own high professional standards and maintaining his involvement with his family. He sees himself halfway through life, and wants to accomplish more in his work. Steve often feels that he is "wasting" time at home, and now is trying to become more aware of the value of the time he spends with his wife and children. "I have to see that time as profound time," he said. Steve's problem may be a common one for many men and women. Work-time is seen as real, significant, and prestigious. Home-time is considered "time out;" relaxing, frivolous, and irrelevant. A variation on this conflict could be that work-time is demanding but somehow less emotionally draining than involvement at home. The responsibilities of raising a family, of living with

another adult, are considerable. So, with the justification being that work is important and meaningful, commitments at home are reduced. For a marriage to succeed, each spouse would seem to have to find some meaning and value in home-time and accept the burden and challenge of living at home.

Susan Lewis was also quite concerned with how she and Richard can find the time to live both together and as individuals. She has

... thought a lot about how the mechanics of a day can really separate two people. It's a system man's set up, where the husband is out of the house. This can be a devastating routine for a relationship. You don't have the time to really talk to each other. Some of the people I have deep relationships with other than Richard are not locked into that schedule. His school vacations do help, though .... I don't know how to put together what we both enjoy doing separately and still have time together .... It's a dilemma if you work eighty hours a week, have a family, and also have good causes and outside relationships you want to maintain. How do you fit that all into a day? Something's got to give. The crunch comes when a partner gets squeezed out. Sometimes we win, sometimes we lose at that. We're working at it, we're aware of it. We tell each other where we are. We're struggling together to figure out how to solve that.

A number of problems can arise from the couple spending large quantities of time away from each other. Michael Davis believed that

If you just pursue two individual lives, and remain two individuals, the other person doesn't become a part of your life. You need to spend time and do things together. If you drift apart, and don't have a common involvement, you don't develop understanding and common interests. It's like meeting a friend who has changed, who you haven't seen in a while. I've seen people who have grown separately.

Dan Turner held that a relationship grows stronger in proportion to the amount of personal interaction between partners. Individual growth and change can add greatly to a marriage. But if the marital relationship is not given an equal opportunity to develop and absorb



these elements, the result may be alienation rather than integration. Spouses can become "intimate strangers" to each other, and few individuals can tolerate that paradox.

During particularly hectic periods, some couples found themselves with very little satisfying time together and tensions beginning to build. Janice Turner said

I go through times when for one particular reason, usually school, we don't have much time to relax together. One or the other of us is very tight. And that leads to a sort of breakdown of physical closeness ... because of the demands made on us. This year for the first time I think we've made organized efforts to try to figure the relationship out. And we really tried to spend some time together.

Many of these couples are involved in the academic world, and so the winter is an especially harried time for them. Things tend to loosen up in the vacation-like summers. The winters have presented a problem for the Turners and the Barretts. Jean Barrett told me that "during the winter, where one gets so busy, there's no time left for the caring things that take a little extra time." In the winter, or other particularly busy times for the Farmers, they see their home life "as involving a lot of time spent normalizing our separate lives, permitting us to relate together." Ellen described their home as a place where they could re-charge their batteries for work. In that light, the Farmers are revitalizing themselves at home, but for renewed separate involvement in their jobs. Not for their relationship with each other.

One possible consequence of living intense work and home lives is that outside social relationships may decrease. Both the Turners and the Farmers have found themselves in this situation. Relationships



with other people take time to develop, and each of these two couples felt they were locked into a work-home axis. The result was a feeling of isolation, and some tension between the couple. The Turners' problem was compounded by their secluded home, which allowed them little if any contact with neighbors. A couple can be "too much" with each other; not only in terms of amount of time, but in the context of few social relationships. Continued isolation also turns a couple back in on each other, and makes any opening up of the relationship both difficult and threatening. Two people can achieve a closeness, or a symbiosis, or just a pattern of living that will tolerate no interruptions or interventions. The Pierces seem to have a mutually satisfying closed system, while the Farmers appear more concerned and troubled about their distance from others.

The whole area of outside relationships can be a difficult one for couples. In their discussions of time, several individuals employed their lack of time, it seemed, as a defense against confronting the actual threats of extra-marital relationships. "I think it takes a lot of time to cultivate a good couple friendship," said Nancy Joyce. The Joyces, who were apprehensive about individual outside friendships, could use the real issue of lack of time as a quick way of handling, or avoiding, the entire issue. Discussing outside sexual relationships, Richard Lewis claimed that the "process is self-limiting because of time." His own reasons for discontinuing a sexual relationship that he had openly added to his marriage seemed more complicated than that.

Jean Barrett was the most empathic in her perception of "time," rather than "outside relationships" as a threat to marriage:

If a relationship took an exceeding amount of time away from me and the children, I'd have some questions about it .... I'm not so concerned with the sexual thing. The time spent in developing a relationship is important. I'm jealous of time spent period which detracts from things shared or developing our own relationship. Not necessarily relationships with women or men, it could be simply business.

Time is often viewed as interpersonal currency, and foreign investments of any nature can be upsetting. But to downplay the unique threat of extra-marital relationships seems a trifle defensive. One can lose one's spouse to a job or to another person, but are those experiences of the same quality and intensity? Perhaps some would say yes, but a number of couples did describe the powerful threat posed to marriage by outside relationships.

#### The Threat of Other Relationships

Many couples have been greatly affected by the relational chaos they see around them. All knew personally of marriages that had dissolved, and many felt threatened by the mortality rate of the marital relationship. Heterosexual love has always been deemed the most mortal of all forms of love, and the options for ending a relationship are today both abundant and available. The actual statements of couples give the best description of how the threat to the institution of marriage affects specific marital pairs.

Slowly and seriously, Jean Barrett said that

After you are married a certain period of time, close to ten years in a traditional pattern of marriage and children, there comes a time for a re-evaluation of the relationship. Not that we feel we need it, but it's been forced upon us because many of our friends are doing this. Some are separating and divorcing. We are discussing these things now.

Steve feels less threatened by the failure of other marriages, but

sees the impact this atmosphere is having on Jean. Jean has recently been confronting her own doubts and questions about her role as a woman, and Steve said:

She's beginning to be able to talk about this. Partly it's through a response to people who are going through some very deep water. A couple of couples around here are in divorce proceedings, and Jean has been called as a witness for the wife in one case ... then her sister's going through some very deep water .... So we know about these people and we care about them, and they're going through some very hard times. And Jean and I talk about that. I don't have a clue as to how to help those people, mostly. And I don't feel as threatened by the devastation that is going on in their lives as she does, I think. I think she feels, 'If them, why not me?'

But his own perceptions of the state of marriage and the family have led Steve to do some thinking about the nature of relationships. He told me that he now has

... a sense of awareness of how fragile, how sensitive human relationships are. It's funny, that goes against my intellectual sense that social relationships are durable. There's a tension between a conception of social ties and the changes anyone in America is going through. I see the fragmented families of my contemporaries. Countless friends of ours are divorced. I feel very committed to the notion that families are important, and that I'm important in my family. Family life is satisfying for the sake of adults.

Janice Turner was especially sensitive to her friends' marital troubles during a winter period when she and Dan were distant from each other. "And it happened," she said

... that one of my two close women friends separated from her husband. And they had only been married a year and hadn't ever lived together before that. But that really made me start wondering, because at different times I wonder if I'm doing the right thing, if I have enough perspective on myself. And Dan and I talked about this a lot when we went to visit her. He and I went for a long walk ....

Alice Davis simply said that it was "scary that so many marriages fail."

It appears that in reaction to other peoples' failing marriages, some individuals begin to examine and perhaps re-affirm their own commitment to each other. They are challenged by the external evidence of the instability of marriage, and wonder whether the changes in the development of their own relationship will lead them closer together or farther apart. Richard Lewis maintained that

... the nature of the commitment we have is very important. We're committed to continue to work to grow together. It's an innocent trusting which leads me to believe that Susan's here and will continue to be here in spite of hassles, that the relationship is solid and can be counted on. I sometimes wonder about that innocence. It doesn't test out well against what I observe in the real world, the changing relationships and fading marriages .... On an intellectual level I see the amount of change and growth in our relationship in the last ten years. Will it continue to grow together or apart? I find that threatening.

"We know so many people whose marriages are falling apart at the seams," said Susan.

While the failure of other marital relationships concerns many couples, a more immediate threat to a marriage can be posed by a spouse's close relationship with another person. A detailed analysis of various forms of friendship and love and the management of intimacy in and out of marriage will be reserved for later chapters. For now we will concern ourselves with the threatening aspect of extra-marital relationships. When I raised the question of possible threats to the marital relationship, John Pierce immediately responded, "An intense friendship that one of the partners developed but the other didn't share." "It could be with either sex," said Sarah.



"It's not necessarily a sexual relationship." John continued:

Let us say 'A' is one spouse, 'B' the other, and 'C' a third party. This third person could come to occupy a commanding position. The A-C relationship could become more compelling than the A-B relationship and could therefore pull it apart .... If you found that you preferred the company of a third person you might make excuses for spending time there. This is not to say that married people shouldn't have friends. It's a question of degree, frequency, and intensity.

I then asked John if he and Sarah had ever approached the danger point on this issue, and he replied

The matter has never arisen. Ours is a middle-aged marriage. You don't make new friendships as easily in and after middle-age. The chance of expanding friendship is smaller.

"If I'd wanted to have a lot of close, intimate relationships with friends," Sarah firmly stated, "I wouldn't have wanted to get married."

Although the Joyces were also apprehensive about either partner's autonomous friendships, they clearly focused on heterosexual friendships or affairs as posing the challenge to marriage. I discussed with Bill Joyce the possibility of becoming friends with a woman, and he said

I would feel guilty, feel like I was cheating. I avoid it. If it really got friendly, I would feel an obligation to get to know them sexually. It's stupid, but .... To really get personal, I'd find that threatening. As a result, so many of the friendships we have are impersonal. If I felt that Nancy was getting too close to another guy, I would get jealous. If she could relate better and talk freely with somebody else, it would turn me off. I put myself in the same position .... I do subconsciously avoid getting too close to women. I've never been in a position where it's happened. I'm afraid of what it might lead to. I'm afraid I might hurt something I've got. There are a lot of people I could be just as happy with, but nobody happier. I'm subconsciously afraid of finding



someone I could be just as happy with. It's a feeling that you could ruin what you have by getting too involved with someone else.

In a separate, individual interview with Nancy, I was told

I'm so happy with Bill, I don't see women as a threat. A close friendship between Bill and a woman would upset me more than a purely sexual relationship. If I knew Bill was very, very close to another woman, liked and confided in her, that she helped him make decisions, that would mean a far more long-term relationship than a sexual fling. I'm hurt any time my way of life is threatened. I'm not a jealous person. It's not so much what you do, but the relationship you have here.

While Nancy claimed that sexuality was not the most threatening feature of a potential relationship between Bill and another woman, it is interesting to note that she does not consider intense emotional closeness to be a major element in his friendships with men. For the Joyces, and for some other couples, same-sex friendships do not appear capable of becoming seriously competitive with the marital relationship. They are not as intimate, or totally involving, or merely as similar to the marital relationship. An opposite-sex friendship, while a rarity in the lived experience of many couples, appears to offer greater prospects of an intense encounter that could rival marriage.

The Pierces and Joyces have reacted to these potential threats by avoiding close, personal relationships outside of marriage. They brought up no specific instances of significant jealousy on the part of either partner, and were adjusted to fulfilling their needs for intimacy solely within their own relationships. Other couples, though, have faced actual situations of jealousy, infidelity, and openly intimate extra-marital relationships. These couples are less committed

to avoiding completely the potential threat of outside relationships.

Jealousy, or uncertainty about the other, characterized the early relationships of several couples. Susan Lewis lived with uncertainty for the three years she dated Richard, because he was also involved steadily with another young woman. Even after he chose and married Susan, she said, "I went through an insecurity. It was silly. I was jealous and afraid Richard would leave me even if he just talked with some other woman. Now I'm secure." Jean Barrett disclosed that "Steve's ability to meet people was a threat to me sometimes, mostly before marriage, before it was a sure thing that we were committed to each other." Janice Turner was at one time threatened by the possibility of Dan meeting someone more interesting than herself at college. Uncertainty is a major feature of new, heterosexual relationships. To use John Pierce's schema, if the relationship between "A" and "B" is not firmly established and has little history, then any "A-C" or "B-C" connection can become a threat and a challenge.

Shortly before her marriage, Janice Turner became "infatuated" with another man. She felt strong romantic feelings, and wondered whether she should pursue or terminate this relationship. Janice decided to go through with the marriage to Dan, even though they had just experienced a tense winter together. She told Dan about her feelings toward this other man, and ended the outside relationship before any serious commitment could develop. Her infatuation, said Dan, was "pretty understandable." He went on:

Dan: It didn't make me feel apprehensive about our relationship because I feel pretty secure. I

feel secure in what I know about her feelings.  
She's not apt to go off on a whim.

Janice: She was then.

Dan: Maybe. If she does go off, it won't be the end  
of anybody's world.

Janice: Why hasn't it (an infatuation) happened with  
you?

Dan: I don't know. It could have hurt us both, but it  
didn't.

Janice: Dan sometimes seems so reasonable it surprises  
me.

Later in the interview, Janice asked Dan "Isn't anything threatening to you?" She was troubled by his calm, rational style, and outwardly placid acceptance of whatever life offered. Like Betty Robinson, Janice seemed to want some response from Dan, some type of jealousy or upset that would indicate concern. Dan replied

It occurs to me that Janice could up and leave by herself or with someone else. I depend on Janice for a certain amount of security. The times it comes up are when I'm unsure about Janice's commitment to our living together. That's only rarely. There haven't been any incidents that have been a real threat. Your infatuation last year, though, was a threat to the relationship.

Michael and Alice Davis have lived the most problematic "affair" situation of any couple in this study. After four years of marriage, Alice began a secret affair with a man named Tom. Tom was initially a casual friend of both Michael and Alice, and he was also married. The affair continued for a few years, and then tapered off and ended. It ended because Tom was becoming more overwhelmed by emotional problems, and was seeing a psychiatrist quite often. Alice decided to keep this involvement a secret from Michael, and initially saw no purpose to discussing an affair that had already

ended. Over time, she became more preoccupied by her secret, and felt it coming between she and Michael. When they moved to a new town, Alice decided to tell Michael the truth. She did not want to contaminate their new home with that secret.

It was in only my second interview with the Davis' that Alice disclosed this crisis in their marriage. During a discussion of friendship, its role in marriage and its boundaries, Alice began to talk about her affair:

Alice: I tried it, I had an affair. Which Michael knows about or I wouldn't be laying it on him now. It's hard to analyze the feelings. I enjoyed the clandestine part, it was exciting, different, challenging. I still don't know if I was in love with him. It turned me on, 'I'm loving two men at the same time,' that was a neat thing. I didn't think that was subtracting love from the other person, but I couldn't live with it either.

Michael: I was totally unaware of the whole thing. When we finally talked about it, it was unbelievable that Alice was living with this thing that was eating her for so long a time.

Alice: If you decide to have an affair, I'll be tolerant (laughter). An affair is not a death knell for a marriage. I didn't tell Michael until last summer. I thought, 'Nobody will be hurt if nobody knows.' I thought I was protecting Michael. But I couldn't bring this secret into a new house. After moving all the furniture in, I told him. I couldn't look at him when I did.

Michael: My initial reaction was disturbing to her. I didn't know what to say to her, I was involved in my own feelings. I was unsure of my own ability to handle it and my reactions to it. I didn't know for quite a while. It was complicated.

Alice: I was the passive part of the thing. He pursued me. I said I didn't want any part of it. He was very persuasive that we weren't going to hurt anybody. I still don't know all of your reactions.



Michael: How does this affect me? My only real concern was that this was not a lack of any affirmation of our relationship. That this didn't mean that there was something missing in our relationship. I've always had a lot of faith in our relationship. We talked about it, I believed it wasn't. Beyond that point, I didn't really react to it very much at all.

Alice: Although it had a long duration, the amount of time we spent together was probably ten hours. Me, a mother, he a shining executive. Arranging trysts was difficult to do. In a sense, there wasn't that much involvement. It gave it an unreal quality. Months would go by. I eventually became secondary to his shrink .... It made sex more difficult for me with Michael. I began realizing it wasn't a good idea, it was lying to yourself in the sex act. I fell in love with Michael all over again, having someone to compare him with. I could never marry or live with someone like Tom. The stability factor is important. There were things he didn't perceive the way you do .... As soon as it ended I wanted to tell you. It became an obsession. I was very unhappy, and I went to a therapist for a while. She led me to believe that our marriage was sound, and to consider what would happen if I told Michael. She said I should tell him. I felt so bad, like I was laying my thing on him, my guilt, and he's an innocent victim. It eased my guilty conscience, it was like taking a blob off your head, an almost physical weight.

This conversation was intense, and it was evident in their hesitant and strained manner that the couple had not discussed Alice's affair in any detail at all. The session with me provided an opportunity for a basic exploration of feelings generated by that affair. Michael said relatively little in that session, and employed his rational, philosophical style to control his own feelings. His initial reaction to Alice's disclosure was to put their marriage through a quick mental test, and when it passed he tried to stop thinking about her affair. Even though he suffered a major betrayal, he was more stunned than angry. Michael ended up in a supportive



stance toward Alice, helping her with her guilty conscience. Focusing on Alice's pain in living with her secret seemed to help dilute his own pain and fear. He became the "coper" once again.

In marriage, one of the biggest questions an individual faces is "how much is possible?" How much commitment to work, to individual pursuits, to family activities, to outside relationships is it possible to maintain while still preserving the marriage? There are no clear rules or fixed limits or boundaries. Religious or moral sanctions or rules help simplify the question, and are therefore quite valuable for some couples. Others face "possibility" directly, nakedly, and have to learn their own limits through reason and experience. In a later session with the Davis', I raised the general topic of threats to a marital relationship. This gave the couple, particularly Michael, a chance to discuss fidelity and infidelity. Michael seemed to use this more theoretical discussion for his philosophical defense against the threat of Alice's past behavior and present uncertainties. What he could not express directly or animatedly in personal feelings, he seemed to be able to put forth forcefully in general terms:

Michael: I have yet to understand people's lack of fidelity. It could change a relationship. There's a need for a general consideration of each other. Before marriage, life is all revolved around one's own preferences. You can't do this in marriage, you need a give and take.

Alice: About extra-marital sex, I just don't know. It appeals to me certainly, but I'm leery. I've been burned once, I'm not ready for it yet. I don't know whether our marriage could stand it .... I really trust Michael and I don't expect him to

run around. I get the feeling he wouldn't approve, and doesn't consider it a part of marriage. I'm an experimental type. The affair itself is not so destructive, but what comes after.

In our final session, this discussion was continued:

Michael: It's the level of commitment that one makes that is a threat. You have made it, perhaps there is some internal need to have the commitment held as valuable as you hold it .... It's not easy to really say what it does to people if it's broken.

Alice: He does feel threatened by the fact that I might have another affair ....

Michael: That can ultimately tear apart what one has made a part of one's existence. It's difficult to philosophize to me otherwise about it.

I then asked Michael if he had a clear idea about Alice's feelings about fidelity. He said he did not.

Alice: Maybe I should tell you. I don't know either.

Michael: That's what I thought.

Alice: It's situational, and depends on what the involvement is, who it's with. That was Tom's argument; it's not a subtraction but an addition.

Michael: That assumes that it won't affect your feelings toward somebody else. What about that somebody else's life? At what point is it worthwhile enough to take liberties with our relationship? In a love relationship, someone else becomes an internalized part of you. I have no moral qualms about other relationships. But the priority is my relationship with Alice, and I get uptight about thinking of messing with that. That's the biggest threat: how it will affect the party not involved.

A relationship does not exist within the confines of one's imagination, or feelings, or one's philosophy. The other person does exist and will be affected by our actions. Even if one partner feels he or she can manage an affair, and assumes that it will not

"subtract" from the marriage, that person is still vulnerable to the response of the other. The marriage exists as an entity, out of the total control of either partner alone. Each person's individual actions can lead to results that are unexpected and possibly destructive to the relationship.

The Lewis' are a couple who have attempted to openly and purposefully add outside relationships to their marriage. Richard had always felt that it was possible for him to love more than one person, and several years ago, with Susan's knowledge, he began a sexual relationship with a friend of theirs. Since then, he has discontinued that relationship because of a lack of "time," and Susan has begun and is currently involved in a sexual relationship of her own. The Lewis' claim to have made this arrangement work. Their own marriage is always their first priority, and they feel they have grown individually and as a couple through these additional intimate relationships. This facet of their marriage will be thoroughly explored in the chapter on friendship and love, since the couple does not presently find their outside relationships threatening. Susan, Richard said, "hada lot of struggle initially" about his outside relationship. She stated

I think I'm through with that. It was the whole thing about being the best and most exciting or whatever. Without an outside sexual relationship you can make this assumption. But with it, the comparison is threatening. I've changed my point of view on that. Part of the threat now is, what would happen if everyone found out? People would think our marriage is on the rocks, which it isn't.

The entire question of the feasibility of "expanding" or "opening

up" the marital relationship to include additional sexual relationships is fascinating and on the minds of many couples. It will be pursued shortly.

#### Life's Challenges to Marriage

The final group of threats to marriage consists of external events or realities that confront the couple. Some of these have been discussed earlier, such as the threat involved in bearing and raising children. Several couples claimed that changes of job and location had created difficulties for them. When John Pierce changed jobs and moved to a new university town, he slumped into a severe depression. He was extremely despairing about succeeding at a new position, and Sarah was concerned about him and lonely in her own right. John said

That was a fairly long bad period for us. You can say better than I the strains it put on us. Without you it would have been worse, I couldn't have seen it through.

"I don't think I could do it again," Sarah sighed:

I worried that you may have needed professional help .... I prayed hard ... sometimes I just cried. It frightened me that you might feel you didn't want to go on with me, and just drawl off in a corner. I didn't really think you'd be suicidal, but I worried a bit.

John: What helped was going on that summer program to Paris.

Sarah: You like showing me things.

John: Things were never so bad after that.

Sarah: And getting settled into our own home was important.

John: You were the prime mover there.

When Hugh Farmer returned to graduate school after he was married

and had children, the family's physical living situation became more difficult and impoverished. He had left a well-paying job to make this move and change of life. He also was not happy during the beginning of his graduate work. Although Ellen recalls thinking "our whole life was on the rocks when we were first there," the Farmers gradually adjusted and succeeded in their new situation. Finally, the Barretts encountered some stressful periods during their years living in the South Pacific: first in Steve's "missionary" days, then a few years later during his doctoral research project. Living conditions were "foreign" and spartan, and Steve and Jean had no one to confide in besides each other. During their second trip, Jean felt constricted by being responsible for two small children. She "gritted her teeth" and endured the year's stay. Clearly, making a physical move, whether temporary or long-standing, is a major change in a couple's life. A new situation is faced, and the possibilities for difficulty are great.

One other "change" in life is the fact of death, and the Pierces, the oldest couple in the study, discussed this threat to their relationship. Sarah raised the issue, saying that "a middle-aged couple gets older all the time. You know the unit won't last. That's one focus of depression, especially when you're tired or depressed." "You realize your happiness is a contingent thing," said John. "When you're feeling good, you think it will last forever." Sarah mentioned that "the possibility of suffering and death heightens love. I've lived with old people, and know that experience." One possible end of the relationship obviously is death, but the younger couples in the study did not articulate this as a threat. Perhaps



it exists as a vague, fleeting apprehension or concern, but more real and immediate challenges to the relationship exist. For the Pierces, at their developmental stage of life, death is a part of their not too distant future. They are aware of it.

#### Conclusion

Being close to another person, as we have seen, is a powerful risk and challenge. Your involvement in life is deepened, and you have to learn to live with another, "different" person. The threats are real, yet the safety of avoiding intimacy appears a deadly form of stability. John Pierce realized that Sarah gave up a very predictable living arrangement when she let him into her life:

You were taking a chance twelve years ago. You had a home and a job. They were permanent. You were taking a foreigner into your life. And there are some things about the other person you'll only find out after marriage.

Sarah replied,

If you get close, you are laying yourself open to pain and disappointment. But you've got to be willing to risk that pain.

A relationship is a fragile thing, and couples today are very well aware of the possibility of marriage's failing. As Dan Turner said,

You make an incredible emotional commitment in marriage. It's as strong as the two people involved. It could fall apart and hurt you for a while.

In love, Alice Davis stated, "you're laying yourself on the line to be hurt." Foote (1953), in an essay on love, wrote:

To expose oneself to another is to run the risk of getting hurt ... fear rather than hate appears to be the original rival of love ....

Working through the threats and crises, however, can be rewarding

for couples. More confidence is gained in the relationship, as well as a deepened sense of intimacy. Many of these couples met during a time of crisis in their individual lives, and their helping each other was an early indication of their closeness. Partners can continue to help each other through crises, both personal and interpersonal. Bill Joyce said that it is "very difficult to face defeat. To have someone to face it with and admit it to, can turn it into a victory." According to Hugh Farmer, "a real fiery furnace experience seems to draw people together."

Some couples, like the Robinsons and the Joyces, do not acknowledge major threats to their relationship. As Bill Joyce put it,

Nancy and I have tried to keep our problems small problems. We catch them when they're small, and don't let them grow.

"That's our philosophy," added Nancy. "We rationalize all our downs into ups." The Joyces have what they call "mini-crises."

Betty Robinson said that

It's different with how many years you're married. In the early years many things could be threats, but in later years there's too much at stake for petty things to make a dent.

All nine couples, however, gave clear testimony about the difficulties involved in living in a marriage, about the risks and pains of being close.

One other threat to the marital relationship is a personal or identity crisis in one of the partners. Not only does that person need some help in order to work through the crisis, but often the personal changes that result imply a basic change in the marital relationship. Many of the wives I spoke with in the study were

experiencing some strong conflicts about their roles as women, and most had been affected by the cultural atmosphere of the "women's liberation" movement. The husbands were trying, in various ways, to cope with changes in their wives' attitudes, life-style, and values. This topic leads us into the next chapter which is concerned with the couples' management of the dual needs for individuality and relationship. The changing role of women is a major part of that discussion.

## C H A P T E R X I

### INDIVIDUALITY AND RELATIONSHIP

One of the central challenges of marriage is finding a balance between the demands of individual life and the responsibilities of an intimate relationship. As we noted in the first chapter, each person exists as a separate entity and as an interrelated part of a larger whole. In a dyadic relationship such as marriage, each partner confronts his or her own basic needs for both separateness and relatedness. The individual must also deal with this issue in conjunction with the partner's feelings and desires. An intimate relationship has the potential to become suffocating, severely restricting the independent existence of one or both partners. It can also become alienating, emphasizing independence at the expense of relationship. But many couples have avoided these extremes. They have worked out relationships in which the "twofold" nature of existence is often a dilemma, but rarely destructive or intensely divisive.

Couples found a useful forum for discussing the issue of individuality and relationship in their statements about separate and shared interests and activities. Earlier, Bob Johnson asked "How do you resolve the conflict of self, partnership, and the rest of the world around you?" In their own marriage's response to that question, the Johnsons maintain several shared interests. For example, both are teachers, although at different levels and in different areas. But independent interests also serve to foster their

separateness and relatedness:

Bob: Our overlapping of interests does not preclude individual interests which act as a new stimulus to the relationship. The other person becomes interested in those areas also. There's the enjoyment of one acting as the leader, almost the teacher-student relationship while exploring something together. This has been true of the two of us. My individual interest in sailing got Laura interested. We both enjoy it. Her interest in language and traveling has led us to do a lot of that together.

Laura: We've gone off and done things on our own. The demands of children preclude our doing certain things together. He goes skiing alone, because he's an athlete and I'm not. I go off to New York to the theater. We can give the other freedom, and we appreciate each other more after a weekend away. At parties, we're not the type who stick together all the time.

Bob: It's essential to remain an individual. That's one area of possible conflict within a marriage. With two different human beings there are certain different interests. If you demand that her interests be subservient to your own, you're going back to the nineteenth century. That's creating frustration in your partner. If you negate your own individuality to the whims of your wife, you become a Casper Milquetoast, a neurotic or a jellyfish. Somewhere in between there is a balance. You can maintain your own integrity as a person, yet allow her to be an individual herself. Unless you both can give, neither can survive as a self. You need to compromise and stick up for your own rights. That's only possible if you can communicate with a degree of honesty.

The Joyces have also maintained separate interests, yet have managed to join together even more intensely as a result. They, too, claim that their "differences" from each other make the relationship more interesting and broadening:

Nancy: We've both done a lot of different things.

Bill: All of our outside activities haven't been done together.



Nancy: We always have something new to talk about.  
We do things separately, but remain close.

Bill: We always share the experience together after we're home .... To a certain point diversity is good. We find our strengths in diversity. We don't have to do everything together. That stifles a relationship. But being too far apart is trouble.

Perhaps if many of a couple's private interests were not shared at a later point, if there was not an involvement in and concern for the other's life, then outside activities could be quite threatening. But many partners told me what Richard Lewis did, that "we have a concern for what the other is doing separately, and growth comes out of that. Growing separately has brought us together." Susan added that "there is an eagerness on the part of the other one to sort of catch up. So, the other person eventually has shared in that experience." Janice Turner stated that

... it is really important to me to feel like a person in my own right. I work on my own things in the house. I have a job .... Our interests have been different, and it's helped to have curiosity. Dan's is better than mine. It gives us something to share, and it expands our boundaries.

As Buber has written, "distance" or "difference" is a prerequisite for relationship.

If one partner is not permitted the independence to pursue his or her own life, then there will probably be resentment and resistance of the separate activities of the other. The ethic could become, "If I am not to have a self, there will be no selves in this house, only a couple!" Along this line, Susan Lewis told me that a few years ago, before she began emancipating herself from the home, she did resent Richard's private life:

I used to hate it when he went off with his friends, for example. Now it's different. I don't hate it or resent it, and I can accept his need to do these things even though I don't like some of them, because I can also go and do my thing. When he went off for a weekend before, I had cleaning and taking care of the kids to look forward to. Now, I know that there are things of my own that I can do.

The Lewis' also pointed out that their attitude toward separate and mutual activities has changed over the years of their marriage. Susan said

There were two stages. First we did everything together, we needed to do things together. This has shifted to our doing our own things. Being able to make this shift has strengthened our marriage. I've wondered a lot about that. Sometimes I get on a mild guilt trip, and I think we should do more together. Rationally, I don't think it's the case. We can grow in our own ways, and that helps the marriage.

A "new" couple needs some time to learn about each other and to establish some basic confidence in the relationship. The task of the early relationship is primarily one of "bonding." The task of the later relationship becomes one of "differentiating." A crisis of these later years may revolve around trying to maintain the relationship in the face of the mutual needs for independence. More on this later in the chapter.

It is interesting to see how couples manage to merge their interests on occasion. Dan Turner said that

We were both curious about what the other person was doing and their interests. We found pleasure in doing together what one person happened to be interested in. We had a willingness to be very tolerant of each other, a real desire to be tolerant.

For this young couple, several conjoint activities had an individual slant as well. In their gardening and in their cooking the overall

production is shared, but they take responsibility for different parts of the project. Alice Davis mentioned a similar pattern, saying that she enjoys when Michael and she are both working around the house yet doing very different things.

The Pierces are older than the rest of those interviewed, and they met in middle-age after much of their "individualization" had already occurred. Being separate was becoming oppressive to each of them, and in their marriage they are very much identified by themselves and other as a "pair." The idea of separate vacations, or even lengthy daily separations, is aversive to them. But even with their intense involvement with each other, their description of balancing self and other in the area of interests is similar to the philosophies of other couples. John said, "You don't have to be identical in your interests. You learn to dovetail into the other's interests and make a team of it." So, Sarah paints while John makes the frames for her work. She gardens, but he is responsible for most of the heavy, physical work of the garden.

Once again, having different interests is considered a stimulus to the individual growth of both partners. They learn from each other and teach each other, and life becomes more varied because of the relationship. "There are things we've taught each other in twelve years," said Sarah Pierce:

For example, I'm from a non-musical family. He taught me a good deal about music.

At another point in the conversation, she said to John, "You like showing me things." It can be a wonderful experience to share a part of your own inner world with another interested person. If we

are excited by some idea or activity, we may wish to share that feeling with another and hope they experience similar enjoyment of it. That is a major aspect of dialogue, of turning toward the other with enthusiasm and openness. What a letdown it is to receive a bored reaction from the other. In many moments of relationship, we do receive this I-It response of apathy and disinterest. We are told, in essence, "Don't take the center stage. I'm waiting to go on myself." In more mutual, I-Thou moments, the response from the other indicates some appreciation of our needs and is not defensive or competitive.

The consensus from this group of people appears to be that a couple needs a strong, shared foundation for their relationship. This is particularly true in the first few years together. Gradually, more time is built into the marriage for outside, separate activities or interests. These separate activities, which of course could include work, feed back into the relationship in couples' discussions of these individual times and in mutual exposure to the other's interests. Newness is thereby reincorporated into the relationship. Each partner is often tolerant, curious, and concerned for the other's experience and needs. There is a general belief that "in diversity there is strength," with a recognition of the dangers of extreme separation in a relationship.

Some couples also tried to conceptualize the way in which they lived together in relationship. "It's a dance," said Sarah Pierce:

A complementary dance. One time one person leads and another time the other person leads. Backwards, forwards. It's been a truism to say that in marriage you think of the other person first. If you put that to the extreme, then you've got a doormat and a dictatorial monster regardless



of whether it's the husband or the wife. And yet there is a certain amount of truth in it, that you are ready to accept that what the other person desires and needs will be paramount.

John: Sometimes you'll anticipate, yes. And know what the other person is going to do. Before you act you foresee the situation.

Sarah: But it's like dancing. If you're a good dancer you know the step they're going to do before they do it.

John: It's a dance of behavior, of little adjustments.

Sarah: Again, without being a doormat, which I am not, this business of thinking of the other person first, it isn't normally just the other person but it's the unit which the two of you form that you are working for.

John: It's the unit of the two that's put before the individual.

Sarah: If there's something that your partner does that you don't like and you feel angry, you're feeling angry as if you yourself had done this. In other words, again it's the part after the whole .... Honestly, if you're feeling blue or depressed over anything for quite a while, I don't know whether it's that I'm feeling blue or that you're feeling depressed. There's something wrong, something out of kilter with the unit, and which part of the unit is feeling that way I don't quite know.

Later, John added another analogy to the discussion. He said,

There's a sense of partial fusing, if not into a single personality ... it's the same sort of relationship, to use a metaphor, that you have in astronomy, of the double-star.

Two separate stars, but in the same orbit. As Stan Robinson put it, "you almost become one in your thoughts." The Pierces are probably the most intensely related couple interviewed in this study. John mentioned that



... friends and acquaintances think of us instinctively as a pair rather than as a separate set of individuals. In fact, for all I know some of my colleagues may be rather amused at the degree of apparent mutual dependence that we have on one another.

Sarah's analogy of the "dance" of marriage is vivid and appropriate, and it is interesting that the word "partner" is employed in both contexts. While both partners have their roles or positions in the dance, there is a give and take, an anticipation based on previous experience, and a tangible sense of the unit or team. In a previous chapter, we discussed the fact that a number of couples viewed the marital unit itself almost as a third party in the relationship. They each had a part in its life, of course, but it clearly went beyond each of them separately or additively in power and complexity. Sacrifices could be made, work could be done, not just for the self or for the actual other, but for the relationship of which both were a part.

Even couples who are not as committed to a "pair identity" conceive of their marriages' balancing of individuality within an intimate relationship in ways that are similar to the Pierces'. Susan Lewis spoke of marriage as a "seesaw" relationship:

There are the needs of the individual on one side, of the rest of the family on the other side. It goes up and down. If one side stays in one place, that's really dull for the other. Both sides have chances to be up and down. Any monopolizing is trouble.

The Joyces described how they "take turns giving."

A possible danger of living within such a workable unit is that others may tend to relate only to the couple, not to the individuals concerned. The couple may also contribute to this by

de-emphasizing their individuality and stressing their togetherness.

Dan Turner emphatically stated

I feel uncomfortable sometimes with other couples. People tend not to be individuals, but to be half of a unit. That's fine, but it's a stereotyped role. I do see two other people as a unit. I like to think of myself as an individual, not just part of a team. Sometimes couples aren't communicative to other people around.

Couples can be turned inward, existing solely off the resources of their own relationship. Closeness can lead to inaccessibility, as the Farmers have arealized in their own lives. But even a couple that wishes to relate to others must work hard to overcome some other people's "Noah's Ark perspective." That awful expression "your better half" is painful evidence of a philosophy that leaves no room for separateness, and envisions us all marching to paradise "two by two." It is important to avoid typecasting, and to see the couple in their actual relational arrangement. Ofte, this will include more individuality than we may have expected.

Individuality and relationship can be viewed as two separate polarities of human existence, but in lived experience they are intimately intertwined modalities. It is incorrect to assume that only one leads to the other, that individuality is attained and then the relationship between individuals results. Our "self" arises originally from the "fusion" relationship of mother and child. Once our individual identity has been strengthened, we can commit ourselves more consciously and intensely to relationship. Individuality is then reinforced, and relationship becomes an even greater possibility in our lives. The processes are simultaneous, not sequential. The two poles feed each other, and in an interactional double-helix, individuality nurtures relationship and relationship promotes greater

individuality. One of the major principles of intersubjective philosophy is that the growth of the self occurs through relationship. A parallel concept is that relationships are furthered by the individuation of each partner. Each person then has more to contribute to the relationship, which in turn can continue to aid the development of each separate person.

Let us examine one thread in this helix first: the growth of the relationship as a function of individual growth. Rogers (1972) neatly sums up the theoretical concept, writing

In a process partnership one of the most important factors making for a truly growing relationship may seem a rather paradoxical one. It is simply that when each partner is making progress toward becoming increasingly his or her own self, the partnership becomes more enriching. It is almost like saying that the more separate you become, the greater is the chance for a strong union. (p. 206)

The couples in this study gave evidence of this phenomenon. As each partner developed individually, pursued separate interests or careers, evolved in values or beliefs, they were then able to offer these new stimuli to the relationship. In marriage, one can learn from the other, and spouses in this study did teach each other new things about life. Individual growth helps the relationship avoid stagnation, and can keep the level of mutual interest high. If each partner can be seen as a strong, autonomous person, then each individual can be relied on in moments of threat or crisis. It is therefore easier for each partner to establish confidence in the relationship. As Richard Lewis said, "growing separately has brought us together."

A close relationship also fosters individual growth in the

participants. As DeChardin has written, "union differentiates." Partners help each other mature, and, to quote Mayeroff (1972), "by helping the other grow I do actualize myself" (p. 30). It is a broadening experience to live with "another" person. The Davis' spoke of this in relation to their friendships as a couple. Michael said

You see qualities in people that the other wouldn't see. You draw on each other. I may react negatively to the person, and Alice positively. That enables me to be a broader person. We help each other to get to know and appreciate people better.

Additionally, five of the nine couples in the study emphasized how they had individually gained in self-confidence as a result of their marital relationship. For the Joyces, the Lewis', the Barretts, the Pierces, and the Johnsons, being accepted and valued by a spouse led to an improved self-image and sense of independence in the world.

In a previous chapter, the individual and relational histories of each couple were presented. One general impression garnered from this information was that many of these individuals began marriage with a shaky self-concept and even a lack of previous social success. If their personal deficiencies were of great magnitude, then we might expect each person to look to the spouse to fill his own personal void. This direct utilization of the other as a result of extreme need is a hallmark of troubled marriages. Frequently, both partners are quite needy, and so neither can make up for the weaknesses of the other. Mutual resentment and increased demands on the other are likely to occur. But couples in this study appear to have been capable of individual survival at the time of their meeting. They had some personal resources, and so were able



to let a pattern of mutual giving naturally develop. When Susan Lewis said that Richard had done more for her self-image than anybody, or Ellen Farmer said that she needed Hugh to tell her she could succeed at work, or Bill and Nancy Joyce both said how they have helped each other do things they never would have done otherwise, the feeling evoked in this listener was not of the parasitic nature of the relationship. Instead, there was a recognition of what being loved can do for a person. Feeling that another individual of worth and substance who knows us more deeply than anyone else is concerned about us, cares for us, and believes we can succeed is a rich and glorious experience. One grows in one's own eyes by being looked on with acceptance and encouragement by the other.

A simple concept such as "giving" is immensely important in marriage. A monologic marriage, based on "taking," has as its goal individual growth, but at the cost of the relationship. The couple is relating on two, separate one-way streets, and there is competition for the traffic. When a couple can give to each other without feeling impoverished or exploited, then both parties can grow and gain self-assurance. Thus enriched, giving becomes all the more possible, and the cycle continues upward. Disturbed couples paradoxically seem, at the same time, isolated from each other and yet fused into an amorphous mass. There is no room for two identities, and yet a terrible fear of being alone.

When a couple does manage to "fit together" successfully, they are often able to point out the differences in personality that characterize their relationship. More troubled couples can also notice personal differences and patterns in their relationship,



but this is usually done with acrimony and resentment. The couples interviewed in this study often cited their spouse's different style as among the qualities they most appreciated in the other. One common pattern has already been briefly mentioned. That is the combination of a steady and reliable husband and an enthusiastic wife. In this study, the Johnsons, Turners, Joyces, Lewis', and Farmers all spontaneously noted this pattern in their marriages. This complementary relationship was generally satisfying to these couples. They learned from the other's approach to life, and were able to rely on the other to balance their own emotional tendencies. Difference, in this case, was helpful to the relationship.

Once again, however, the borderline between "happy" and "unhappy" couples is subtle and interesting. The dissatisfied couple's translation of the pattern of the "steady" husband and "enthusiastic" wife reveals a "dull" husband and "hysterical" wife. The different style of the other person can become an irritant if viewed as a challenge or threat to one's own way of life, or if the person is ashamed or angry about needing the qualities the other offers. Any large differences between the spouses in the amount of personal change and growth they have experienced is also likely to lead to dissatisfaction with an earlier interactional style. For example, a woman who is trying to develop the more organized, rational, dependable qualities in herself may have difficulty with a husband who is still looking for and desiring her flightiness. Unless he is willing to change in relation to his wife, her changes will lead to friction in the relationship. The old configuration can become a symbol of oppression to one partner, and a sign of stability and

security for the other. As a result, one partner may be unable to value any aspects of his or her previous behavior, and the other may be unwilling to change in any way for fear of "losing" the battle. Inflexibility leads to brittleness.

The configuration of "man: steady -- woman: enthusiastic" is a fairly traditional division of sex roles. In the last few years, the issue of the woman's role in society and the family has gathered much momentum. The "woman's liberation movement" includes a wide variety of viewpoints, and has had a significant cumulative impact on the lives of couples today. None of the wives in this study are strong adherents of a particular women's organization or doctrine. But as a result of exposure to the literature and cultural atmosphere of the women's movement, all have thought about what it means to be a woman, and many have been going through some major changes in their self-image and goals for the future. The questions these women are raising are central ones for our discussion of individuality and relationship, and this section of the chapter could well be subtitled "the crisis of female individuality."

The issue of achieving "independence" in life was of great concern to a number of the women I interviewed. Several described the life of a girl raised with home and children as pre-eminent values, with either vague or eventually discarded career goals, who married, had a family, and watched their husbands take a controlling position in the world and at home. Now, some of these women are questioning this arrangement and wondering about alternatives. They convey the sense that something has been lost from their lives, although they are not sure exactly what or when or what to do to

get it back. But independence, freedom, control, and responsibility are frequent themes in their life-histories.

Jean Barrett said that when she was growing up, her parents did not allow her to learn how to make her own decisions. They would offer her a choice and tell her that the decision was hers, but always made their expectations known. Jean did not disappoint them. She felt, reasonably, under their control. Jean taught for a year before marrying, and felt independent at that time. After marriage, however, maintaining a sense of autonomy became difficult again.

Here are a number of Jean's statements on this issue:

I'm trying to think of the times when I really have been happiest with myself. They've been the times when I've been the one making the decisions, and it's made me very happy. They may have been the wrong decisions, but they've been mine, totally, and I've had to stand on them. ... One of the times when I felt really good about myself have been times when I have not been totally cut off from Steve, but the times when I have been at least partially away from him and have been responsible for things. We saw a lot of each other the year I was working, we enjoyed each other's company and contact. I'd say I even depended on it for happiness. And yet I was living alone and I was teaching and I was fully responsible for my own life, and I was very happy.

Jean also recalled her trip back from their year of living in the South Pacific while Steve did his doctoral research. She left early, with their two children, in order to set up a new home for them. Jean and her two children made an extended trip of it, and traveled all through Europe before returning to the U.S. She then made all the arrangements for buying the house, and was able to act in a very independent, responsible manner. Jean said

I didn't feel I was happy to the exclusion of having Steve as my husband. It was nice. I don't know how to achieve that kind of independence within the marriage relationship, which is going to make me feel really happy

and good about myself. It's a thing I've really got to work on .... It was a high point to be independent and make decisions on my own. You need your own identity within marriage. Right now I feel I have a role in life, but it's through Steve.

It is difficult for Jean and Steve to break away from well-established patterns of living together that place Steve in the controlling, dominant position. For example, Steve usually initiates their entertaining guests in their home. Until recently, Jean did not express her dissatisfaction or anger at this arrangement. She merely resisted many of Steve's efforts to invite other people to dinner or for an evening of socializing. As long as entertaining was Steve's province, Jean felt controlled and even exploited. It became apparent to her that it was an issue of decision-making rather than just her social anxieties when she vetoed Steve's plan to invite a couple for dinner, only to invite them over herself later in the same day. Jean really wanted them to visit, but it was essential that she make the decision herself. One of the most insidious aspects to working through the dependence-independence dilemma is that the old patterns are taken for granted. It is difficult for one partner to first realize the source of upset and then share those feelings clearly and directly with his or her spouse. Resistance, vague resentment, and depression may be the only external signs of a complicated relational problem. When Jean Barrett was finally able to verbalize her conflicts to Steve, the couple acknowledged that they were at a crisis-point in their marriage. But at least now the crisis is identified and understood.

In looking back on her life, Janice Turner said



I had no real interests of my own and I guess I'd been brought up the way a lot of middle-class females are. You know, thinking that the major point is to get a man and get one who has all sorts of favorable qualities .... I tend to wonder if I didn't sort of flop from my parents to Dan.

She saw herself as always being dependent on others, relying on them to make decisions, and having a low opinion of herself as a result. In the last few years, Janice, still in her early twenties, has been attempting to increase her sense of autonomy and self-respect. She is a member of a local women's support group, and is confronting the dilemma of being a woman and an individual within the marital relationship.

It is so much easier, in a way, to feel like a separate person if you are physically separated from your spouse. Jean Barrett noted this fact, and similarly Janice Turner described a time in her relationship with Dan when she wanted to live by herself:

I really wanted the best of both lives. I wanted to feel I could live by myself, meet people on my own, and have space to myself. I felt I wasn't anything definite, that I had no talent or interests. I felt like not a very valuable or adequate person .... But it would have been unrealistic to get an apartment of my own. I had a strong and real relationship with Dan for all the surface tension. An apartment would have been a step backward in human relations.

Living with someone who is willing and able to take charge can be both seductive and frustrating for the more passive partner. To change the relationship while maintaining the ongoing intimacy is exceptionally difficult work.

Susan Lewis, Nancy Joyce, and Alice Davis are three other women who are trying to work their way out of a poor self-image and a dependent relationship. Eight years ago, Susan just wanted to be married. She relied on Richard to see her through any difficult



point in her life. At that stage in her development, having a husband and children meant that you had succeeded as a woman and that there was a place for you in the world. To be independent meant to be alone and unwanted. In the last four years, Susan has become more independent, and her marriage is consequently in transition.

Nancy Joyce says that she likes herself better in the last three years because she is feeling less and less like an "extension" of her husband. She too wanted only children and a home when first married, but now values her blossoming independence. Alice Davis said

I see myself in a dependent relationship, and that's annoying to me. For example, I'll wash the dishes because he's more tired than I am. I've got to get away from that.

Alice is also in a women's support group, and is at the beginning stages of thinking of a more autonomous life-style.

The fact that all these women are now outspoken in their uneasiness with a traditional marital arrangement seems to be multiply determined. Part of this can be attributed just to their growing maturity as adults. After several years in one kind of relationship, these women have found themselves thinking of the future and wanting more from their lives. Their self-images seemed low as young adults, and they currently manifest more self-respect and self-acceptance. This could be partially the result of living in a close, accepting relationship, a topic discussed earlier in this chapter. As confidence rises, so do expectations. But perhaps most significantly, the present social atmosphere of female unrest and the growing number of

forums for the discussion of women's issues and advocacy of alternatives has helped these women air their dissatisfactions more openly than in the past. Surely, many women have always felt confined or oppressed in marriage, but they may have either accommodated to the status quo or turned their resentment inward and suffered for it. Now, it is permissible and very socially acceptable for an educated, middle-class woman to raise questions about her marriage. She has other women available to talk with in organized groups, and husbands who are more aware of their key issues and concerns. This combination of personal and societal evolution has helped to make the issue of male-female dependence-independence a central concern of many contemporary marriages.

One major avenue of expression for personal independence is a career. Men have usually based their self-image as much on their professional as on their familial ability and success. Earlier, we noted how much time men spent away from home and at their jobs. But what about the women? Some are satisfied with being full-time wives and mothers, but others accepted that status because of a lack of any alternatives that would still be "womanly." Susan Lewis sighfully recalled

I was brought up to assume women were inferior. I was a physics major and the pressures got to me, the idea that no man wants to marry a woman smarter than he is. I had an identity crisis at college. Part of me still believed that and assumed that the woman's place is at home with children, taking care of her husband. That was opposed to my natural state. I'm not a housewife, I'm not domestic.

Susan first wanted to be an oceanographer, but women were not

allowed on the boat to do research. She switched to physics and astronomy, but eventually gave in to social pressure and became an elementary education major. Susan hated this approved feminine vocation, and only recently has been spending time in several social-activist volunteer projects that she finds satisfying. Susan can be seen to have been running scared in college and in her initial years of marriage. Feeling unworthy and insubstantial, she sacrificed personal freedom for relational security. Partly as a result of being in an intimate relationship, Susan began to feel more confident and therefore more constricted by her previous compromises. She has recently begun to express herself professionally.

Both Nancy Joyce and Alice Davis are unfulfilled by a purely domestic life-style. Nancy is a nurse, another sanctioned occupational outlet for women, but does not enjoy this work. She said

I hope to have a career in five or ten years. I usually like to know my goal. I'm starting college in September, but I don't really know what I'm going to do. It's as if I'm waiting for a divine calling.

Alice is a college graduate, but has never had a job after graduation. She is also exploring various career possibilities, but there is a vagueness to her plans at this time. More is available to women now in the way of careers, but those women who have not worked for a while, and who still have small or young children, seem partly stunned by possibility. They need the time to think about what it is they want to do, and time to work out with their husbands and families a way of making a smooth transition from home to work.

Once again, Jean Barrett was eloquent concerning the issue of

home versus career. She has been feeling angry lately, and experiencing "an undercurrent of unrest and unhappiness with things. It disturbs the harmonious condition of my life and relationships." In a number of comments, she vividly expressed some of her anxieties, thoughts, and confusions about working out a livable relationship between a man and a woman:

For any marriage to survive in this age, it has to be very honest about some of these things, or else it's just going to collapse in some great explosion. No matter how much the people love each other. And I really do think people can love each other and still have their marriage dissolve. I really do. The more I hear about relationships that are breaking up, in many cases I feel the people probably do love each other at some level, but are just incapable as human beings of working out the logistics of their lives together. And I don't know whether people in the past have--I think probably a lot of women have accommodated. Maybe that's why there are so many female alcoholics in this country ....

Our relationship sounds like a very traditional one, and that's exactly what it has been. It's a pleasure to come home at night and find dinner ready, and you can play with the children and all or that. The thing is I think I'm partly torn about this because I don't dislike having a home. I enjoy it. There are aspects of it that are, it does give me pleasure, having a home that I enjoy and doing some of the things that are necessary to maintain it. But I guess that's not enough for me. Why, you can read any literature these days, I'm not saying anything different than any other woman who has been to college and has been told in college that her college class is the uncommon woman. What the hell does this mean? And then all of a sudden--clunck--you're supposed to find all your fulfillment in raising your children for a number of years ....

I really do think there are some women who can do that. But I'm not sure that I'm one of them. And I don't think I should feel guilty about that, but I do .... I'm not quite sure yet exactly what I want to do either .... I want my cake and want to eat it too, which is perhaps selfish, because I'm saying that I want to have the independence and freedom that a man does, and still have the leisure and the time to do things connected with the home or whatever it is that are the traditional roles.



Jean's position may be a very common one for contemporary, educated women in their thirties. She is frustrated with the present arrangement, but is unclear about how to go about expanding individually within the marriage. She finds appealing some of the aspects of being at home, but this is not enough. There is some guilt concurrent with even the partial rejection of domesticity, but a growing sense that a husband should take some responsibility for the home and children. The situation is in flux, and there are tensions in the relationship. If these can be expressed and discussed, there is some possibility of a mutual readjustment of the relationship.

Four of the women interviewed expressed no complaint about their present division of roles in marriage, and were not having difficulty maintaining a sense of individuality in marriage. Interestingly, these were the four oldest wives interviewed, and these marriages were characterized by having one "dominant" partner. Sarah Pierce had a career as a social worker and gladly gave it up when she married. "I'm not much of a women's libber," she said. Her professional identity had been established, and the identity that Sarah lacked when she married was that of a lover, a wife. Betty Robinson has worked in the past to bring more money into the house, but she has no desire to do so again. She enjoys raising her sons and running the household, and Betty is clearly the decision-maker and guiding force in the family.

Although Ellen Farmer is now teaching and enjoying doing so, Hugh had to encourage her to resume working. She finds satisfaction



being the more verbal and outspoken of the couple, while considering Hugh to be the more important spouse. She stated, "I believe that the male is superior. Males who are superior are vastly superior." Similarly, Laura Johnson, who teaches at the college level while her husband teaches at the junior high school level, emphasized that she considered his career more important than her own. Laura is a person who greatly values her career and did feel stifled as a housewife. "I don't want to stand back and watch while others run the world," she told me. Yet she added,

I always considered my job secondary to Bob's in importance. I still feel that way. I'd sacrifice my job if he needed to move. Since we're both happy here, my job means a great deal more to me now. I really want to keep it.

Laura is contented with a traditional marriage relationship in which the husband is given higher status, but has found satisfaction in a career that takes her away from home a good deal. She maintains her independence and her marriage, and is not struggling with a conflict between these areas. Perhaps if the above four women had lived their twenties and early thirties in today's atmosphere of "female activism," they would have also had to contend with the desire to break away from traditional role distinctions in marriage. The women who are attempting a re-ordering of their lives are facing unknown territory, difficult questions, and hard work.

While women seem to be doing more of the changing in philosophy and goals, their husbands are in the position of reacting to these changes. The general reaction to a wife's desire for greater independence has been one of acceptance, even appreciation, yet also

confusion and uncertainty. Early in their marriage, support went one-way for the Lewis': from Richard to Susan. Now that Susan is more self-reliant, Richard has had to adjust to being less "needed." But he has also been able to count on his wife at difficult moments. When they were first married, Dan Turner had to try hard not to make decisions for Janice. He also did not state his opinions forcefully, because he knew that she easily became intimidated. Now that Janice is more confident, Dan can feel freer to be himself. Bill Joyce told Nancy,

You've done a tremendous job, you've made yourself more of a person. It livened up our relationship even when you took that one course in school. For a while, you were getting out of touch with worldly things....

"I'm aware of how independent you've become," said Richard Lewis to Susan. She then asked him if her independence was "troubling" him. He replied,

I've wondered too. Maybe it's causing some uneasiness. Then I say 'That's crazy!' Your growth is a tremendous asset. I don't want it to go back to the way it was ... It does feel good seeing you forging out. That's exciting. Still, I want to do and share things with you. It makes sense to have the dependence balanced.

Richard has some concern about what the future holds for him and Susan. Their relationship has been changing so rapidly, where will they be in five or ten years? Steve Barrett talked in more detail about his perception of and reaction to Jean's changes:

She feels a lack of freedom and a lack of time to pursue what it is she's finally discovering to be her own self, and to become herself instead of her parents' daughter, her husband's wife, and her children's mother. But to become your own self, I think at this age in America, for a woman, is especially difficult. And she's really wrestling with that now, really struggling with that. I try to understand it, and I'm trying to help her with it, although I'm sure I don't many times.

Steve is trying to be less critical, demanding, and hostile in his reactions to Jean's behavior. He is making an effort to be tolerant of Jean's confusion, and not rush her into a definitive statement of her needs and plans. He is perplexed, though, and angry at times. Steve seriously wondered whether women in their mid-thirties go through a bio-chemical change that leads to these crises of identity. He pointed out that he has no models for a new relationship with his family, a relationship with a more independent wife. Steve's father and grandfather did not face the situation he is now facing. Expressing the ambivalence of many husbands, Michael Davis delivered this mixed message in reacting to Alice's desire for a career:

Alice is not entirely pleased with being a full-time housewife .... I'd like to see her doing something she'll be satisfied with. But I'm more a realist. We do have young kids, and not a lot of income. She needs to underwrite the costs of child care. I can appreciate her feelings.

Balancing individuality and relationship is a difficult task. To ignore the interconnection of these two realms is to invite disaster. The individual then may become the enemy of the relationship, and a perplexing battle is on. The couples in this study have been sensitive to this issue. These marriages have been threatened by the dual nature of human beings, but they have also been strengthened by separateness and relationship. Women are now undergoing the most dramatic changes, but male individuality is also problematic. For example, it can be isolating and burdensome to be caught up in a career and in a relationship with an insecure, unhappy, dependent wife. In reacting to their changing wives, some husbands are having to confront their own styles, goals, and needs. Ironically, women

may end up attaining what many men now have: independence and a career. Men may spend more time at home, and emphasize family over career. And so men might be saved from the oppressive "masculine" life-style, and women might inherit stresses they would rather avoid. It is easy to understand why individuals are searching for new alternatives, so that this era of "consciousness raising" does not end in a blind exchange of one sexual stereotype for another.

## C H A P T E R XII

### FRIENDSHIP AND LOVE

In an earlier chapter, a distinction was made between "community" and "communion," between friendship and heterosexual love. According to Cowburn (1967), both are forms of "ecstatic love," and each individual faces the possibility of discovering friends and lovers. One aim of the present study is to understand better the life of the happily married couple. Friendships can play an important role in marriage, and can also provide each spouse with a type of intimacy that is similar yet different from marriage. A marriage must contend with the potentiality of outside relationships, and its manner of doing so strongly shapes the character of the marital bond. One of the purposes of this work is to conceptualize the twin worlds of friendship and love. In this chapter, couples will be discussing their ideas about the essential elements of these two forms of intimacy.

#### Friendship

Many authors do not consider friendship to be a form of love, but this is usually a semantical problem. The Greeks coined a special word for friendship love, *philia*, and the word friendship itself originated in a verb of the ancient Teutonic tribal languages meaning "to love." For the ancient Greeks, and in the European age of chivalry, friendship rivaled and even surpassed the value of heterosexual love. In those eras, friendship was revered because it was the least natural of loves, "the least instinctive, organic, biological, gregarious, and necessary ..." (Lewis, 1960, p. 88). Not tied to the creation of a family, free from the needs of sexuality and physical



intimacy, friendship has seemingly always carried with it an aura of freedom and spirituality. It is, ideally, a "pure" relationship.

Lepp (1969) embraces this attitude toward friendship, writing that

... the most universal and, in our opinion, the noblest of all forms of interhuman communication, the only one capable of dissolving our loneliness, is friendship.  
(p. 21)

And Lewis (1960) brightly adds that as a love independent of nature, friendship represents "a luminous, tranquil, rational world of relationships ...." (p. 89)

With this glorious introduction, however, most authors go on to proclaim that friendship has fallen on hard times. It is readily apparent that the term "friendship," like "love," can be abused in popular conversation. Companions, colleagues, and casual acquaintances are glibly called "friends." Being "friendly" implies the frequent use of smiles and the radiation of likability, but seems to fail as the basis of an enduring relationship. Going out to "get" friends, to be popular and end loneliness, reduces friendship to a utilitarian, I-It relationship. Just as much of our conversation is, as Buber put it, monologue disguised as dialogue, so are many of our casual relationships confused with friendship. An additional factor in the theories of friendship's demise is the increased mobility of our contemporary, middle-class society. The couples interviewed in this study all made several moves in the first years of their marriages, and the Joyces even characterized this as a problem of couples in their twenties and thirties. Friendship develops as two or more individuals share a common history, and if people are constantly changing jobs and locations this cannot occur.

Against the background of these broad statements concerning friendship, I talked with couples about the existence of friendship in their own lives. The major topics of conversation included: how friendship develops, what are its prime elements, the differing commitments of friendship and marriage, the differences between same-sex and opposite-sex friendships, the role friendship plays in individual life and in marriage, and the experience of "individual" and "couple" friendship. It is interesting to see both the couples' varying attitudes toward friendship, and their unanimity on certain points about this phenomenon. I will be including the statements of scholars on friendship along with couples' comments in the following sections.

How friendship develops. One point of consensus between "experts" and couples is that a friendship is likely to arise from within a group concerned with the same interest or project. Friends are made through work or social-recreational activities, and the activity appears to be the initial medium for the relationship. Hugh Farmer claimed, "Friendship develops for me in working relationships. The task of the job is a built-in provision for conversational material." For Janice Turner, "friendship comes from working on something together ... becoming so involved in work that you forget yourself in a positive way." Bob Johnson said that you form individual friendships

... with people you work with, who you respect by the way in which they work with you. You become interested in them as a person ... and from a common interest and respect, see how they operate in one context. If you like what you see, you can expand it further. If your interest and theirs still overlap you maintain the friendship. If not, it atrophies.

"It's interesting," said Richard Lewis. "Outside of jobs, the major ways we've gotten to know people have been church and service activities." Finally, Stan Robinson told how "people you work with are your friends in most cases. You have to have some common interests." He maintained that the next closest thing to living together was working together on the same project or job.

People placed in common situations--classmates, teammates, clubmates, co-workers--may find that almost without intending to they have begun a relationship with another person. Individuals engaged in play, in some task, occupation, or interest can come to gradually reveal themselves to co-workers or co-participants. What is revealed is apt not to be trivial or shallow if the individuals are committed to the project. Fromme (1969) believes

The more widely we reach out from ourselves, the more people we encounter on some level of mutual interest. The easiest way to develop friendships is on the basis of a shared pleasure or a shared cause. People who are interested in the same thing are likely to be interested in each other. (p. 189)

Many writers have noted how people become "fast" friends in the face of a common hardship or danger. The best example of this would be that of soldiers in battle. Cowburn (1967) cites the example of men who choose a dangerous profession, like coal-mining. His partial explanation is that they know the quality of "comradeship" that exists among individuals facing a risky business. Recent popular magazine articles have made the same point about policemen, some of whom call their teams "marriages." These men achieve a striking degree of intimacy in their work. This depth of relationship may well be one of the attractions of these professions.

Obviously, one does not automatically become friends with a co-worker. There must be a certain sense about the nascent relationship that leads the two individuals to deepen their mutual involvement. Lepp (1969) writes that "... all friendship implies a certain degree of communion; a certain likeness must exist between friends, a more or less essential community of interests." (p. 26) But C. S. Lewis (1960) is the most successful in evoking the sense of discovery that underlies friendship:

Friendship arises out of mere Companionship when two or more of the companions discover that they have in common some insight or interest or even taste which the others do not share and which, till that moment, each believed to be his own unique treasure (or burden). The typical expression of opening Friendship would be something like 'What? You too? I thought I was the only one!' ... Friendship must be about something .... Those who have nothing can share nothing; those who are going nowhere can have no fellow-travellers. (p. 98)

The nature of friendship. While there is agreement on how friendship develops, conceptions of the nature of friendship are more varied and complex. Couples were able to isolate several basic elements of friendship, and these elements indicated that friendship was being considered an intimate, dialogic relationship. Most individuals made a clear distinction between "acquaintances" and "friends." Dan Turner noted that

It's a difficult thing to be good friends. It's like living with a person, you have to overlook things you don't like about them. There's something strange about the chemistry of that .... Part of becoming good friends is establishing trust. You confide a lot of yourself in the other person, and you need trust in that person's judgment and integrity.

"Friendship involves direct communication," added Janice.



You need to have some parts of a personal language in common. If one person says something, the other knows what is meant. Trust also includes an acceptance.

Other couples elaborated on the significance of "sharing" in friendship. Jean Barrett stated that friendship represented

... an ability to share both experiences and ideas, and to be able to have fun doing it. A good friendship has humor and lightness .... It's easier to be a friend with someone else who shares your basic attitudes. It's not impossible without it, I don't want to sound narrow or cliquy. Even with diversity, if certain basic attitudes are the same it's still possible .... Also, people we're the most ourselves with, who support us the most, are people we can laugh with, have a common sense of humor with.

"Being able to share my feelings is one significant criteria of friendship," said Richard Lewis.

Feelings need to be shared in both directions. If they only went one way I'd be suspicious. You express warmth and caring. It's feeling really comfortable when together. There's a joy in getting together, yet a comfortable joy. There's a sharing of both humor and of more serious concerns.

To Bill Joyce, a friend is

... somebody that you share something in common with, a common philosophy. Someone you can open yourself to .... With my best friend, even though we came from different economic backgrounds and were opposites in many ways, we did a lot of things together and developed a trust for each other. We would talk about our troubles, rap, and come up with a solution.

"Friendship in general," for Bob Johnson, "means a couple of things: a commonality of interest or interest area, and an understanding of honesty." Finally, Stan Robinson said that friends

... have to have some common interests. Acquaintances are people you brush against every day. With friends you discuss more than that, like personal problems. You have a little bit more feeling for a friend. A true friend treats you like a brother. You wouldn't want to see a friend injured any more than yourself.



It hurts more to see a friend hurt, than for you to be hurt yourself.

Authors writing about friendship have also emphasized certain attitudes that are necessary to create and sustain this form of relationship. Rake (1970) lists "fidelity, sincerity, honesty, reciprocity, affirmation, support, and respect" as those attitudes deemed essential in friendship by a cross-section of social scientists. Lepp (1969) notes the importance of availability, sincerity, and fidelity, and Sadler (1970) cites the value and life-giving force of acceptance, trust, forgiveness, and sacrifice. In a rather arbitrary and general manner, Sadler lists five basic elements of "true" friendship. These are: joy, communion, freedom, truth, and sacrifice. He states that the proportions these elements assume in a real friendship will differ from relationship to relationship. And, as we noted earlier, most scholars firmly maintain that common interests, pursuits, and concerns are a basic foundation to a friendship.

The different commitments of friendship and marriage. In reading through all of the above descriptions of friendship, the similarities to the marital relationship are striking. A sense of commonality and comfort, an ability to share a "personal language," feelings, and ideas, trust and honesty, are all prime elements of the love between man and wife. Many people, however, are able to point out essential differences between friendship and marital love, between the experiences of community and communion. The fact that the two forms of relationship are similar in nature can cause an individual difficulty in distinguishing between the two intimate experiences.

As we shall see, this may result in a strain on both types of relationship.

Friendship appears to represent a type of commitment that is different in both degree and quality from that of the marital relationship. One difference is in intensity. Jean Barrett used the word "lightness" to describe friendship. She said that

... a good friendship is not terribly intense. I don't enjoy intense, analytical relationships with people. That makes me uneasy. I would rather share experience or ideas and go from that rather than poring over feelings .... I can only go so far in soul-searching, into the intricacies of others' relationships .... I don't enjoy introspective relationships. Maybe that's an insensitivity to others' needs, but I admit this. I feel I don't have time for that.

While Jean prefers to be non-analytical about her relationship with Steve, she sees a value in clarifying and working out problems in her marriage. Betty Robinson also sees friendship as a less demanding relationship than marriage. "It's easier to have friends than lovers," she said. "You don't get so involved." C. S. Lewis (1960) simply notes that "Friendship, unlike Eros, is uninquisitive." (p. 102)

Some couples believed that communication in friendship was not as personal or intimate as the dialogue of the marital relationship.

Bob Johnson said

When I'm talking with people, with friends, there's a difficulty in shifting from a superficial, non-threatening type of conversation to talk about something personal to you or the relationship. It's hard going from the 'they' and 'it' stage to the 'we,' 'I,' and 'you' stage, to get down and talk about those kinds of things where there's a potential threat of changing the relationship between you ... Laura and I can really start talking with each other at any level. There's always a transition stage with friends.

Mutual involvement is so much more complete in marriage, that, as Laura said,

After you've lived with a person, there are common reference points. There's an ease in communication. With friends it's different. You always have to give them the context.

Lewis (1960), in his witty essay on friendship, states that "lovers are always talking to one another about their love; Friends hardly ever talk about their friendship" (p. 91).

Sarah Pierce told me that after adolescence, she had no friend with whom "it's been this completely soul-mate business. That's alien to me. Some things are just kept private." John continued an analogy referred to earlier, stating that while "lovers" were "double-stars," friends were "stars in their different orbits." The double-star is affected by a common gravitational pull, but the separate stars move more autonomously. Sadler (1970) perceptively maintains that if Eros offers people "the freedom to be one," friendship allows them "the freedom to be two."

Distance is highly respected in friendship, and this is demonstrated even physically. In our culture, friends rarely engage in the long embraces that characterize the world of "communion," of the love between man and woman. With greater distance and less exclusive involvement comes an enhanced feeling of control in the relationship. We may speak of being "in" love, but of "having" a friendship. According to Lewis (1960), there is a greater sense of choosing a friend than a "lover." The experience of "falling in love" is a more absorbing experience than the beginning of a friendship. These themes of "choice" and "control" continue to differentiate

friendship from marital love. Janice Turner believed that

... in marital love you make a commitment to open yourself up pretty completely. In friendship, you choose when to see a person, for how long, and how much you'll expose. It's partly the physical proximity thing again.

In discussing the effect of losing a friend, perhaps because of a move, John Pierce said

You regretted it for the first month or so but then you picked up the same activity with someone else. It was the doing things of mutual interest that was more important than having a relationship for the sake of a relationship. The interpersonal aspect of it was secondary.

He went on to say that in marriage, the relationship transcended the activity. Other people might emphasize more strongly the personal nature of the friends' activity, but John's belief in marriage's greater intensity of encounter has some support. Lepp (1969) writes that

... unlike love, friendship does not establish immediate communication between two persons; rather, friends communicate through the mediation of something outside of them such as an ideal or a common cause. (p. 104)

Both Von Hildebrand (1942) and Lewis (1960) make a similar distinction between what they term "side-by-side" and "face-to-face" relationships. Friends are viewed as standing alongside each other, working together, but not turned exclusively toward the other. Friendship is therefore generally considered to be the least jealous of loves, and the love least tied to a feeling of exclusivity. "Lovers" are imagined to be "face-to-face," deeply and intensely involved with each other. In a dramatic statement about the discovery of a friend, Lewis (1960) writes



You will not find the warrior, the poet, the philosopher or the Christian by staring in his eyes as if he were your mistress; better fight beside him, read with him, argue with him, pray with him. (p. 104)

Other couples gave additional reasons for differentiating friendship from marital love. The Pierces mentioned the wedding ceremony, which sanctifies the marital relationship, as adding to the special quality of marriage. In more secular terms, Bill Joyce spoke of the greater legal and financial investment in marriage as opposed to a close friendship. Marriage is special and unique, while friendship is a more limited partnership, a staple of a healthy life. This is the consensus of opinion from couples and experts. What is confusing and problematic is that friendship and marital love share a common foundation. They differ in the nature, intensity, and totality of involvement. What happens if friends are allowed to turn more toward each other and further develop their relationship? If some forms of friendship are seen as "limited," is it not possible to raise these relationships to an equivalent position with marriage? Are people meant to be involved in only one face-to-face encounter? Couples are currently asking themselves these questions and experimenting with answers.

The limits of friendship. As we have seen, friendship and marital love are related realms. Susan and Richard Lewis clearly viewed these forms of relationship as existing along a continuum of intimacy. Susan said

Being married, our relationship, reaches the ideal, platonic, ultimate friendship. Being loved and accepted in spite of negative qualities, and loving and accepting in spite of the other's negative points. Most relationships fall between being strangers and my ideal. It's difficult to accomplish that friendship with many people



because it takes a lot of work .... All other relationships could reach the ideal point, but probably won't due to time and circumstances. Even relationships with females.

Alice Davis said that she and Michael added sex to their initial friendship on the road to becoming lovers. Surely a friendship between spouses exists within a loving marriage. But the Lewis' are advocating adding sexuality to friendship outside the marriage. Most couples have serious reservations about allowing a friendship to become that involving. Once it does so, can it really be called friendship any longer?

"In an absolute sense there are no limits to outside relationships," said Susan Lewis. "That's where we are," added Richard. "The real world does place practical restraints." They then continued this discussion:

Susan: I don't see how you could subtract out the sexual part of you in a relationship. It's sad that we subtract that out with everyone except your spouse. That eliminates joy from our existence. I don't look on it as a sexual or non-sexual relationship. My sexual nature is part of all my relationships.

Richard: I'm increasingly coming to the conclusion that in order for me to be aware of my sexuality in a relationship with a female, and express warmth, I need a certain amount of freedom in not having an absolute boundary. Practically, the time doesn't exist to develop another relationship to the extent our relationship exists.

Later, Susan added

It's confusing deciding what are the elements of the outside relationship that have to be maintained. It's like getting married again, but it's not like it. You wonder what you can expect from the other person, how much commitment. It's not just a sex thing, but could easily get to that. To try to maintain a full relationship with another

person, what is expected if you're not married or living together? Can or should things in marriage exist in the other relationship? It's messy. I can understand how monogamy evolved, it's just too damn difficult with two people. In any relationship, you expect something of the other person, but what? In my case, the time for the second marriage, whoops, relationship is getting less and less due to circumstances beyond our control. I'm hassling that now.

The question facing some couples is whether or not they want to accept some of friendship's limitations. The words "limitations" or "boundaries" may imply deficiency or inadequacy or incompleteness to some people, but in my mind friendship's own nature is valuable and significant. Friendship is different from marital love, not inferior to it. The difficulty that the Lewis' face in moving beyond traditional friendships is not only one of time and practical arrangements. As Susan pointed out, it is hard work being so intimate with more than one person. It is especially difficult when one of those relationships exists outside of the formal structure and coherence of the marriage bond. Other couples clearly wish to avoid these difficulties, and find satisfactions in the comforting, non-intense, peaceful world of friendship.

While discussing the limits of friendship, Janice Turner expressed her attitude toward the combination of sexuality and friendship:

There is a real sexual element in relationships. There are times I feel it with women friends too. Once you give in to that, you develop a fascination that's not of great value but can take over. I like to feel I have control over my life, time, and energy. When I've gotten sexually involved I just haven't been able to handle everything else. That, Dan, and my life wouldn't be possible in marriage.

Alice Davis, who had an affair, is tempted but leery of an "expanded friendship:"

We have some friends who are such good friends, if it went one step further couldn't it be better? It's a nice idea, a communal marriage. From a hedonistic point of view loving people is a good idea, maybe it could add something to a marriage. I'm afraid it wouldn't.

The Barretts and Johnsons have both personal and religious sanctions against sexual infidelity. Bob Johnson said,

I get hung up on the taboos of society. They say that with friendship you have a license for intellectual intimacy with a friend of the opposite sex. Because it's a friendship, you have confidence in the friend's sincerity and discretion. Without having any feeling of the necessity of sexual contact. You can get very intimate and personal without sexual contact. The shift comes when, with latent desire and sexual attraction, you release any inhibitions, the bond has shifted from friendship to love, and you're granted an extended license of intimacy. If you're already married to somebody it's a sticky wicket. I'm not prepared to handle it now.

An "extended license of intimacy." Sexuality is obviously not synonymous with intimacy, but for these couples it seemed to be a shorthand expression of deep interpersonal involvement. It represented a removal of all barriers between two people. As we noted in a previous chapter, a spouse's friendship with someone of the opposite sex was the type of relationship often considered a threat to marriage. Perhaps a more "total" level of intimacy with someone of the same sex seems more difficult to accomplish, less competitive with marriage, and, in our culture, more personally threatening if attained.

It appears that some couples believe that "more is better" in relationship. Other individuals point out that when a friendship is "expanded," something may also be lost. In his novel, ironically titled All My Friends Are Going To Be Strangers, Larry McMurtry

describes the effect of adding sex to an already established friendship. Emma is the wife of a graduate student named Flap, and the couple has been friends for a number of years with the protagonist, Danny. Emma is speaking to Danny after they have made love for the first and only time:

'I've always known personal things were desparate. Personal troubles. I've always known it. Seeing you last night almost destroyed me. I can't even help you. It's going to be hard for me even to be your friend, now.'

'I know,' I said.

I guess that was the sentence we had been resigned to, in bed, earlier. That was probably what screwing had done. Taken away our chance for long friendship, of the kind we had had. We might love each other and stay on each other's side forever, but we couldn't have the sociable things of our friendship again, at least not for years. And who could imagine years? I couldn't even imagine the day. I could imagine Emma and I trying to be together in Flap's company, and I knew neither of us wanted to. We hadn't been ashamed of it, in the bed in the quiet morning, but that nice hour of our lives was past forever. (p. 207)

Some distance is required for friendship to exist, and sexuality implies overcoming that distance. In that connection, as McMurtry noted, you lose "the sociable things." The rules of the game have been changed.

Same-sex and opposite-sex friendships. The issue of the lure of sexuality is an important factor in the distinction couples make between friendships with members of the same and opposite sex. Historically, the "great" friendships have been between members of the same sex. Additionally, works on friendship most frequently stress male friendship, but this may be due to the fact that almost all writers on love have been men. The consensus from the couples in this study is that heterosexual friendship occurs less frequently



than friendship with a member of one's own sex. And there seem to be a number of reasons for this.

One is the threat of sexuality. Certain couples avoid individual friendships with the opposite sex because of anxiety about becoming too involved in that relationship. The Joyces feel this way, and Bill said that if he got friendly with a woman, he would feel "an obligation to get to know her sexually." He said his wife was his first female friend. Janice Turner told me that since she met Dan she has lost her male friends:

When I knew them there was always a sexual tension.  
I wasn't interested, and they became frustrated with me ....  
There's always that hassle to be confronted or avoided.  
It's not as relaxed as with women.

There does appear, however, to be a good deal of socializing between men and women in work and party situations. Hugh Farmer clearly stated that he related more intensely to the women than the men he worked with, and said that there was a "visceral" element to these relationships. Nancy Joyce finds men more interesting to talk to at parties, and Laura Johnson finds stimulation in her relationships with male colleagues. But these opposite-sex relationships are stringently restricted encounters, and so seem to be considered benign and enjoyable. They are not deep friendships, and therefore do not pull so strongly toward further intimacy.

Steve Barrett said it was

... hard, apart from professional relationships, to have a male-female relationship without raising some notions about jealousy or why the relationship is the way it is.

If a couple has clearly established the boundaries of their relationship, it seems easier to attempt a heterosexual friendship.



The Johnsons have set definite limitations on friendships, and confidently consider their own relationship to be "on a completely different plane." Therefore, Bob could say

We both have friendships of both sexes. There's no difficulty in maintaining these, no tensions. I've never felt threatened by Laura's friendships with other men. She enjoys male companionship professionally. A number of my friendships are with women, and stem from childhood friendships, and I've maintained these.

The Lewis', with their acceptance of sexualized friendships, also feel free to meet and become friends with people of the opposite sex.

The most traditional explanation of the greater frequency of same-sex friendships is that common interests, activities, and values have usually not been shared by men and women. Jean Barrett said that it was especially hard for married women to meet men socially:

Unless you're involved in a professional with both men and women, it's hard to be in situations with men. Most of your contact is as a couple with other couples. A man has a much wider range of possible relationships.

"I don't meet many men on my own as a housewife," echoed Alice Davis.

"I don't get too much exposure to people Michael doesn't. There used to be little men and women had in common, less groundwork that you could base a friendship on." Janice Turner said she had more interests in common with women, although she tended to get bored and impatient with them. She has not avidly pursued female friendships. And Stan Robinson concluded,

It's hard to have female friends. You don't have as much in common. Most of the women I know don't have the same interests I would, they wouldn't want to be in the same activities.

Most couples who spoke of having difficulty in establishing male-female friendships added wistfully that they were sure things were different now. Today's young couples, they felt, could feel free and natural about an opposite-sex friendship. Somehow, I am doubtful. Certainly with the women's movement there has been the removal of many barriers that separated men and women in the areas of career, values, and interests. In that regard, it should be easier for men and women to inhabit a world of shared experiences that could lead to friendship. But contrary to the traditional explanation, I feel that the major obstacle to heterosexual friendship is the easy blurring of its differences from heterosexual love.

Couples appear threatened primarily by the possibility of a friendship competing with marriage, and it is usually the heterosexual friendship that is viewed in this light. Work, formerly an "approved" individual domain for married persons, now may come to include this added threat of heterosexual relationships. The sexual element is a powerful one in opposite-sex relationships, and a puzzling one to deal with in a friendship. Some couples do not try to contend directly with this issue, and have less intense but more flirtatious relationships with the opposite sex. Others set tight boundaries to protect the marriage, or else welcome sexualized friendships. But all have had to deal in some manner with the issue of sexuality in male-female relationships, and I believe young people today are having to do the same.

One final note about the gender of the friend. Most individuals

took for granted that same-sex friendships were a common and natural occurrence, but Jean Barrett went further in explaining the importance in her life of this type of friendship. She expressed a belief that a number of women might share: that it is more difficult for a woman to establish a friendship with members of her own sex than it is for a man to become friends with other men. She discussed her years at a women's college, and said

There was a great deal of value in living with women, being free to develop relationships with a group of women. They're still my best female friends. The time factor is important for women. Men or boys have sports groups and a sense of comradeship. Women don't do so much of that growing up without having to have them put into the context of being further complicated by relationships with males. At college, I could zero in on intellectual endeavors with women. There are a tremendous amount of games in courtship, a competition for attention. If I couldn't have a really comfortable, growing relationship with women, I couldn't have this with men.

Without having some close relationships with women, free from the external demands of dating and romance, Jean doubted that she could have developed friendships at a later point in her life. She felt that boys had more opportunities for a social existence separate from girls, allowing them the chance to form close friendships. As a woman, she found a community of individuals with shared interests in a women's college. At that time, she was helped by living separately from men.

In considering the role of outside friendships in a marriage, several couples began by emphasizing the importance of friendship between spouses. While it can be assumed that these husbands and wives do consider themselves friends, it was interesting to learn

that, for some couples, this friendship within marriage reduces the need or desire for other close relationships. Nancy and Bill Joyce discussed this issue:

Nancy: It sounds corny, but I really feel he's my best friend. It does limit your own friendships. Like I find a lot of my girlfriends spend a lot of time with each other, going places, confiding this and that, but I have some close friends but I don't need them as much as other people seem to need them.

Bill: I haven't really developed buddy-buddy type friends you do everything with .... I don't really have a close friend at all, only a few from college, but I only see them once or twice a year.

Nancy: We have a lot of acquaintances and I see people in the neighborhood now and then, I'm usually very outgoing, but I just don't have very many very personal, personal type confiding type relationships, and I think maybe that's a factor that there are very positive reasons why I don't.

Nancy's phrase "very personal, personal type confiding type relationships" describes the intimacy found in marriage, but not generally thought to be a component of adult friendship. Friendship, as we have seen, is considered less demanding and intense. But the Joyces do not appear desirous of friendship's form of closeness either outside of their marriage.

Bob and Laura Johnson had an interchange that was very similar to the Joyces' discussion. Bob began by saying

We felt that we were very good friends with each other. As a result, we didn't necessarily feel the need to go out and cultivate friendships outside. If in the normal course of events we met people, we'd follow up. But we didn't join clubs or social groups. We enjoyed each other's company and activities. The exclusion of new friendships also reflects a maintaining of old



individual friendships or people we've known since then. We keep up with these. Our closest friends come from those categories as opposed to those we met in this town.

Laura said that

Being each other's friend precludes my need for a best girlfriend. I don't have one, except for a college friend. If I don't see her for six months, it's still like we saw each other yesterday. We're long-distance friends. I have one other close female friend here, but I don't have to see her every day or tell her everything. Since being with Bob, I haven't felt the need for a female friend of this sort.

Similarly, Betty Robinson told me "my husband is the one I confide in completely."

The role of friendship in the lives of married persons. Prior to marriage, each spouse may have had close friends, usually of the same sex, who served as confidantes and partners. After marriage, discovering the total involvement and intimacy with a friend and lover of the opposite sex, many spouses begin to wonder about the ongoing role of friendship in their lives. The old, individual friends may be retained in a modified form, but new friendships frequently appear to be curtailed. Sarah Pierce, in her matter of fact style, summed up the sentiments of the above-mentioned couples by saying "If I'd wanted to have a lot of close, intimate relationships with friends I wouldn't have wanted to get married."

Several couples interviewed, however, stressed the value of extra-marital friendships for both their individual and relational growth. The Turners, Barretts, Lewis', and Davis' expressed a desire for close friendships with individuals other than their spouse. The Turners saw a potential danger in relying on the marital relationship as their only source of intimacy. As Dan said,



It's a tremendous emotional burden for one person to put all their problems and concerns on just one person. You can't always expect one other person to respond in a helpful way to you. Having a variety of people you're close to brings out a lot of your personality that wouldn't be exposed in contact with only one other person. There's the sheer joy of being close to other people.

Jean Barrett also commented on the ability of friends to draw out additional qualities in an individual:

We both at points have recognized the need for a catalyst to bring out things in our own selves. It's not needed, but it is valued. We value the kind of thing that sometimes other people, friends and acquaintances, would be able to bring out in each of us. This then gives meaning to our own relationship. Very few two people are able to provide each other with everything.

Commenting on the same theme, C. S. Lewis (1960) wrote

By myself I am not large enough to call the whole man into activity; I want other lights than my own to show all his facets. (p. 92)

The concept of individual growth through relationship has been considered at a number of points in this book. A friendship can be a relationship that helps the individuation of both participants. Adding friendships to the marital relationship can provide an increased opportunity for personal discovery, confidence, and development. Susan Lewis emphatically stated,

Friendship is absolutely essential to our personal growth and for the strength it gives our marriage. It'd be damn dull without it. I need to have more than one significant relationship. I couldn't survive with just one significant relationship before I die. I need many more on different levels of depth. Because I have these, I'm more independent, not a parasite. It's dangerous when a woman stays home and never has the opportunity to meet anyone else. Outside relationships are a plus for us as a couple.

These relationships, said Richard Lewis,

... are important for my personal growth, for learning about myself. I work on things to change about myself through relating with other people. I couldn't have made the progress that I have only in the context of our relationship.

Susan added,

It keeps us alive and exciting. It brings stuff into our relationship that contributes to the other person. We're not stagnant .... The freer and more whole that I become, that has to make a significant difference in our marriage. I don't want to be wholly dependent on Richard.

Lepp (1969) sensed this connection between self-transcendence and self-creation, writing

And it is by making ourselves more available to others that we become more and more ourselves. In friendship we discover and reveal what we are and, perhaps still more, what we are capable of becoming. (p. 119)

Friendships outside of marriage may, then, represent both an assertion and affirmation of independence. A person can learn that he or she can survive separately from the spouse, and this increase in confidence can make the marriage a more fully mutual and reciprocal relationship. As Richard Lewis said,

I think the additional relationship for me was very significant for my growth and identity, and in dealing with my feelings and expressing them. It affirmed my self-image and self-confidence, my worthiness and acceptability to somebody else.

Even though some of their remarks pertained to outside "sexual friendships," the Lewis' statements are helpful in understanding the role of any type of close friendship on the marital relationship.

We saw earlier how family ties can provide a sense of continuity and permanence in a couple's life. Nancy Joyce has experienced a similar feeling of stability through maintaining friendships over a

period of years. Even if the friend is seen only infrequently, and the Joyces are a couple who do not rely heavily on outside friendships, a friend can serve to tie together different eras of one's life. "A close friendship is a special thing," Nancy said:

It's a link with the past that you've left. It's remembering times that were different .... The world is such a fleeting place, if you can keep a friend here and there it makes life more stable.

Laura Johnson spoke of the importance of having a "home base," and said part of that experience was the ability to "relate to friends from other eras of our lives." Focusing on the effect of ongoing friendships on her marriage, Jean Barrett said

When we re-meet people who have been important to us, this cements our relationship even more. It shows we still have something between us.

Individual and "couple" friendships. When a couple marries, both individuals usually have several personal friends. Couples vary in their treatment of these individual friendships after marriage. John Pierce said

We don't go through the pretense of beginning a couples friendship with our pre-marital friends. It would be a pretense to feel you have to have them on equal terms.

He added that "pre-marriage friends become more peripheral, less essential." Sarah said "you fill in with friends you make together." The Joyces consider themselves lucky not to have had many individual friends prior to marriage. They thereby avoided what they feel would have been a difficult problem. Stan Robinson had more friends than Betty, and has made more independent friendships since they have been married. But he has severely restricted these

involvements at Betty's request.

Other couples have maintained their pre-marriage individual friendships, but attribute this to the ability of both spouses to relate to the friend. Over the years, individual friends get married and along with their spouses may become "couples friends." This happened for the Johnsons, Barretts, Davis', and Turners. As the Lewis' pointed out, however, within the four-way friendship are six possible individual friendships. All these relationships will not exist on an equal level, and so a friendship between couples may be a means of de-toxifying independent relationships for a couple. The individual friendship is allowed to exist, but under observation and in a social context. And the couple avoids the problem that might ensue if one spouse were to be left at home.

Only the Johnsons forcefully stated that individual friendships had to be shared. They felt that any socializing would be done as a couple, so the spouse's feelings were important. If one partner's friend were disliked, Bob hypothesized that "we would respond with enough negative reinforcement to squash it." While, like most couples, they continue to make individual friendships at work or with neighbors, Bob and Laura require each other's tacit approval to spend additional time in these relationships. Most couples found themselves to be sharing their friendships, even if they did not philosophically feel that this was necessary. Time was again an issue, as individual friendships, separately maintained, would tend to draw one spouse away from home. For this reason, time and family are protected by a withdrawal from some outside



relationships, or an expansion of these to involve the couple. There can be benefits from the latter course of action. Michael Davis, for example, did not fully share Alice's feeling for some of her friends, but considered his socializing with them to be interesting and "broadening." Finally, relationships at work appear to be the locus of the more clearly individual and separate friendships. But often these relationships are restricted to "business hours," and so lack the freedom of involvement that characterized pre-marriage friendships.

Over the years a number of couples appear to have gone through two major stages of friendship relationships. They moved from individual, pre-marriage friends, gradually to a development of friendships between couples. Pre-marriage individual friends will most likely be maintained, but many of these are relationships which are either "cooled out" or just watered down by lack of contact. Another possibility is transforming it into a couple-to-couple friendship.

Couples' attitudes toward friendship: a summary. Some couples, specifically the Farmers, Robinsons, Pierces, and Joyces, seem to have limited their involvements with individuals or couples. For them, outside friendship is not a crucial need for married individuals. Some spoke hopefully of wanting to expand their contacts with other people. Ellen Farmer seemed especially interested in developing couples friendships, and was concerned about Hugh's "asexual" individual relationships with female co-workers. But the tone of these discussions about possible future changes in relational



patterns was vague and purely speculative. The above-mentioned couples are heavily "family-centered" and expressed satisfaction with that style of life.

The Johnsons, as noted earlier, also do not desire a great deal of intimacy and involvement from their friendships. This is because of the depth of their own relationship with each other. They seemed, however, a more open couple than the ones just mentioned, and see a place in their marriage for non-intense individual and couple friendships. The Barretts are a similar couple, and the Lewis' and Davis' are even more committed to a policy of "openness" toward outside relationships. The Turners seemed to share this philosophy with the Lewis' and Davis', but are currently living in an isolated location and are in work situations that are quite demanding and time-consuming. They look forward to moving to the country and rejoining friends they had in the early period of their relationship. Janice was particularly aware of the dangers of their emotional isolation:

It would be good for us to draw on other people more than we do. For example, we both had the same look on our face the other day, it was like we were looking in a mirror. It's not good to be around the same other perspective and sense of humor all the time.

Marriage can be inhibiting in many ways of outside friendships. The mutuality of a marriage is so involving, the couple spends so much time together, that little opportunity may exist for "sharing" a common world with a friend. While this commonality might occur and be noticed in work or club situations, it might be difficult

for married individuals to find the time to move beyond socializing to friendship. There may be no intense need to do so. But there is a danger in these restrictions. Several people commented on their personal need for a number of close relationships. If outside friendships are implicitly or explicitly prohibited, the couple may become too inbred, confined, and eventually bored with each other.

The problem lies in finding a constructive way to add personal friendships to a happy marriage. Friendships between couples, the usual route, are in many ways muddled relationships. The specific interactions are obscured, and particular relationships within this complex may have no other chance to spend time together. The most helpful corrective would appear to be the clarification by each couple of the limits of friendship, and an open discussion between the spouses about their needs for additional relationships. But in order to fully understand friendship and its role in a marriage, it is necessary, as we have seen, to have an insight into the world of love. One major goal of this study is to illuminate the world of Eros, of communion, of marital love. Both the couples in this study and a wide variety of authors have addressed the question, 'What is love?', and our discussion now turns to their answers.

#### Love

In the literature on heterosexual love, a distinction is frequently made between "romantic" and "conjugal" love. This distinction is sometimes translated as unmarried versus married love, immature versus mature love, transient versus enduring love,

emotional versus rational love, and new versus old love. Many authors believe that "romantic" love characterizes the courtship and early phases of a love relationship, while "conjugal" love represents the more stable and domestic pleasures of a relationship in its later stages.

Interestingly, most of the literature on heterosexual love is really about romantic love. This phenomenon has captured the fancy of novelists, poets, songwriters, and scientists alike, and the "conjugal" experience has received limited attention. Indeed, in some studies conjugal love becomes a non-entity and is negatively described simply as the opposite of romantic love (see Knox and Sporakowski, 1968). Fromme (1969) is correct: "if all the world loves a lover, it is a romantic lover that the world loves" (p. 193). Because of its importance in traditional literature on love, it is essential to understand the nature and meaning, as well as the historical development, of the concept of romantic love. At that point, the couples in this study will comment on the quality of their own experiences of "being in love."

As an introduction to the concept of romantic love, it is helpful to turn to the world of fiction. Storytellers, playwrights, and novelists have conveyed the spirit of romance in vivid fashion, and that chronicler of the magical world of nineteenth century Polish Jewry, Isaac Bashevis Singer, presents a classically romantic episode in his novel The Manor. One afternoon, Miriam Lieba, daughter of a Jewish merchant, accidentally meets Lucian, political refugee son of a Catholic Polish Count. Her family has arranged a marriage

for Miriam Lieba, but the evening after her encounter with Lucian she feels the impact of "romance:"

Miriam Lieba stirred the food in her dish. Beneath her hair, her ears burned, although her face was white. A strange warmth overcame her. She was not consciously thinking, but her mind seemed full of thoughts. They pressed against her skull. Within her, words were being uttered, scenes enacted. She dared not even meet Tsipele's eyes. Miriam Lieba was generally shy with strangers, but this time she felt bashful in her own family. What's wrong with me? Am I getting sick? she wondered. She rose, went into the hall, and climbed the stairs to her attic room. For a while she remained standing in the dark; everything that had happened that afternoon re-enacted itself vividly. Lucian appeared as if stepping out of the frame of a painting. He looked at her, smiled, and said something she did not hear. He was bathed in an ethereal light, like the visions of saints described in books by Christian mystics.

Why am I so happy? Miriam Lieba wondered. Only a moment ago I was in torment. Suddenly she knew: what she had been awaiting for so many years was happening. Why hadn't she realized it before? She wanted to laugh, to cry. God in heaven, what would come of it? Miriam Lieba locked and chained her door. She felt the same as she had on Passover night after the Seder, when she had gone to bed after drinking four cups of wine. Walking unsteadily to her bed, she lay down, feeling as though an illness were coming on. Miriam Lieba lay there for a long time, fully clothed, half asleep, in a state of intoxication such as she had never known before. The cold woke her. A midnight moon was shining upon the snow. The trees facing her window seemed to her to be covered with blossoms. (pp. 94-5)

In the above passage, Singer includes most of the major elements of the classic romantic love experience. His lovers come from "two different worlds," and their relationship will obviously meet with severe parental and societal objections. "God in heaven, what would come of it?", says Miriam Lieba. The couple's momentary meeting is idealized and bathed in mystery and mysticism. Violent emotions course through Miriam Lieba, contradictory emotions. She is "burning" yet "white," she feels sick yet transformed, she is



tormented yet joyful, she wants to both laugh and cry. These feelings are overpowering and intoxicating. The future is unknown and dangerous, but Miriam Lieba realizes it will lead her away from the stable and predictable family life. She is already "bashful" in her own household. Carrying the full flavor of the unity of opposites, Miriam Lieba sees blossoms on the snow-covered trees in the cold, Polish winter moonlight.

Other romantic couples easily come to mind. Romeo and Juliet, Tristan and Isolde, Heloise and Abelard, and Dante and Beatrice all share many aspects of the romantic experience. Their loves are stridently free and irrational. The heart rules the head in these totally absorbing, urgent, emotional experiences. These relationships appear out of the individuals' control, and are often termed a form of "temporary insanity." These loves are always fraught with uncertainty and obstacles, but the sorrow they engender seems strangely sweet. Suffering is not dreaded, but relished. The word "passion," in its religious sense, implies suffering. All feelings are intensified, and this force carries the relationship down to a tragic end. Romantic couples rarely build lives together. They are usually either separated by their enemies or die at the ecstatic peak of their love. In our own example, Miriam Lieba and Lucian do run away together and marry. Demonstrating romance's inability to survive domestication, they soon are torturing each other and eventually die separately, alone and destitute.

One clear meaning of romance is "revolt." Romantic love is, in one sense, a political statement, a rebellion from tradition and the status quo. As such, it is vulnerable to repression from the



authorities. Or, as John Gardner points out in his novel The Sunlight Dialogues, it is susceptible to the ennui and faded spirit that may overcome a rebel once the fight is over and he has won:

But the thrill was dead, inevitably; created to die from before the beginning, like all illusions, and impossible to revive except feebly, momentarily, when one happened to be made jealous. 'Love is revolt,' someone had told her--Stanley Burrish, when they met in San Francisco three years ago--and it was true. A flight from the humdrum, from reality: you shucked off all you had been before and the world that went with it, you became the enemy of the universe and imagined your lover to be another just like you, and so for a moment the two of you were free, lifted out of all ordinary dullness, out of the old vulnerability, became godlike or childlike or a little of both, and the world, no longer a fence around you, was beautiful. So that love was doomed, the new world sickened like the old. Move on. (p. 186)

The concept of romantic love can be traced back to the European "courtly love" of the twelfth and thirteenth centuries. In that era, marriages were arranged for economic or political convenience, and love and marriage were viewed as incompatible experiences. The Church's dogma prohibited heterosexual relationships outside of marriage, and so sexuality was spiritualized and sublimated. The knight worshipped his lady, and sought to prove his love for her through acts of courage, strength, and character. But a cultural phenomenon occurred during this era. Those persons of "noble heart" dared to break from tradition and religious doctrine and sought out their lovers. With such powerful opposition, these relationships were dangerous and often tragic. They represented, however, the assertion of the individual spirit. According to Joseph Campbell (1968), this awakening of romance signified the beginning of an era of individuality out of the darkness and restrictions of

the Middle Ages. His fascinating point is that love led the way for reason. The first rebellion was of the individual senses, the second, represented by the Renaissance, was of the power of the individual intellect.

Campbell's thesis merits closer examination. He bases his statements on the study of the works of the troubadours in France and "minne-singers" in Germany, particularly one Gottfried von Strassburg. Around 1210, Gottfried wrote his version of the Tristan legend, and Campbell notes that this work was a major source for Wagner's later artistic creation. Campbell (1968) writes,

Of all the modes of experience by which the individual might be carried away from the safety of well-trodden grounds to the danger of the unknown, the mode of feeling, the erotic, was the first to waken Gothic man from his childhood slumber in authority (p. 42) .... Love was in the air in that century of the troubadours, shaping lives no less than tales; but the lives, specifically, and only, of those of noble heart, whose courage in their knowledge of love announced the great theme that was in time to become the characteristic signal of our culture: the courage, namely, to affirm against tradition whatever knowledge stands confirmed in one's own controlled experience. For the first of such creative knowledges in the destiny of the West was of the majesty of love, against the supernatural utilitarianism of the sacramental system of the Church. And the second was of reason. (pp. 54-5)

Another feature of romantic love related to its "individualistic" nature is also represented in the Singer passage. Descriptions of romantic love revolve more around an evocation of personal feelings than an account of an actual relationship. Romeo and Juliet spent very little time together, Dante merely caught a glimpse of Beatrice for thirty seconds, and in our example, Miriam Lieba exchanged only several words with Lucian before her "intoxication." Because the relationship is new or non-existent, romantic lovers have parallel

private experiences rather than a shared love.

One potential pitfall of the intensely romantic experience is that the individual will fall in love with love itself. Many authors have noted that when love becomes a god, it also becomes a demon. Buber (1970) claims that there can be an "Eros of monologue" which is based on self-absorption rather than self-transcendence:

There a lover stamps around and is in love only with his passion. There one is wearing his differentiated feelings like medal-ribbons. There one is enjoying the adventures of his own fascinating effect. There one is gazing enraptured at the spectacle of his own supposed surrender. There one is collecting excitement. There one is displaying his 'power.' There one is preening himself with borrowed vitality. There one is delighting to exist simultaneously as himself and as an idol very unlike himself. There one is warming at the blaze of what has fallen to his lot. There one is experimenting. And so on and on--all the manifold monologists with their mirrors, in the apartment of the most intimate dialogue!  
(pp. 29-30)

Even if this worshipping of feelings is avoided, there are other problems facing the "romantic" couple. They often share nothing more than their conjoint rebellion. Also, as Fromm (1970) notes, the "explosive" experience of falling in love is largely the result of suddenly discovering another person. But that experience is by its very nature a brief one. Once the loved one is known in greater depth, the onrush of exciting feelings of discovery comes less regularly and naturally.

Clearly, in its most extreme form romantic love appears to be a pre-marital, even a pre-relational form of love. Similarities have been pointed out between the behavior of the knight toward his lady and the adolescent male toward his girlfriend. The spirit of adolescence is one of rebellion, of awakening individuality,

and this is distinctly in the romantic tradition. But most individuals do not experience the full classical impact of romance. How many Romeos and Juliets have we known? Furthermore, the romantic love syndrome has changed both culturally and historically. Love and marriage are no longer viewed as being mutually exclusive, and most young lovers are given a good deal of autonomy by parents and society. As Beigel (1951) says

The mood of lovers, though still vacillating between joy and depression, is, on the whole, less sentimentally sad, and, owing to their greater independence and the diminishing outside interference, is based more often on anticipation of marital joys, cooperation, 'having fun together,' and pursuit of common interests. (p. 331)

Modern romantic love, while still an affair of the senses and the heart, does not appear so "insane" after all. It can be viewed as a natural beginning love, an intitial attempt at reaching beyond oneself into the world of love. In a recent study, Rubin (1970) conceptualized romantic love as including three basic components: an affiliative and dependent need, a predisposition to help, and an orientation of exclusiveness and absorption. Driscoll, Davis, and Lipetz (1972) pointed to a modern-day "Romeo and Juliet effect." They found that "parental interference in a love relationship intensifies the feelings of romantic love between members of the couple" (p. 1). The experience of romantic love has certainly changed over the years, but even the modern variety has its roots in the classic "romantic" encounter.

Understanding the "pure" and extreme romantic experience helps to sensitize us to some of the basic meanings of any love relationship, new or old. The sense of one's world changing, of powerful



feelings and heightened individuality, the awareness of discovering another person and being discovered by that person, are important aspects of any form of ecstatic love. Also, as Reiss (1960) points out, different definitions of love are clearly tied to social class and cultural background. Different social classes have varying requirements for the use of the word "love." Broad descriptions of love may have some general validity, but are obviously not accurate representations of everyone's experience. In this study, the nine couples represent a group of middle-class, college-educated, Protestant individuals. Let us turn now to their descriptions of their early loves and the development of their love relationships.

The couples in this study all were able to identify a romantic quality in their early relationship. Alice and Michael Davis recalled the opening phase of their life together:

Alice: I remember really being in love. That was a very compelling way to feel. It's a pace you can't keep up. There are too many emotional highs. It was a wild, romantic, blurry courtship .... I felt intensely alive. Everything was new, significant, and beautiful. There was an intensity in your whole life.

Michael: We enjoyed so many things so fully together. The intensity level of life caused a prolonged period when everything was fantastic.

John and Sarah Pierce also discussed their discovery of romance in middle-age:

John: In romance, there's a sense of floating two feet off the ground, being spiritually airborne .... It's heady, like champagne.



Sarah: It involves imagination, idealization. You don't think about as many of the little concrete things. If they do occur, they're suffused with a golden glow.

John: It's like the effect of champagne. We had it even at our advanced time of life. But like excessive champagne, excessive romance can let you down with a bump the morning after.

Another prominent component of romance is physical attraction. Most spouses emphasized their intense initial sexual attraction to each other. This was an important part of their beginning relationship. This study has not closely examined the sexual lives or feelings of the nine couples interviewed, and there have been several reasons for this. First, a number of the couples made it known from the outset that they considered the sexual area a private one in their lives. They did not feel comfortable in discussing that aspect of their lives with an interviewer. Second, I was aware of the easy confusion in people's minds of the words "love" and "sex," and I definitely wanted to explore the broader phenomenon of love. As a result, I did not emphasize the sexual area of the couples' relationships. When they would spontaneously raise this issue, I would follow them with further questioning. In retrospect, I feel that I was too reticent about sexuality and should have tried to discuss it with all the couples. If they were uncomfortable about it, obviously I would go no further. But at least a more sincere attempt would have been made to understand the sexual component of marriage. My own hesitancy about certain aspects of the interviewing will be discussed in more detail in the next chapter.

Most couples felt that intense romantic feelings could not, and even should not, be sustained at their early peak for the duration of the relationship. Couples saw their love "evolving" and "growing" over the years. Their later love would include romantic feelings, but these would be part of a larger whole. Dan Turner said,

When we first met, we had awfully strong feelings, but you couldn't call them love. You just build on some of your feelings that are developed. My love for Janice is not just one strong feeling but is really a growth in my concern for her, my growing awareness of what she's like and who she is.

Janice replied, "At first it's a big glow, and then it complexifies."

Couples spoke of their love becoming richer and multi-faceted over the years. Physical attraction remains important, but is subordinated to other emotional satisfactions of intimacy. "I have a much different perspective now on love relationships," said Hugh Farmer:

I was heavily influenced by romantic notions of love and marriage. I have a sense of a greater depth of feeling now, especially the non-physical aspects of the relationship. It's deeper, more cognitive ... it's been an elaboration of earlier criteria of affection.

Bill Joyce said,

The same feelings are expressed now as in the early relationship, but in different ways. Before marriage, I was very physically attracted to you. I'm more emotionally attracted to you now than then. And it's not that I'm less physically attracted, it's just matured.

As Nancy pointed out, these changes "evolved so gradually." Susan Lewis made a definite connection between her pre-marriage need to control her sexual drives and her intense experience of romantic love. That "butterfly" feeling became "more encompassing" once

sexual experience became a natural part of her relationship with Richard.

There was, however, an especially interesting aspect of these couples' statements about their early, more romantic days. Even with the existence of many romantic feelings, most of the couples strongly emphasized their early feelings of friendship and comfort with each other. Alice Davis said, "Before we were lovers, we were friends. It was a close feeling." Betty Robinson told me that "love and friendship go hand in hand. We were friendly first." When describing the beginning of their relationship, Jean Barrett referred to it as "the development of our friendship." Jean and Steve were quite interested in discussing romance and later forms of love, and felt their early "romance" was different from traditional conceptions. It seemed heavily invested with many of the aspects of a serious, long-term involvement.

Jean: There's an element of 'conjugal' love even before marriage if people are really interested in continuing the relationship. And there's still an element of romantic love in the later marriage relationship.

Steve: When we were in romantic love, we were thinking about matters of the mind, about living together as a couple. This went on for a year or so. We both knew the other was attainable, and that's not in the romantic tradition. A romantic vision of someone else is supposed to see beyond the mundane. And conjugal love's familiarity is supposed to breed contempt. But that's simple-minded and doesn't fit my experience. I'm continually surprised by the love relationship. You can't be predictive about it. I see it within a promise-making context, and that's more satisfying than a temporary liaison. That instability doesn't appeal to me romantically. It must for some people.

Jean: Ours has always been a love relationship which takes into account more than just the two people involved.

Romantic love is self-centered for the lovers.  
We live in a world of responsibilities, and  
they were there at the beginning.

If you will recall the chapter on the meetings of these couples, you will remember the frequent use of the word "comfortable." The partners felt comfortable, at ease, with each other, and their relationship developed naturally and smoothly. Once again, in this discussion of romance, the word "comfortable" appeared often and prominently. In elaborating the meaning of comfort in love and marriage, John Pierce stated that

Marriage is a comfortable relationship. It's like a chair in which you feel at ease and relaxed. When you look at the meaning of the word, it indicates providing you with a strength that you don't have yourself. Two partners reinforce one another. Both bring out the positive characteristics of the other. It's providing a backup where need be for the other's weak points. It's reassurance, encouragement, consolation.

Comfortable is a word that really cannot be applied to the conventional image of romantic love. Anguish, sweet sorrow, intoxication, but not comfort. The couples in this study seem to have experienced a "romantic" beginning of their relationship that has its own very distinctive flavor and texture.

It was noted earlier that each set of partners appeared to come from similar cultural backgrounds and possessed compatible value systems. This is unlike the meeting of "two different worlds" that distinguishes the famous romantic couples. When future spouses met for the first time, they certainly were encountering a person different from themselves. There was a feeling of excitement and discovery. But there were no huge obstacles to overcome, and no lack of a common foundation upon which to build a future relationship.

While couples like Romeo and Juliet seem to have lived a "romantic love" experience, the couples in this study appear to have begun their relationships in a "romantic friendship." There is a gradual merging of their lives, and the relationship is taken seriously. It is seen as involving mutual responsibility. While feelings are strong and satisfying, these are also rational relationships. In their "questionnaire" style study, Driscoll, Davis, and Lipetz (1972) discovered that "feelings of love become more highly correlated with trust and acceptance as relationships develop through time" (p. 1). My interviews with couples support these authors' findings that "conjugal" or "friendship" factors characterize the later love relationship. But the couples in my study emphasized even more strongly how their early relationships included major elements of friendship as well as romance.

Because these relationships began with an emphasis on the friendship between partners, the couples appear better able to understand and contend with subsequent changes in the partnership. A certain pitch of feelings cannot be maintained forever. When the distinctly "romantic" moments come less often, these couples do not see their relationships coming to an end or losing their vitality. Their early friendship has helped them be aware of other aspects of closeness, and has prepared them for the evolution of marital love. Before turning to a description of the major elements of couples' later, more complex loves, it would be helpful to become acquainted with a philosophical approach to love which can provide a broad context for those statements.



One consistent assertion in this study has been that love is a form of relationship rather than a purely individually possessed feeling. Within the relational domain, the concept of love representing only an exchange of personal resources is also limiting and unsatisfactory. C. S. Lewis (1960) contrasts "Need-pleasures" and "Appreciative-pleasures," and cogently argues that love cannot be fully comprehended in a theory of need satisfaction:

... Eros thus wonderfully transforms what is par excellence a Need-pleasure into the most Appreciative of all pleasures. It is the nature of a Need-pleasure to show us the object solely in relation to our need, even our momentary need. But in Eros, a Need, at its most intense, sees the object most intensely as a thing admirable in herself, important far beyond her relation to the lover's need. If we had not all experienced this, if we were mere logicians, we might boggle at the conception of desiring a human being, as distinct from desiring any pleasure, comfort, or service that human being can give. And it is certainly hard to explain. (p. 136)

Several philosophers have attempted to explain this "appreciation" of another person, and they have viewed love as a response to the total "value" of a human being. For Scheler (1954) and von Hildebrand (1942), both phenomenological philosophers, love is aimed at a mutual enhancement of value in the lovers. Love is seen as "irreducible;" it cannot be explained in terms of only one of its component parts. The message of love, for these authors, is "Become who you are!" Sadler (1969) writes,

One of Scheler's consistent affirmations is that love is a creative movement toward the highest values appropriate to the beloved .... Love is the active tendency to seek of each thing its essential value, its perfected value .... Love is that unique form of perception which not only sees the highest value of another but creates the very reality of which it becomes cognizant. (p. 59)

Looking more specifically at conjugal love, von Hildebrand (1942)

states that

... in this love the personality of the beloved is instantaneously revealed as a complete unity ... conjugal love reveals to us intuitively the whole being of the other in a mysteriously lucid unity. It not only shows us individual praise-worthy traits but also the particular charm of his individuality as a whole, which permeates everything and characterizes the essence of his being-- a charm which can only be completely understood by the complementary person and can have its full significance for him alone. (pp. 8-10)

Writing of the parallels between von Hildebrand and Gabriel

Marcel, Alice Jourdain (1960) says that

... love is a response to the value of the loved one, to the total personality of this irreplaceable individual, and not only to his single virtues and qualities. As a result, we cannot compute our reasons for loving another person. (p. 31)

Many authors have commented on the totality and inexplicability of love. Why do you love that person, one might be asked. It appears impossible to give a simple and precise answer to this question. There may be many "because," but none sufficient to explain our love. This is to be expected from the perspective of the value-response school. Marcel once stated, "I don't love you because of what you are, I love what you are because it is you." "I had, despite all my criteria, always fallen in love with people, not characteristics" (p. 126), said Ingrid Bengis (1972) in a recent book on heterosexual phenomenon. Feelings may come and go, the lovers may change over time, but love can continue. For sociologist Georg Simmel (1971),

... the ultimate mystery of love resides in the fact that there is no single attribute which is responsible for it .... However valuable the qualities of a person may be, feelings are attached to the unity and totality which lies behind them. Its superiority over all particular attributes which stimulate love (which only

serve to form bridges to that totality) is evident from the fact that love survives the disappearance of these several attributes .... (p. 244)

The person, rather than the person's qualities, is emphasized as the focus of love by the "value-response" philosophers. This is a relational conception of love, and it is founded on the immediate perception of the other person. By way of contrast, Plato, in his Symposium, saw love as a response to the ideal of pure Beauty represented in a particular individual. Love, for Plato, was suprapersonal, and the human relationship was only a tool for a higher purpose. As Simmel (1971) notes,

What to us appears as the definitive high point of the love experience is distant from his conception: that love concerns precisely this unique, irreplaceable being: that even where the love is turned on by external beauty only this particular individual manifestation of it is involved: and that once this has happened, an objectively equivalent amount does not affect us erotically at the same time. For us the beauty of individuality and the individuality of beauty comprise an indivisible unity. (pp. 241-242)

Campbell (1968) also believes that the direct perception of the unique personality of the beloved is a major component of love. He notes that theologians have frequently contrasted two major types of love: "agape" and "eros." The former represents the spiritual grace of charity, the latter the natural instinct of sexuality. But for Campbell, a third type of love is more representative of the highly individualized nature love has manifested since the Middle Ages. He calls this alternative "amor," and says it

... is the path directly before one, of the eyes and their message to the heart ... the address of amor is personal. It follows the lead and allure ... of the senses, and in particular of the noblest sense, that of sight .... (pp. 176-177)

The lovers must be able to see each other's specific nature and

character if a love relationship is to develop. In The Sunlight Dialogues, John Gardner contends with this very issue:

The thing was--he struggled to get hold of it, nail it down once and for all--but again it came merely to this: she had a face that marked her, singled her out not as the bearer of any particular virtue or defect but as, simply, the bearer of her singleness. In adolescent dreams one coupled with radiant beauties with indefinite and lovely faces, but then one day it all turned real, no longer airy wet-dream vision--a girl one knew, with a name, brittle hair, a chin just a little too deeply cleft. That was love, if it was anything. Not the other. Not the sunlight but the sunlight entrapped in the cloud .... (pp. 575-576)

In love, people are revealed in their "singleness" and "differences" are affirmed. Being seen and recognized as a distinct, separate, special person increases the person's sense of individuality. It can be gratifying and enriching to be singled out from a crowd. And to single out another person is also an assertion of our own power and autonomy. Following the principles of intersubjective philosophy, when two persons are "set at a distance" they are capable of "entering into relationship." It has frequently been noted that in the love relationship two individuals can become the most "themselves" and "become one" at the same time. According to the relational philosophers, love reflects a dual nature of singleness and unity.

Several of the concepts mentioned above are subtle and complex, but I feel they do provide a theoretical foundation for the variety of ideas couples had about love. It does appear impossible and inappropriate to try to rigidly and narrowly define love. It has many facets, and these vary in importance for different couples. What follows is a presentation of a number of statements about the



nature of the marital love relationship, and a description of some qualities or attitudes which are seen as integral parts of love.

A consensus of couples and experts consider marital love to be an experience of "complete union." Dan Turner said of his marriage, "We want to be close and unite totally and completely." Two people's lives are joined together more totally in this form of relationship than in any other. The paradox and challenge of marriage is, as we have seen, that "union differentiates." Within this fundamental and multi-level bond exist two distinct persons. Love helps create individuals as well as couples.

The theme of love representing unity is an ancient one. In Plato's Symposium, a work devoted to the analysis of love, Aristophanes relates one version of the evolution of man. Originally, he says, there were three sexes: male, female, and androgynous. These creatures each had four legs, four arms, two faces: in short, each consisted of two human beings. These were powerful creatures, and eventually they even challenged the power and authority of Zeus. As a punishment, Zeus split each of these beings in two. Now, says Aristophanes, each seeks its missing half. Some males look for other males, some females other females, and the remnants of the androgynous creatures seek a member of the opposite sex. In all cases, the people desire to re-unite with their "missing half:"

This meeting and melting into one another, this becoming one instead of two, was the very expression of his ancient need. And the reason is that human nature was originally one and we were a whole, and the desire and pursuit of the whole is called love. (p. 158)



While many people have experienced the reality of feeling "whole" when joined to another in love, this is not to say that each person separately is only "half" of a unit. In love, complete persons have their lives raised to a new level and exist within a greater whole. Another aspect of this complete union was mentioned earlier by Michael Davis. He described how, in love, the other person becomes a part of your own thinking and awareness. As John Pierce said, the lovers are like double-stars, joined but separate.

Another feature of marital love that is frequently cited is exclusivity. Unlike friendship, marital love is viewed as an exclusive, face-to-face relationship. There is some controversy about the merit and necessity of exclusivity, and this appears to result from reactions to the dark side of this concept--jealousy and possessiveness. Some degree of jealousy and possessiveness appears natural in a marital love relationship. Extremes of these traits would seem to be the result of an uncertain rather than an exclusive love. While some couples are trying to maintain additional intimate relationships alongside marriage, it is interesting that even in these cases the marriage is given a clear priority. For example, Susan Lewis, who is involved intimately with another man, said

Love has to do with the importance of the other person. Richard is still the most important person in my life. There is a caring about him and what happens to him more than other relationships, even my kids.

Most people interviewed agreed that they could have come to love many other individuals besides their actual spouse. But once

that decision was made, other possibilities remained just that or existed at a less total level of involvement. Bill Joyce stated

There are a lot of people in this world I could love. You find someone you like and enrich that relationship. You can't have two good love relationships. You can't be a citizen of New York and Washington at the same time. Each requires a total involvement.

In his book on marriage, von Hildebrand (1942) wrote,

Conjugal love in its essence aims at one person only. The characteristics of complete mutual self-giving, and of being exclusively turned toward the beloved, as well as the fact that the two partners form a couple, exclude in themselves the possibility that this love can be directed simultaneously to more than one person. (p. 16)

The work of the love relationship, the commitment of love, would appear to be too difficult to sustain in two separate partnerships. And perhaps something would be lost loving more than one person in this "complete" sense. Exclusive can also mean exceptional or special. The marital relationship may gain strength and luster from its uniqueness and very special place in our lives.

Another characteristic of love within a marriage is the unconditional acceptance of each partner by the other. For Alice Davis, this means

You can be your own worst self with a spouse. For better or worse, in sickness and in health. It's nice to feel you can be less than perfect, healthy, or beautiful.

In an atmosphere of acceptance, an individual can feel comfortable and at ease with himself. A major message of love, according to Ellen Farmer, is "I take you just as you are. I love you just the same." There is security in the caring and accepting environment of marriage. The Lewis' discussed this issue:

Richard: The level of trust in this relationship is the greatest. It leaves you free to share more of your feelings here.

Susan: It's also a security type of thing. It's not ever having to worry about whatever I do because I know Richard will love me anyway. Even if I do something he doesn't like, we can still talk about it and work on it. There's a secureness unlike any other relationship. There's always game-playing in other relationships to some level.

One word that appeared again and again in couples' statements about love was commitment. In their use of this word, couples emphasized the importance of making a choice or decision to live in the marital relationship. This awareness of "choice" is another feature distinguishing "romantic" from later forms of love. You "fall into" romantic love, but you choose to marry and live with your spouse. Couples in this study stressed the intentional, purposeful nature of their commitment to each other. Commitment can mean bondage or it can indicate the free choice to turn towards another, to live his world with him. These couples recognized the distinction, and took pride in their freely building their relationships. Richard Lewis felt that

The nature of the commitment we have is very important. We're committed to continue to work to grow together.

"My first loyalty is to Janice," said Dan Turner. Janice spoke of "a decision to support the relationship." In the spirit of these couples' relational work ethic, Nancy Joyce maintained that "the more you commit yourself to the relationship and work at it, the stronger it gets."

There is a pledge inherent in these marriages: a pledge to

value and have concern for the marital relationship and for the broader family and social relationships that also are a part of the marriage experience. Buber (1958) once wrote "love is responsibility of an I for a Thou" (p. 15). The Barretts described the role of responsibility in the commitment of marriage. Steve said,

I see love within a promise-making context .... There are times in our marriage when love isn't present at a certain moment. The social context is important, promise-making again. Once you make a promise to care and be responsive to the other person, there is deeply rooted some likelihood of reciprocity. This builds. Once a person pulls out of this promise-making, the other hedges his bets too.

Jean: If you make these promises when you're quite young, your ability at twenty or twenty-one to understand the tensions of living together in a responsible way is hard. Some people change so much, grow as individuals, and they just find it's impossible to keep these promises and still be happy.

Steve: It's joyful, not dutiful. I was reading an article about 'singles,' and it was a tragic view of this. People were looking for something and not finding it, they're looking for love without the other social relationships that go into conjugal love. There's an agreement, tacit, to be financially responsible to each other, and legally bound on behalf of the children. You go places as a couple for the most part. You attend family reunions. The experience of love may be related to social obligations. You present yourself as living according to an ideal even when in many moments you don't have it going.

In this same spirit, Bob Johnson told of the satisfying "restrictions" of married life:

I had no idea of the restrictions it would place on me, the frustrations of being restricted. Just having to think of four other people and a dog. There are problems in being a head of a household .... But I had no conception of the real joy that taking on these responsibilities, doing your best to live up to them, could bring. It's all beginning to make some sense now after twelve years.



The nature of marital love is such that it includes familial and societal responsibility and involvement. This foundation can be demanding, but it also counteracts our often too precarious and rootless existence.

To understand the phrase "constant in love," it is necessary to perceive the "promise-making," responsible, intentional, decisive character of marital love. If we are purely at the whim of feelings, romantic or otherwise, then we have little control over the future of a relationship. But if feelings are seen as being subordinate to a conscious willing of commitment and concern, then the love relationship can become our creation as well as our creator. Cowburn (1967) called this "a decision of commitment, which is fundamentally a man's consent to the existence of a particular woman whom he has found and to whom he dedicates himself" (p. 203).

In marital love, partners are able to "give" to one another in a variety of ways and levels. Von Hildebrand (1942) emphasizes the mutual self-donation which characterizes "conjugal love:"

Quite independent of sensuality, conjugal love in itself constitutes a completely new kind of love. It involves a unique mutual giving of one's self, which is the outstanding characteristic of this type of love. It is true that in every kind of love one gives oneself in one way or another. But here the giving is literally complete and ultimate. Not only the heart but the entire personality is given up to the other .... (pp. 5-6)

One is available to one's beloved, and attempts to help that person attain his or her goals and desires. At a more mundane level, spouses "do things" for each other freely and often joyfully. When I asked Steve Barrett his definition of love, he answered



Some of it is very concrete. It's doing things for other people as asked, mundane acts which may please the other person, or refraining from doing things that disturb the other. There's a nice quality Jean has of expressing enthusiasm, and that indicates that kind of care for other people. It's the way she does special things to make me feel special. A surprise birthday party, or a special dinner, or suggesting we do something as a family together. These are concrete ways I sense that she cares about me. There's always a sense of giving yourself to another. And there's also some sense of reward--the other's pleasure.

Laura Johnson said that she and Bob

... do special things for each other, say things ... love is honoring and esteeming him to the extent of foregoing personal things. It's a pleasurable activity. It's a pleasure to do things for Bob.

"Love is a willingness to sacrifice self for somebody else," said Bob. "It's all the connotations that takes on." One specific aspect of "giving" to a spouse is "forgiving." These couples were able, over the years, to develop realistic expectations of each other's behavior. They had enough security and belief in the relationship to forgive temporary failures or transgressions by the other person. "Love is forgiveness too," said Alice Davis, "you don't seek perfection in one's mate." Bill Joyce maintained that "love is being able to forgive." Nancy continued, "it's being able to look at each other as human, having anger and conflict. It's not holding such high expectations that when they blow up you lose love." Love, according to these couples, includes allowing the other person the right to be human.

In an earlier chapter, it was noted that these couples had confidence in their relationships. This sense of confidence, along with such attitudes as hope, faith, and trust, appears to be a central

feature of marital love. For Gabriel Marcel, love is the culmination of the interpersonal attitudes of faith and hope. Faith helps the person build a bridge to another, hope helps him overcome periods of adversity in this endeavor, and love is the climax of intersubjectivity. In love, says Marcel, two people create a "solidarity" between them, and in this solidarity fidelity and hope are actualized, are "superabundant."

The Pierces spoke of "a high degree of expectation" that they had concerning their comradeship and availability to each other as resources. Hugh Farmer said he had "confidence in a relationship that transcends momentary disequilibriums." Innocence was the word employed by the Lewis' to describe their faith in the stability of their relationship. Their marriage, based on "innocent trusting," was said to be "solid in innocence." These couples see their marriages as the most trusting relationships that exist in their lives. In the precarious world of relationship, these humble and optimistic attitudes appear to be of great help to couples. In hope and faith there is a pledge to continue to work at the relationship, and a basic assumption that this is possible and worthwhile. As Sadler (1969) says,

To hope in this presence is to say that in spite of what happens I shall be faithful, I shall affirm our reality. As such, hope is inseparable from love; it is an act of creative fidelity, and act of transcendence which fulfills a situation. (p. 113)

Fromm (1970) lists several basic elements of a love relationship. These are care, responsibility, respect, and knowledge of the other. The couples in this study also found these to be important qualities.

They tended to group together respect, caring, concern, and sensitivity. Most individuals believed that it was exceptionally important to manifest these attitudes towards oneself if one were to be capable of loving another person. This point has become a truism in the literature on love, and with justification. Love is a challenging form of relationship, and an individual must have personal resources in order to meet the demands of love and give love to another person. As Sarah Pierce phrased it,

In order for love to develop, you need some esteem or respect for yourself. If you're guarding yourself, you don't have enough emotion left to invest in someone else.

Several couples discussed having a concern for and being sensitive to the other person's existence. They also stressed the importance of maintaining a balance in the relationship. Michael Davis said, "I can maintain my individuality and have consideration for the other." Caring and concern were words that recurred throughout these conversations. To Ellen Farmer, love was

... being sensitive to the needs of someone else. Knowing that times are rough or somebody's tired. Or going through a crisis and knowing there's a deep concern ... you respect what somebody is doing.

Having an interest in one's spouse is an expression of caring and concern. "I have a sixth sense that Jean's interested in knowing about what I'm thinking. I sense that things that happen to me I can talk about," said Steve Barrett. Laura Johnson simply affirmed the importance of some "time-honored" relational qualities in understanding love: respect, honoring the partner, tenderness, gentleness, and courtesy.

Love is a complex form of relationship, with many components and manifestations. John Pierce said, "love is the biggest thing in life, but it is made up of little things." The statements on love included in this chapter are not meant to be viewed in isolation from the other chapters in the book describing the marital love relationship. Feelings upon meeting one another, coping with threats, working at the relationship, balancing self and other, are all topics that can reveal the nature of love. In this section, we have seen that, beginning with a "romantic friendship," these couples proceeded to develop a more totally involving and satisfying love relationship. Physical attraction matured into a mosaic of emotional intimacy, and responsibility, choice, and confidence in the relationship increased in significance. Love is made an object of the will of these individuals; it did not appear wholly out of their control. These exclusive, complete unions, founded on commitment and "joyful" giving and "promise-making," are considered the central part of these individuals' lives. They value themselves, each other, and the relationship, and work at preserving and improving the nature of their lives together.

These couples are living what Cuber and Harroff (1965) call "Intrinsic Marriages." As contrasted with "Utilitarian Marriages," in the "intrinsic marriage," "the relationship of a man and woman has top priority among the several considerations which make up a total life" (p. 132). There is a "basic uniform quality" about these marriages, consisting of "the intensity of feelings about each other and the

centrality of the spouse's welfare in each mate's scale of values" (p. 144). Cuber and Harroff note that because these "intrinsic" relationships are so involving and intense, they demand a great deal of effort and attention. This is also supported in the present study by the emphasis couples placed on the "work of relationship." These couples are eloquent about love, because they take their marriages seriously. These are rational unions, but they are not cold or mechanical. Feelings exist as a part of the broader relationship, and needs are also subsumed within the marital bond. But these couples, in general, possess an awareness of the power of relationship. They have grown separately and together by consciously working at understanding and assisting their relationship.



## COUPLES' REACTIONS TO THE STUDY

Throughout this book, I have attempted to weave together my ideas, the thoughts of the couples I interviewed, and the concepts of philosophers, social scientists, and novelists. The goal was to gain an increased appreciation of the complex and multi-faceted worlds of friendship and love. But an additional point of interest in this study is the format of the study itself. Loving couples were interviewed for an extended length of time about the nature of their relationships. Why did they agree to participate in a project such as this? What were their reactions to the interviews themselves? Did the sessions have an impact on the couples' lives between and after the actual interviews? Were these interviews perceived by couples as a form of marital therapy or not? What were the couples' reactions to the style of the interviewer? And finally, I would like to discuss my general reactions to having done the study, and raise the question of continuing this interview format in an extended research-preventative counseling program.

Couples had a variety of reasons for agreeing to participate in the study. I conducted the research in an academic community, and several of the couples had some professional empathy for the plight of the researcher. Jean Barrett laughingly said,

We're suckers for people doing research. At the time you started with us, I was even involved in another research project. It seemed like an interesting thing to do.

Many individuals said they were "interested" or "curious" about the project. They thought the idea of interviewing happily married

couples about love was novel and upbeat.

The approach of having local clergymen recommend some of the couples also was helpful. Betty Robinson took the project more seriously because her minister was connected with it, and the Pierces were flattered that their minister viewed them as a successful couple. They then felt an obligation to contribute what they could to this study of healthy marriages. "If we've got something good here," said Sarah, "it's our responsibility to try to share and understand what makes a good marriage." Most couples appreciated their being singled out as a loving couple, and this mood smoothed the way for their entry into the project. Some couples may have been looking for a quasi-therapeutic experience. Dan Turner told me that "Janice was more interested right from the beginning. She wanted to try it; I was lukewarm." Janice explained, "In the beginning I was up for it. In the winter, I felt we weren't in good touch. I was looking forward to it as a shot in the arm."

It became increasingly clear that the formal structure of contacting couples was a key factor in their decisions to join the study. You may recall my exchange of letters with John Pierce (see page 39). He said that my second letter, which was a formal clarification of the project and an acknowledgement of his right not to participate in it, "disarmed" him. Steve Barrett also mentioned that the initial contact by letter, leaving the couple a few days to think about the project before I phoned them, was constructive. "The way you did it was candid," he said. "You let us have the chance to say no."

So, these nine couples agreed to meet with me and the project began. The first session, which usually dealt with the couple's meeting, courtship, and early marriage, was a memorable experience for several of the participants. Stan Robinson felt that

The best one we had was the first one. There was reminiscing, bringing things back .... We went deeper in the first session. Other sessions more or less followed it up.

Bob Johnson found the first session to be

... an interesting situation. To try to remember, assess what have been our views and reasons for falling in love and deciding to get married. It's been interesting to figure out what kind of events have been important in ten or twelve years. It was an artificial, yet enjoyable, situation.

For Laura, "it was a lot of fun, really. It makes you feel romantic about each other again .... It takes you back to 'B.C.,' before children, an entirely different era. I remember it, but it doesn't seem quite real." Richard and Susan Lewis responded in different ways to the first interview:

Richard: We reacted differently. For Susan it was very stimulating. For me, it provoked more thought in the next few days. About the complexity of our relationship, how much it has evolved. And fears about what that meant about threats in the future.

Susan: It was more than just stimulating, it was erotic. It revived things that had happened in the past that we've been too busy to think about.

Richard: It was the same for me in the short-run. I don't mind the struggling. My reaction's a little different from Susan's, there is an uneasiness in reflecting back on fourteen years of a relationship. We've grown in exciting ways. We're different now.

Susan: I felt quite secure. It reaffirmed things that I believed.

In an intriguing division between the sexes, these husbands were interested and thoughtful about the first session, while their wives were stimulated romantically and erotically.

In their overall reactions to the interviews, couples remarked that in their day-to-day life they did not usually discuss the issues raised in the study. John Pierce stated that "it's helped me to examine and to look at some aspects of our married life, not perhaps on a very deep level, that I wouldn't have the occasion of looking at otherwise." "It's a thing you wouldn't think of doing," said Sarah, "it's a new idea to say 'What's good with our marriage?'" For Betty Robinson,

It's been rather worthwhile to sit and talk. It brings back things that you wouldn't think of .... We really don't talk much about these things. We haven't been together much this last week, and we appreciate it when we do have some time together.

The sessions provided couples with a scheduled time to be together, a time when, free from distractions, they could concentrate on their marriage. For busy couples, this was a significant opportunity.

"It's not the kind of thing in the normal course of life, family, and long hours, we normally talk about. It's a good experience to discuss it," said Michael Davis. Alice told me that

It's hard to sit down and say 'Let's talk about our marriage.' But people should every once in a while. Unless you're having a problem, you don't think of it .... For example, I never realized before what a big security grab I was making marrying Michael .... Some things you ignore not to make waves, if you're non-combative types like us.

It's been very interesting and I enjoyed it very much," said Laura Johnson, "it has made me sit down and think about how our marriage is put together and works. I've learned a lot." Finally, Steve Barrett commented that

My sense of this project, of the interviewing, is that it's helped me think through in a fairly relaxed and gentle way some very important things. In the presence of a third person, in a way we don't do often enough. It helps to see things from her side, to be more conceptually aware of love, phenomenologically aware of love in our own life.

One important aspect of the special opportunity these sessions provided for couples is the possibility of one spouse learning the views, feelings, and ideas of a usually taciturn partner. "I've heard Dan say things I don't think I would have heard him say," said Janice Turner; "I wouldn't ask the question right, or he couldn't say them to me. I've gotten a better understanding of how relationships work." Betty Robinson also heard Stan express himself on relational issues, which is a rare occurrence in their everyday experience. "Some of his answers have been very interesting," she said. The sessions afforded these couples the chance to learn about each other, and, concomitantly, about their relationship.

As a group, these nine couples found the interviews to be enjoyable, thought-provoking, enlightening, and stimulating. John Pierce added that the study "raised to a level of articulation the procedures and mechanisms of adjustment which we were already using subconsciously." This enthusiastic response from couples was not entirely expected. I took a total of from ten to twelve hours of each couple's time, with the goal of the research being to learn more



about successful marriages. It was fascinating and gratifying to discover that the couples also found satisfaction and value in assuming a "co-researcher" stance toward their own relationships. In response to my thanking them for their cooperation and time, both Richard Lewis and Michael Davis told me that they felt our time together was more beneficial to them than to me. Michael said,

You re-opened a door we knew was there, but wasn't open in a long time. This has been terribly valuable and enlightening for us. It's hard for me to accept a 'thank you' from you. You've done a lot for me.

Couples appreciated the structured opportunity to explore the history and current nature of their relationship, and to discuss what makes it work and what problems must be confronted.

The couples also had several criticisms or questions about certain aspects of the project. Relationships are intangible and difficult to conceptualize. I did not go through a check-list of questions with each couple, but tried to follow their own responses to key issues in their marriage. The result was often a confusing interchange or an unclear opinion. The Robinsons found some of the discussions difficult and perplexing. "I still don't understand some of the things you spoke about and tried to get out of us," said Stan Robinson. Bob Johnson felt that some of the areas covered were vague, and several of the discussions repetitious. I remember having similar feelings about some sessions. While an element of the amorphous will probably always characterize this research approach to relationships, the experience of having conducted the study would help me in future efforts. I learned from dead-ends

and puzzled stares, and with further experience I believe a researcher could guide the couples through these discussions with much less uncertainty.

Some individuals questioned the level of depth of the interviews. The Turners believed that they were giving me "an average" look at their relationship. Although they were not consciously holding back information, they felt that "the lowest lows" and "the highest highs" were not being discussed. These were not probing interviews, and an attempt was not made to "see through" couples or expose very powerful material. Basically, I let the couple set the pace and adjusted to their level of comfort and intimacy with me. "Deeper" material might be lost by this approach, but there was ample room for discovery within these couples' levels of disclosure. One further point on the quality of the discussions. I tended to concentrate on the couple's life-history, rather than on the partners' theories about issues under discussion. Bob Johnson, for one, had hoped for more time to think out loud about love. Looking back on the quality of the theorizing that couples managed to do, I would support Bob's inclination to philosophize.

Earlier, I mentioned my own hesitations about questioning couples about their sexual relationship. Not wanting to offend couples or overemphasize sexuality, I once again decided to follow the couple's lead in discussing the role of sex in their marriages. This strategy had advantages and disadvantages. For Laura Johnson, my unobtrusiveness was a blessing:

When I first got your letter I thought, 'What kind of a kook is that? Will he ask about our sex life?' I expected you to. Frankly, I didn't know

how I'd talk about it. It's nobody's business, it's a private issue. I feel our physical relationship is a very good one.

But for the Farmers, my passive style left a potentially interesting area unexplored. Hugh stated,

We feel sex is a supreme expression of love. I'm surprised we didn't raise the issue of sex more often, and I'm curious that you didn't. I would have been willing to talk about that.

Future research efforts could, I feel, take a more direct look at the sexual component of marital love. If the couple wished to keep this area private, the interviewer could then accept this and go on to another issue. At times, I felt that the project was so broad and time-consuming that I just did not want to make additional demands on couples or antagonize them in any way. This, however, says more about my own comfort discussing sex than about the willingness or unwillingness of couples to explore this area.

It is important to realize that the interviews were threatening at times for certain individuals. Powerful, intimate material was often discussed, as were problematic areas within the marriage. Richard Lewis was concerned about the many changes over the years in his relationship with Susan. What does the future hold for them? Susan thought that the interviews might be threatening because she knew so few happily married people. Perhaps the study would burst the bubble of her own confidence and optimism. Ellen Farmer wondered whether the sessions would raise questions in Hugh's mind about the validity of their relationship. By actively examining their relationship, perhaps he would discover some previously unarticulated dissatisfactions.

As a result of participating in the study, a couple risked learning some painful things about their relationship. Steve Barrett said,

There have been times, especially early on, when thinking of being studied was a bit disquieting. Love is so personal. There was a fear of discovering maybe that there was a lack in me or in our marriage, and that you'd find out or Jean would. That would be hard and embarrassing, difficult to deal with. That has not really been the case.

These couples showed both courage and confidence by being willing to examine "a good thing."

I was also interested in the effect, if any, the sessions had on these nine marriages. Several couples were able to describe the aftermath of our interviews. Between meetings, most couples did not rehash the sessions or discuss their actual conversations with me. The issues raised in the sessions lingered on, however. And the couples did notice some changes. As a result of our examination of their lack of a social life, the Farmers found themselves involved in a "flurry of socializing." "There's been some direct action," said Ellen,

There are times when after a session we jump into bed, sometimes I don't want to look at him for three days. I had hostile feelings after the last session. Sometimes we leave the session and feel so close.

For Steve and Jean Barrett, the interviews coincided with their growing awareness of certain crises in their marriage. The interviews and their own private discussions appeared to be similar parts of a continuing exploration:

Steve: I think there were some reactions. Both of us continued to talk about it, although it's hard to say whether the interview was the



cause of it. Subsequently, we have spent some time talking about how to be more responsive to each other, for one thing. And how to gain some more sense of serenity .... I suspect that this was one of the triggering things in the process of trying to communicate to each other about some things that are going on. It may have helped Jean to be more open with me about her present doubts than she would have been otherwise ....

Jean: I can't remember when we started seeing you. But it seems that since about that time there have been all sorts of input into the whole, trying to stimulate talk and discussion .... It is kind of interesting that it's going on in the period of time when we've been talking with you.

Being a part of this research project was demanding and involving. Couples seem to have continued to work on sensitive issues and on aspects of their relationship that they had only become aware of through the interviews. I did not feel that any couple was becoming overwhelmed as a result of the sessions, but the project clearly had helped to precipitate a change-process in many relationships. Another change-inducing situation for couples can be marital therapy. I would like to examine the parallel between these interviews and marital therapy, beginning with the style of the interviewer.

To begin with, I did not feel like a therapist in these sessions. I was not there to help these couples make changes in their relationship. I felt partly like a guest, and it is significant that I conducted the sessions in the couples' homes and not in a clinic or office. I attempted to gather information, and did not direct the couples to examine their style of relating to each other or reveal or clarify unexpressed feelings. I also did not become highly



personally involved in the sessions, or draw out the couples' feelings toward me as I might do in therapy. I saw myself as an observer who sparked the couples' conversation by raising some important relational issues and questions.

Couples perceived me as "warm," "caring," "curious," "a catalyst," and "non-directive." I provided a "mirror" or a "sounding-board" for their conversations, a comfortable atmosphere in which they could discuss their marriage. I helped by gently guiding the conversations, clarifying certain questions, and raising a new issue when the discussion lagged. I was interested in understanding their lives, and this helped them work hard at expressing themselves. As the third party in the session, I was there and made a difference. But my status was curious. Not a helper, I also was not a participant. I held myself back from much self-disclosure in the sessions. This was partly the result of my desire not to contaminate or sway the couples' own beliefs, but also was indicative of my own uncertainty about my role.

Several couples were troubled by my lack of visibility. Susan Lewis said,

I wish we could have had more of a triologue. I'd like to know what you're thinking about these same questions, and talk with you instead of at you.

But most couples preferred my warmly distant style. They could rely on me to ask questions and present topics, but the floor was theirs. As Michael Davis said, "Alice and I were talking to each other under the pretext of talking to you. You adroitly have handled that. You don't editorialize." John Pierce claimed

I've almost forgotten you were there as a recording and critical mind of your own. You've been largely a catalyst that I've talked at. Your presence has not been an obstacle to my talking, but an encouragement.

My attitude may have been "therapeutic," but in the sense of listening and allowing and encouraging the couples to tell their story. This would be appropriate in the initial evaluation or history-gathering stage of marital therapy, although the issues discussed would be slightly less theoretical. At the time when the actual process of therapy might begin, my sessions with these couples came to an end. And the couples were quite sensitive and perceptive about the timing of this termination.

Ellen Farmer was not bothered by not knowing what I was "like," because she knew that I was "going to leave" their lives in a short while. Part of my style as an interviewer was tied to the time-limited involvement with these couples. Most couples felt that the amount of time we spent together was quite appropriate for our task. If we continued the contact, they felt that therapy would have begun. It was remarkable how several people made this same precise point. Hugh Farmer stated,

It was an appropriate amount of time. If much more, there would be a greater tendency to get into therapy discussions. There would be a deeper level of self-analysis, if not in our conversations, then later. You couldn't have cut it a whole lot shorter. There was some establishing of rapport.

For Jean Barrett,

The length of time is fairly important. It's been a good length. I wouldn't want to go on much more. I would see it as therapy, and it would require more self-analysis. This has been therapeutic. To go

further, we would have to make a commitment and see a counselor to discuss the good and bad points of our marriage. That would begin to violate the assumptions on which our relationship is based. There's a certain fragile quality to a love relationship. If it's continuously analyzed, you might begin to question it.

My sessions with these couples were therapeutic and helpful to them, but the couples were not contracting for psychotherapy. Their motivation was not for long-term, open-ended involvement. They did not feel their marriages were in trouble, but they saw a value in a series of interviews aimed at understanding their success. Interestingly, several couples, such as the Barretts and Pierces, said that after their experience with me they would be more willing to seek out marital therapy if a problem arose in the future. They had received a taste of an encounter with a professional "third-person," and found it satisfying and constructive.

This project was a very special experience for me as well. I had hoped to find couples who would be interested in talking with me about their marriages, but I did not expect the warm and enthusiastic response I received from most participants. People felt that mine was a wholesome topic for a research study, and they responded beautifully to open and broad questions, free from dogma or hypothesis-testing. I was welcomed into these homes, a trusting relationship was established, and I learned a tremendous amount about love and marriage. I sincerely like and respect these couples. All of us entered unknown territory when we began the interviews, and found the project to be a warm, human, illuminating,

enriching experience.

Several couples commented in our final session that they wished other couples could have the same opportunity to examine, with a third person, their "successful" relationships. Bill Joyce said, "It's like having a cardiogram when you're healthy. It helped us come to grips with some questions, and catch crises before they're out of control." Nancy added, "To share things in your life before you're in trouble is a great experience." Janice Turner felt that "it would be a good thing if you could spread it around." "It's like exercise for a healthy body," said John Pierce.

After the interviews were completed, I remember feeling that my wife and I could have benefited from such conversations. A couple that is not having serious marital problems will most likely not see a marital therapist. They may find less and less time for a close look at their relationship: how it has developed and where it is going. It is difficult for a couple to sit down and seriously explore the nature of their love without the help of a third party. This series of discussions can be therapeutic in a preventative manner: helping the couple understand the history and development of their relationship, clarifying patterns and strengths, and providing a forum for more troublesome issues. Couples found that the sessions re-affirmed their closeness at a time when the marital failures around them were becoming quite threatening to them. Being limited to approximately five two-hour sessions, it is a focused and controlled experience. I feel that this research procedure can be of benefit to many couples, and can provide a researcher with important

insights into the love relationship. People can talk about their lives and experiences, and those individuals who are not troubled by severe problems are perhaps best able to do so. And, in the sample surveyed, they were willing to do so.

One of my own goals for the future is to continue these interviews with a wider range and greater number of couples. Different socio-economic and cultural groups could provide significant additions to conceptions of marital love. The definition of the love experience, according to Reiss (1960), does appear to vary along social class and cultural dimensions. The goal would be to enhance our understanding of love, of relationships, and of individual existence. A service would be provided to couples (perhaps through the auspices of a preventative and educational community psychology program), and the research would be carried on as well. An additional benefit would be the effect the findings of this research on healthy couples would have on a marital therapy approach with troubled couples. Understanding a successful relationship can greatly aid those trying to be of help to marriages that are failing. Hopefully, those interested in working professionally with married couples would have a combined research-therapy orientation. They would spend time with couples in therapy and in the marital research project, and build a more total conception of the marital relationship. That is my own plan for future professional interest in love and marriage. This study has encouraged and excited me to continue to learn about human existence by talking with human beings. They have a great deal to teach us.



## CHAPTER XIV

### SUMMARY

This book began with a very broad and basic goal, a desire to understand in a sensitive and faithful manner the lived experience of happily married couples. My expectation was that married people could examine and describe their lives and relationships. I have always felt that the relationship between two persons is one of life's most subtle and significant phenomena. By interviewing members of an especially powerful relationship, marriage, I hoped to add to our awareness of important themes or issues in any relationship. And I was intrigued by the mystery surrounding the word "love." Could this phenomenon be made more comprehensible, without being reduced to a utilitarian or instinctual process, by conceptualizing it as a form of relationship? I decided to talk with married couples about their lives together and about their own thoughts on love.

The early relationships of the couples in this study developed naturally, gradually, and comfortably. They allowed themselves the time to come to know each other, and to develop personally as separate individuals. Couples spoke of the importance of a shared personal language, sense of values, and sense of humor in their growing relationships. A relationship that moved precipitously to marriage would have a diminished chance of creating a solid foundation for a life together. The couples I interviewed also tended to wait several years before beginning a family. This gave them an additional opportunity to learn about themselves and each other, and to establish

an identity as "spouses" before adding the role and responsibility of being parents. From the beginning, these couples demonstrated a patient, serious attitude toward their relationships.

Similarly, the couples emphasized the importance of the formal structure of marriage. For some, the religious ceremony marked the transition to a more total and demanding commitment. Other couples spoke of a more secular change in their relationship once they were married. They found that marriage signified an ever-increasing involvement in life and a solidifying of the relationship. There was a sense of joining the community of married individuals, as well as a feeling of establishing roots and continuity in their lives. These couples were aware that the act of getting married was not a trivial social convention, but was a moment of significant communication, an exchange of promises. Looking back on their lives, they emphasize the pledge inherent in marriage: a pledge that includes commitment to one's partner, but also broader family and social responsibilities and obligations.

Being married definitely implies a loss of freedom and control over one's life, but these "losses" can be liberating. Entering into a relationship with another, "different" person means that they will have an effect on our lives. While the relationship may become vitally important to us, it is not our possession or completely controlled by our wishes. To be close is to be vulnerable, but the safety of isolation is a dry, lifeless satisfaction. The couples in the study seemed to realize that the "freedom" offered by marriage is a complex and sophisticated experience. It does not mean unbridled individual autonomy, but refers to the freedom of choosing to live

in relationship with someone else. While the experience of early courtship might be considered something that "happens to" a person, the later commitments of marriage are the products of choice, decision, and work.

These couples impressed me with their dedication to the process of being married, and with their serious, rational, and confident attitude towards their relationships. They believed in marriage; they felt that couples and families were important in life. They were not trapped, but had chosen to "complexify" their lives with responsibilities and involvements. They had faith that their marriages could succeed if they really wanted them to. In our society, it is frequently the "sophisticated" thing to do to criticize marriage or be pessimistic about anyone succeeding at it. And there are enough divorces and unhappy marriages to provide ammunition for this point of view. But here were nine couples who liked being married. Their marriages were their joint creations, and they saw themselves as responsible for them.

It became apparent that these individuals shared a "work ethic" of relationship. You have to work at living together, they said. It does not just happen. That work included trying to understand oneself and one's partner, learning to compromise, attempting to balance each partner's twin needs for individuality and intimacy, and being able to communicate in an honest, clear, and mature manner. There was an appreciation of how important it was to "recognize," respect, and support the partner. Acceptance and tolerance were mentioned as being a part of "caring" for another person. All these attitudes or behaviors were not considered qualities one was born

with, but responses that were worked at and strived for. At times, some were expressed naturally or spontaneously, but at other moments the individual will asserted itself for the betterment of the relationship.

In talking with these couples, I was struck by the simple, reasonable, and humane attitudes they found helpful in their relationships. Words like work, courtesy, consideration, acceptance, tolerance, patience, respect, and confidence are commonly understood to be characteristics of a healthy relationship. But too often they have degenerated into cliché status, and are therefore not mentioned in studies of marriage. The couples I spoke with used the words, but in a realistic and specific manner. The old virtues are still creative, but they must be lived, not only proclaimed.

Couples also had an interesting way of conceptualizing their marriages. They saw the marital unit, or the "couple identity," as having its own existence, almost like a third party in the relationship. The marriage did not consist of two individuals exchanging resources, or bargaining with each other; or giving up one's self to the other. These individuals felt a part of a larger whole, and so work could be done and sacrifices made for the other and oneself at the same time. The extremes of altruism and hedonism were avoided. Partners were considerate of each other, but also felt tied together in marriage. The other person can become a part of you as well as remain different and separate from you. This is the dual reward of marriage according to these couples.

A couple must work out a living arrangement that allows for

individual as well as couple space. The intersubjective philosophers have noted how identity and relationship are intertwined, feeding and supporting each other. Couples were aware of this as well. They allow each other some separate space, and find that this eventually adds life to the relationship. There are many ways to achieve individuality within a relationship, ranging from a career, to a hobby, to outside friendships and/or sexual relationships. Time and effort, however, must also be put directly into the marriage. Whatever the method or arrangement, it is significant that the couples interviewed were sensitive to their "dual natures" and were consciously working at this issue.

There are certain basic challenges or questions that are a part of marriage. One is the tension between the desire for the new and the old, for excitement and stability. We all need to experience both qualities in our lives, but marriage survives best as a combination of the two. It is not all excitement, as any of these couples could attest to, but neither does it have to be pure stability and predictability. Couples found that by being attentive to the growth and maturation of their partner, and by working at doing special, "romantic" things for each other, the feelings of excitement remained a part of marriage. They also found the stability, continuity, and grace of the marital love relationship to be a major satisfaction.

Children can take time away from the marital relationship, and can be a constraining force in a marriage. Persons who entirely give up their status as a couple to become parents are losing a great deal. The couples in this study valued their children, found strength



in the love of children and building a family, but also worked at maintaining their marriages and love for each other. Another perennial question in marriage is, "How much is possible?" Couples have to find their own limits for outside involvements in work, interests or activities, and personal relationships. There are no clear rules, but definite complications if "too much" is attempted. Once again, a marriage does not just exist like a trophy. It is a living thing, and is affected by our actions. But on the encouraging side, if we can destroy it, we are also capable of helping it grow.

Currently, women are questioning their role in marriage and in life, and this had created a problem for some couples. Many wives are wondering how to achieve individuality while still remaining in the family unit. Several relationships are having to re-adjust their previous style and pattern of existence, allowing the wives more room for separate, individual interests and goals. The challenge for husbands today is to understand their wives, help them make some changes in their lives, and be flexible enough to make whatever personal changes are required by the "new" relationship. The challenge for women is to realistically decide what it is they want in life. The cultural atmosphere of the women's liberation movement, coupled with the personal maturation of particular women, has led to this current crisis of female individuality.

One primary goal of the study was to conceptualize the realms of friendship and marital love. Couples distinguished between these two experiences in several ways. Friendship was said to be a lighter, less demanding and involving relationship, based on shared

interests, acceptance, and trust. It was mediated through personal interests; rather than being a "face-to-face" relationship, friendship was pictured as a "side-by-side" partnership. Personal distance is heavily emphasized in friendship, and the relationship is generally seen as being more under each individual's separate control. Friendships outside of marriage have created a problem for several couples. Male-female friendships are rare and threatening, primarily because couples feel that the lure of sexuality may draw them into a deeper form of involvement. Adding sexuality to friendship appears to change the nature of that relationship. It then may become both an incomplete love relationship and a too intense friendship. Spouses often considered each other their best friends, and sometimes this leads to a reduction of friendships outside of the marriage. Other couples found that having a friend outside of marriage added to one's feeling of independence and personal confidence. Even when additional sexual relationships were openly added to marriage, the couple considered its own relationship to be of the highest priority.

These couples began their own relationships in a "romantic friendship," which included both strong, exciting feelings and a comfortable, conscious merging of their two lives. They saw their love as evolving or growing over the years to include a wide range of emotions and attitudes. They emphasized responsibility to each other, and the mutual giving that occurs in the relationship. There was a general acknowledgement of the power of love, of what loving and being loved could mean for a person. Many of these individuals

lacked self-confidence at the beginning of their relationships, and indeed often met their spouse at a time of emotional crisis. Living in a mutual love relationship has helped them grow as separate individuals, and as a couple. Marital love is said to be a complete, exclusive union, based on the singleness or uniqueness of each partner. Love helps to create both individuals and couples.

When discussing love, these couples mentioned many particular attitudes or feelings that existed within this phenomenon. But they stressed the conscious decision to live in relationship with the other as being the most basic conception of love. Feelings may wax and wane, the spouses may change over time, life may just be difficult or cruel, but the couple's commitment to the relationship can remain constant. You work towards your ideal even when in reality it is far from present. And each partner can provide support for the other's working at the relationship. The couples in this study described love as a form of relationship, and many authors have said that this conception surpasses more reductionistic views of love as a feeling, need, or exchange of resources.

In love, the other person is responded to for his total value, not for particular attributes, qualities, or abilities. In these couples' lives, love is a rational as well as an emotional relationship. These are mature unions, realistic unions, yet they are confident and "innocent" in their love. They want their lives to be spent together, and are willing to work and fight to overcome obstacles to that goal. Their loves are not private experiences existing only within the minds of the lovers, but are relationships

that join them to each other, family, and community. These couples are "at home" in their world.

Several individuals interviewed mentioned that their marriages had taught them a great deal about people and relationships. Living intimately with another person is a powerful educative experience. Similarly, several couples said that our interviews had given them "a better understanding of how relationships work." That has been my major goal in the research. Not to reach any grand or final conclusions, but to learn from the lives of real people. This study represents a beginning exploration of many issues. If there is one "conclusive" finding, it is that couples are capable of meaningfully verbalizing their thoughts about love and marriage.

Throughout the project, these nine couples were gracious, interesting, and informative. They let me into their lives for a brief while, and I hope I have been faithful to their experience. They have affected my own ideas about my marriage, and have given added meaning to words like love, work, and commitment. I feel I have grown through my encounter with them. As Isaac Bashevis Singer has written, "It's not child's play to be born, to marry, to bring forth generations, to grow old, to die." These tasks require mature adults, and I was privileged to meet some in this study.

Thank you.

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