

# OUR FAMILIES



## TEN PROFILES

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By the women in the  
San Francisco Breakaway  
Family Class  
Winter, 1970-71



## Introduction

During autumn of 1970, a group of women who are active in San Francisco Women's Liberation began BREAKAWAY-- a program of alternative education for and about women. This pamphlet came out of a study group in BREAKAWAY on The Family.

Our Family class consisted of ten, white, educated, more or less middle class women. We are all relatively active in the Women's Movement. We regret that we are not a representative cross-section of women. None of us are Black or third world; none are gay; none are poor; none are single mothers; none are adolescent or elderly.

At our weekly discussions we integrated the knowledge gained from reading about past and present family structures with our personal experiences and insights. When our ten weeks ended we decided that we had only begun to study the family as an institution. We wanted to learn more about alternatives to the nuclear family. We were excited about alternatives being created by communal living and wanted to talk with women living in collectives. However we decided that we needed to know more about the advantages and disadvantages of our present life style before comparing ourselves with the benefits and pitfalls of women living in collectives. The statements that follow are separate attempts of each woman to analyze her own present living situation. We sought to discover the positive, supportive aspects and the drawbacks of our situations.

The writing and subsequent analysing of these statements by the group has been an enriching experience. Finding the time and sufficient belief in ourselves to write these papers was difficult, if rewarding. In writing and going over the papers we gained a much clearer perception (understanding) about our life style, of what real support we receive and what is missing. Moreover, it was sobering to realize the difficulties of other life styles. We have taken ourselves and our experiences seriously and learned again that that which we thought of as personal is also political.



We decided to make this collection of papers available to other women in order to share our efforts and to solicit feedback. Also we want to encourage other women to take seriously their own desires for a better living situation while recognizing the risks. Exchanging information about our life styles may help us to dispel some of the myths we hold about women who live differently from ourselves, and perhaps encourage us to understand and support each other in common struggle against the oppression of all women.

The statements of ten women are presented in this order:

Four women living in a nuclear family with men and children,

One woman living with a man, without children,

Five women not living in a nuclear family, two of these in collectives.

### Profiles: Women Living In a Nuclear Family

#### Doris

I live in a nuclear family. At 25, I have been married for five years, have a child, B., three years old, and another is due in August. I quit college before the end of my first year, and for the last 7 years have been active in various ways with left-wing politics. I have been in the women's movement for almost 2½ years. Raised mostly as an only child, I grew up in San Francisco and Marin county. I am still very close to my father and my half-sister who is ten years older than I. My husband K., who is seven years older than I, grew up in the East, completed one year of graduate work, and became active politically about the same time I did (1964). O.K. So despite all kinds of plans to be "different", i.e. I would never get stuck in a house, raising kids, playing second fiddle to a man, here I am.

My life is defined by several things: job, marriage, child-

ren, housework, intellectual work for myself and friends. I can best describe my life style by outlining each of these areas.

I am economically dependent on K's work, he earns our money. K. likes his work, comes home pretty relaxed and satisfied, but that 40 hours a week means he is away from B. and me a lot, and he has little time for other things he would like to do. It is very expensive for us to live, partly because rent and food is high in San Francisco and partly because so many things we consider important cost money: a car, B's school, some furniture. Since neither of us come from well-to-do families, we received no wedding gifts, and have had to buy everything ourselves. Since we rent, we are at the mercy of landlords, and have had little security wherever we have lived. We have only ourselves to rely upon, except for occasional emergency loans from family. We live with the ever present fear that K. will lose his job, due to the recession and because in most jobs there is very little security.

Since I am remarkably unskilled regarding the job market, as of course are most women, that means that K. is the wage earner (and therefore he has more power) and that I am unpaid for the labor I do---i.e. housework and the major part of child care. It has only been in the last couple of years that I have referred to my being "married", and this is because I have come to take my marriage more seriously. K. and I know each other well, are friends, and give each other a lot of support. We have spent a lot of time together and a great deal of time working on our relationships. We share experiences, hopes, dreams, and fears. We feel responsible to and for each other. We also have a lot of problems. We live in a society that is shitty and within that we live in the institution of marriage which is basically a power relationship. Because we are trying to have a more decent relationship, and are challenging many of the rules of marriage, we are engaged in a power struggle. Challenging male supremacy on a day-to-day level means fighting for power. K. gives up privileges when I force him to and sometimes when he comes to realize he is better off for it. I force him to change when I force myself to challenge both of us. This almost always means bearing the brunt of explaining why "X" is not "my" problem, but



rather another example of women's oppression. It means knowing that the changes we make are small, but we can only begin to get a better understanding of our society by examining our own situation. Despite the hassles I stay married, because we are close, and because I don't see better alternatives. This has been difficult for me to accept, but I understand more what reality is for me and I have learned more how to work on problems without wanting to throw out the good stuff too.

Having a child is a daily responsibility. There is a lot of joy and learning and it is one of the few ways our society encourages taking responsibility for others. But it also means that for 24 hours a day, one way or another, my life is controlled by child care. It is an awesome task to try to explain this world to a child. It is not enough in my "middle class" white world to provide only physical necessities. I must also bear the burden of responsibility for my child's emotional and intellectual well-being. Dr. Spock laid out the ideology, mothers are responsible for the child's formative years, providing stimulating games and toys, lots of outside contacts, friends for the kid, good schools, etc.

Although I have gotten pregnant by choice, and had B. by choice,--I didn't play games with skipping pills or forgetting the diaphragm--in many ways I didn't have a choice. To a large extent I have children because I was raised to want children. But just as I challenge the rules of being a wife, I challenge many of the assumptions and rules about being a mother. Yet I am still a mother, either doing my job well or not so well. If I don't do my job well, turn out a bright, well-adjusted, happy child, I will bear the burden of having fucked up.

So why am I pregnant if it's all so heavy? I want a larger family than I had as a child. I was mostly an only child and very lonely (I used to want five or six kids!) I also like being pregnant and have little choice as I explained before. O.K. So we want more kids; why not adopt or form an extended family? We tried to adopt but got turned down. Making an extended family is largely a dream, has not happened much, and is very fucking difficult because we've tried.

I do like being pregnant, giving birth, and nursing, in spite of the nausea, and stomach aches, and back

aches, and being tired ALL the time. I've been taught to be uptight about my body, to be ashamed of it and think I'm ugly. Yet when I was pregnant with B., giving birth and nursing I learned to like myself. My body went through all kinds of changes and it felt good, not because I was creating life or some such bullshit, but because my myself I was learning to look at myself, feel changes, be aware, and somehow that helped me get through some hang-ups. It's difficult to describe how I feel because almost everything I say sounds like it's coming out of some women's magazine extolling the joys of motherhood. All I can say is it's not that, it's something I learned for myself. One of the worst things about our society making women's bodies into objects is that it alienates us from ourselves, as of course it is meant to do. But using one's body working, running, swimming, making love, dancing, and being pregnant, CAN be good. I can occasionally like myself, relax, and lose self-consciousness by defining my own terms. Furthermore, children, the future, and all those kinds of nebulous things are important. (More generally we have to find a way to deal with the fact that societies reproduce and women are the reproducers).

I'm not just having a baby by myself, I'm doing it with K. and also with B. But I particularly wanted to focus on what it's like for me as a woman, and the particular woman I am. I wish I could feel I have my children in the context of some meaning to my society, but that's not the case. Most of my friends don't care, or don't understand. So at best it's K., B., and I, a few friends, and family. In fact, if it's possible I would like to have this baby at home with my family, parents, and close friends with us.

I now live in a six-room apartment with K. and B. We have worked it out that K. spends a considerable amount of time caring for B. driving him to school, getting him down for naps and bedtime, and also doing most of the dinner cooking and food buying. But I still have to take care of B. when K. is at work, plus do all the laundry, and the house-cleaning. We have found that trying to involve the man in more child care adds a lot of pressure in terms of time, although it gives emotional benefits. Since I believe the house belongs to B. as well as to K. and myself, I think he has the right to play in all the rooms. Although



I try to get him to clean up his stuff he's not very conscientious and there is constant picking up to do. I'm not particularly fussy, but no matter what the standards, maintaining a house involves constant work. It's never-ending, boring, and offers no return because things get dirty immediately.

One of the most important ways I have of developing my own identity as an active, thinking person is my involvement in the women's movement. I want political change in this country, and for women. I want us to have work with some meaning. The women's movement, although non-paying, offers me more meaning than I think I can get anywhere else. I think that by definition people are political in that we are involved with other people. My small group read Hanna Arendt's The Human Condition, and I came to understand much more about the definitions of lives. Our society is run on the theory that the public area of life should be run for and by men. Women are therefore relegated to the private sphere. The women's movement is challenging this. By our demanding the right to participate and define the public sphere, to define our own condition. So I see the need for building movements and political organizations to teach ourselves to remake our society. I think in each of us there is a need to learn and express our ideas analytically. Therefore, I read and think and talk and work to make a women's movement. This is my work, my public life.

We talk a lot about the isolation of women in the nuclear family. I think this comes from alienation and separation in our society, from the lack of meaningful work for women, and from very little quality offered in most areas of our lives. But in that I do have friends, and relative freedom to be with people who are challenging and exciting to me, I do have an advantage other women miss. (My mother, for instance, had very few friends to talk with about anything but kids and housecleaning. My sister is also very isolated from people.)

I can best sum up my life by saying that I live with a lot of frustrations, but as much as I am trying to change things I also understand that given our societal set-up none of us can be "free". Despite many lacks in my life, the very real problems of boring housework and never-ending child care, I get many benefits from the way I live. My marriage and political work offer a lot

of support. My child and my relationship with K. force me to be responsible and give me a good emotional life.

### Anne

For the past five and one half years I have lived with my husband Paul. Before coming to San Francisco three years ago, we lived in Davis where we met and went to school. I often think of myself as having been more independent in Davis. At that time we both both worked and went to school, and were active in the movement. I contributed as much to our financial support as Paul. I had stimulating jobs, and a wide variety of social relationships. Many of our friends were not married and since most of our relationships had been formed before we were married I seldom felt the stigma of being a "married woman".

We left Davis in 1967 and spent the year travelling from California to India and back. A very free-flowing, rootless, third-class kind of travel. Few people we met in our travels believed we were married, for the luxury of prolonged travel is not consistent with most of the world's concept of the "responsibility" of married life. On our return we moved to Berkeley. Paul got a dull lab job, and I worked in a city run Day Care Center and audited some classes.

I got pregnant joyfully and consciously in June of 1968. I had taught and travelled and felt confident about my ability to continue teaching at a later point in my life. I felt I wanted to have children while I was fairly young with a lot of energy. I wanted more than one child, and to have them close in age.

In August I was fired from my Day Care job. I was considered too free, spontaneous, etc. I fought my firing, and despite strong parent support I lost. In September we moved to San Francisco. Paul got a job teaching in a progressive private school. This move began a new phase of my life. I had never spent much time alone or at home before moving to San Francisco. Given the choice of solitude or companionship I almost always take companionship. With my move to San Francisco I began spending more time alone than I felt comfortable about.



Solitude at that time felt like isolation. I did work twice a week at a radical education project in Berkeley. I maintained friends and contacts in Berkeley, But it did not help me to meet new people in San Francisco. I Tried unsuccessfully to get work in day-care centers, head-start programs, and other schools here and in Marin county. Nothing was available to a six month pregnant woman. Our society deems pregnant women unfit for work; this has no sound physical or psychological foundation.

Not only does it isolate pregnant women and thereby reinforce the whole "your life will be your children" myth, but it also isolates society from pregnant women. I did some substitute teaching at Paul's school. The kids there were very involved in my pregnancy and did a lot of poking, feeling, touching, and asking. They saw pictures of Aaron's birth and felt pretty close to all three of us by the end of the year.

My work was at best irregular. I had trouble getting into the San Francisco political scene. Even Women's Liberation seemed to be a closed, elite group. I didn't know how to get into it, and gave up after one small group said they had no room for newcomers. The more alone and unhappy I felt while I was pregnant, the more I worried about what it would be like after the baby came. I became shy and reticent about seeking out new situations and people. I had never been like this before, but the feeling sort of snowballed out of hand. I felt jealous of Paul's work, felt almost as if he had usurped me of my role as teacher and left me to become a housewife and mother. We both rejected most of the social scenes around the school, but even so there were times when I resented him or expected him to make a social scene for both of us since he had more accessible contacts than me.

These feelings represent the most dependent phase of our relationship. Paul tried to give me support and urged me to get out, but it didn't help much. Trying to view that phase of our marriage objectively I see several realities: 1.) for the first time in our relationship I became economically dependent on Paul. 2.) for the first time in my life I became very

dependent and passive: 3.) I felt isolated from many situations because I was pregnant. None of these points is coincidental. They fit together for social, political, and economic reasons.

We were evicted from our apartment when I was nine months plus pregnant. We found our present flat when I was in labor on the way to the hospital. The flat we found was only a block down the street, and I felt relieved to be able to stay in the same neighborhood I had made some friends in. We moved when Aaron was ten days old.

Aaron is a central force in determining my life style. That's the nitty-gritty truth of it. His birth was exhilarating. I felt proud of my body and its work, and proud of the child before me. I felt cleansed and new and close to Paul. My pregnancy and the birth and nursing seem to have helped me accept and like my body. Sexually, I have become more open, shaken off a lot of Catholic oppression.

I nursed Aaron for sixteen months. The first eight months this meant that despite much support and care from Paul, I was indispensable to Aaron. I couldn't go very far from home for more than four hours.

Paul teaches everyday roughly from 8:30 to 4:30. He does have summers free and sometimes longer afternoons plus school holidays. This leaves him free to spend quite a bit of time caring for Aaron, but still I am responsible for the bulk of Aaron's day time care. Paul always bathes him at night, now that he's not nursing. On weekends, he takes him out one morning to give me time alone.

It's difficult with a first child to achieve a balance between its needs and yours. I have tended to be a super-conscientious mother, making few decisions for my life which would even possibly have a negative effect on Aaron. I have taken the responsibility for his socialization and physical needs very seriously, and there hasn't been much support outside my immediate family. I see a lot of middle-class fuck-ups and dangers looming up on the horizon for this concerned parent kind of trip. I love Aaron, and he loves me, but I



realize we both need other people in our life. The isolation of a doting mother and child is not healthy for either, and yet our society constantly reinforces this myth. I guess my child-development-teacher training has made me all the more aware of the virtues and faults involved in childrearing.

When Aaron was young I spent a lot of time in Golden Gate Park, especially in the children's playground where I had contact with lots of other mothers and children. Most of the people who use that playground come from around the Haight-Ashbury and are very open about their problems and their kids' problems. There's a whole sort of "bench" society in the playground, and it's very important in breaking down the isolation that mothers and kids feel when there is no place to be together. In the park I made most of the contacts with families I now know in the neighborhood.

I began a baby-sitting exchange when Aaron was 8 months old with a neighbor I met in the park. In the park we talked about the things we missed since babies. For her ballet, for me teaching. We felt we had sort of pushed our previous roles aside. Acknowledging this led us to the exchange. I started teaching French two afternoons a week, and Jan began taking, then teaching ballet. Lisa and Aaron grew very close, like brother and sister, and Jan and I grew very close too. We were able to give each other important criticism and support in child care which is often lacking in nuclear families where there is no one outside the family who knows the child intimately.

In September 1970 our neighborhood child care center opened. One family donated a large basement room which we all fixed up. The initial idea for the center came out of a larger community group, and I followed it through and found people who were interested. Every family works a little less than one day a week. Aaron goes four days a week from 9-12. This provides me with freedom and time to work and pursue my own interests, and it provides Aaron time and space to be with the children and adults of this community. He knows many mothers (fewer fathers, unfortunately) and kids he feels secure and happy with.

I see this center as being the beginning of a community family.

My "job" is teaching French at a private school twice a week. This doesn't change the fact that I am economically dependent on Paul's salary (\$7,000/yr), but I feel good knowing that what money I do make provides for extras which would otherwise be unavailable. The teaching is ideal in many ways since it is part time, but still regular enough to make me feel a part of the school and kids. Paul is a part of the same classes, and we share a lot of feelings about the school.

I am a poor housekeeper. Almost anything can distract me from housework. Paul does most of the mopping, vacuuming, and dishwashing. I wash the clothes; he takes them to the dryer. We belong to a neighborhood food purchasing group (Food Conspiracy) which cuts a lot of store shopping time. I do most of the dinner cooking, because, I tell myself, it's more convenient with Paul's schedule. Paul makes the bread and yogurt. He usually gets up first in the morning and makes breakfast for himself and Aaron, also makes lunches for school.

Because Paul's work schedule is regular, the mechanics of our week to week existence are fairly well defined. We are both active in a neighborhood organization which grew out of the reaction to Cambodia last spring. It meets every other Wednesday, and also for parties, hikes, and trips. We have made some close friends in the neighborhood, and we are beginning to exchange dinners once a week with another household. Our flat is generally known in the neighborhood as a place where kids are welcome after school. Young people also see it as a place they can crash, and we've had several students spend three or four weeks with us. My family-parents, aunts, cousins and sister all live in the Bay Area. I see my parents once or twice a month; I talk with my mother every week on the phone. Even though many of our values are different my mother is able to give me support in raising Aaron.

We have a wide variety of friends: couples our age; older couples; older women; single people; my friends



from Women's Liberation; parents from the school; neighborhood people. The people I see most often are the women in the neighborhood. Getting together with couples takes more arranging and subsequently we see each other less. My oldest and closest friend lives across the bay. We have grown up together since we were four years old and gone through many changes and stages together. She is married and lives in a household with her husband, another man and her three year old child. We try to see each other and talk often, but it is never often enough. We crave time together, without our families, and this is difficult to find since we are both active, and since our children have schedules determined by their child care. Molly and I give each other support and criticism. The honest rapport we have established makes our relationship very precious, and I consider it to be the most important relationship in my life outside my family.

I have trouble arranging or finding time to see many of my friends. On weekends Paul and I and Aaron usually go places or visit people together. I need to push myself out of the neighborhood more often than I do; for while I have much companionship I often feel I lack more mutual stimulating kinds of friendships. The women's movement helps me in establishing new friendships with women from all over the Bay Area.

In writing this it occurs to me that I don't know many single men. I no longer meet men in the movement, and find relating to most of the men in the community frustrating at best. I am close to one young man I met this summer in the hospital. I liked getting to know him away from my usual tags of wife and mother. He was the first man besides Paul to relate to me in an intense, interested way since I left friends in Davis. He is now close to Paul and Aaron too, and at times I feel jealous of the expansion of our friendship.

Paul and I are monogamous, although in principle we acknowledge each other's freedom to have sexual relations with others. However it's difficult going from the principle to reality. It is difficult for me to imagine a sexual relationship without a strong

emotional one. Since I have not formed strong relationships with men besides Paul (it's circular, being married cuts of a lot of relationships) it seems unlikely that our monogamy will open up in the near future. We talk about it a lot.

I have tried consciously to work out solutions to the isolation and monotony of childcare and housework. My involvement in Women's Liberation has given me much strength in trying to do this. It is important to me to reach out to new people, and new social situations which will break down the capitalist system we now live in and under. We do a lot of projecting, hoping and fearing. Talking about the future makes me realize how much I define my life in terms of Paul's. I think he does too; and I think it's good and bad. Because we share our work and a dedication to radical change in education, we are able to give each other fantastic amounts of support. We share and discuss our ideas and frustrations, and our physical closeness helps us through the really impossible times. But, I also feel we cut each other's energy because we can satisfy frustrations or work out potential solutions with each other. If we were more independent perhaps we would share and seek solutions with more people, and if we did that we might not be as short with each other as we sometimes are. It seems significant that neither of us since we have been married. If we are physically together at home, it is often difficult to pursue our individual needs and projects. The danger of monotony and set patterns of relating is something to struggle with.

I recognize many of the advantages of a more communal family, but I am also afraid and hesitant of changing a well set pattern. The community closeness and support I have now will not be an easy thing to give up, especially for Aaron. He already has a very real place and identity here and while his prime security comes from me and Paul, the child-care center and his friends are becoming more and more central and important to his life. I feel hesitant about "uprooting" him, even though I know kids make new friends fast.

There's still another part of me that longs for more



sun and outside space. I don't want to live in an isolated country situation, but I'm not convinced that the city is the place to stay. This is all difficult to balance with my involvement in the women's movement and the possibilities and directions of our work. Right now, we are thinking about starting a school in the city. Things are changing in my life, and sometimes I feel insecure about the changes, and still I know that is only through change, and sometimes painful change that we begin to build a new society.

### Georgeanne

My life is a family composed of three solid bodies. We are a mother, always a mother; a son, my son, our son, his son, a not-his-son; a husband, a not-husband; a wife, a not-wife; and a father, his father, a not-his father. Our roles change with mood and with society's demands.

We relate as one to one, one to one to one, one against one, one against one against one. And, rarely, we are one. One against one against one is a common household pattern.

We are married; we are not married. Usually I am a married mother. Occasionally I am an unmarried mother. I feel very married most of the time. This makes me feel secure. It also makes me feel my essential strength is never tested. Sometimes in the presence of an attractive man I de-emphasize my marriage. But I cannot usually present myself as unmarried in social relations without feeling false. There is however no city hall record of our union.

Not getting legally married has always been a symbol to me of independence of social norms, of traditions, of governments. I've long been alienated from my society. From the age of about twelve I have known the schizm between what people say and what they actually do. I felt different and I wanted to be different.

The lack of a ceremony has apparently not made me an

independent person. I am very dependent upon my present mate and have been similarly dependent upon other mates in the past.

My model for a non-marriage coalescence had been the bohemian, cafe society, artistic and intellectual relationship such as that of Simone de Beauvoir and Jean Paul Sartre. Simone, however, unlike me, did not have a baby when she met Sartre and has never had a child. I didn't meet Sartre either.

I at no time wanted to grow up to be a wife or a mother. I did want to love. I wanted to be a veterinarian, a Marco Polo, a Simone de Beauvoir, A Rimbaud, a Bertrand Russell. I wanted to be my own version of excellence. Later my view of excellence reversed itself and I began to believe in the holy fool. Worldly heroes became evil. The castigated became saints.

I was aspiring toward a love relationship in which two strong people who didn't need each other loved each other. Bertrand Russell and Ayn Rand particularly influenced me when they wrote of self-sufficient love partners.

But now I don't believe in or want to be a person who doesn't need someone. Love is a combination of needing and giving. Love dies in excessive confinement but I think it also dies in complete freedom. Or what I mean is that if one feels completely free in a relationship with another person, that love is not in depth.

We love each other and are in Nirvana or Zion. We hate each other and we are two encapsulated in monogamy or three hellishly trapped in the nuclear family.

Work is not a distinct category in my life. Much of whatever it is that I do is burdensome. I feel obligated to shop, cook, wash dishes, and clothes. The last six months I've begun to do less, particularly of cooking. My growing woman's consciousness has taken me psychologically, if not physically, out of



the kitchen. I shop in a supermarket every other day. Carrying a heavy load of groceries two blocks is unpleasant but minor as this world goes. My son and his friends may come along to help me. They, including especially my son, pressure me to buy items against my will. They also shoplift. My son has been punished at home but I think he is more impressed by his peers who all seem to steal. So I often slip off to the store alone, unless you count the dog. The dog doesn't pressure or shoplift, just waits however long outside the store.

My husband tells me to make a list and he will shop. I have a block against doing so. I believe it would take more energy planning menus in advance and reading shopping papers. I consider the decision of what to buy the hardest part. I make up my mind what to cook as I wheel through the store. So much hatred for housekeeping ruminated in me that I do not want to, am unable to, be conscious of this work that has come to me by default. I am sorry that my identity is that of a housewife.

Because of my husband Ben and the scene (early hip) I've been around for years I usually don't buy prepared foods.--I'm beginning to want to free myself-with canned food that I can teach my son to use. The organic-ecological approach is moral but it is also time and energy consuming. Food preparation is oppressive to me as it has been most of my life. My mother tried to teach me to cook, while I was still a woman-child.

I hated it and she gave up. Sewing and cooking were compulsory for my sex in the intermediate school. Sewing was even more of a horror. I couldn't learn how to put in a zipper. I wish that it had occurred to me and that I had known how to destroy that brand-new single level suburban school but I was not so precocious. In the fifties few of us of the middle class struck out violently against our oppression.

I always feel all the household work is hanging over me, that I've got to do it so that I can

get to what I really care about. On a relative basis I have less work than many women. Still, housework has oppressed and depressed me. Its never-endingness has left me with no energy or time to find out what I really care about.

Coinciding with my husband's illness I have stopped doing much of the housework. When Ben doesn't work I feel less guilty about not working. When he goes back to work I will have to adjust my schedule or my guilt at not working.

I feel a much heavier obligation to do work for my son Jeff. The laundry is done when he doesn't have clean clothes for school. Whether I buy or prepare food is also based ultimately on my responsibility to him. If Jeff is out of town, which doesn't happen often enough--about once a year--I don't shop, cook, or launder.

My son is 8 years old and thus far I've demanded no housework from him. To be honest, all I've asked from him is to cause me as little trouble as he can. I know this to be wrong. I know that he needs responsibility beyond just going to school and keeping out of trouble. But I've also felt very sorry for children who seem to be enslaved to their parents--doing housework, running errands, etc.

My husband helps to make the boy more responsible. My husband is more authoritarian than I. At eight years my son already takes men more seriously than women. I usually protect my son if Ben is being overly strict with him. I also try to protect my son's friends when their parents are mad at them.

In the neighborhood where I live are three large black families, one small oriental family and two white families with one child each. The parents of the black families are seldom visible and are apparently working hard to maintain their families. The children function without close adult supervision. The older teen-age daughters are inside their houses and no doubt have most



of the household and child care responsibility. The older girls and I meet on the way to and from the laundromats. They are not friendly. Neither am I. The younger the children are the friendlier they are. In the past when Ben and I were home in the daytime and the children were on school vacation, we got involved with them. They were hungry for adult attention. They would want us to arbitrate fights, to have something to eat, to get something to play with, to have a glass of water, and to use the toilet. I'm torn. I hate to see children neglected, but I've taken care of children so much in my life that I don't want to do much concretely to alleviate their condition. At least not so concrete as taking care of them myself. When I've been pressed involuntarily into child care by my conscience, I've resented the parents who were off "being free". Generally, I've seen very little of people who really wanted to commit themselves in a serious way toward the children of others.

The girls in this neighborhood are all black. They start more fights than the boys. I think it is because they see their mothers working harder than their fathers and unconsciously know they are expected to someday also fill that role. They are less free to play when they are outside because of having younger children hanging on them.

My disappointment with my life focuses on my failure to travel. I met Ben when my son was 2½. He had travelled a lot. I think I was attracted to him because of that. He, it would seem now, was attracted to me because of wanting a more settled family life. At one point in our life Ben wanted me to quit the job I had and travel together with the boy in a camper throughout Mexico. I was saving money and was obsessed with going to India. Ben felt, and still feels, going to India with a family and without a purpose to be insane. I loved Ben and didn't want to leave him, but maybe more than that I didn't have the courage to travel so far alone with a child.

So other than travelling through the Southwest we

haven't gone anywhere. We don't encourage each other to do anything. He does not encourage me with my commitment to the women's movement. We are too much of the time bad energy for each other, but we are so emotionally involved and fused that we cannot separate. We blame each other viciously for our disappointment and yet still have many moments of tenderness.

I have been developing a fierce intolerance of sensuality--particularly in the forms of dope and sex. So much of my life has been spent in these activities that I intensely want satisfaction in other realms.

What's disadvantageous about my life is the lack of purpose coming from having no goals. What's advantageous is a murky kind of freedom that having few commitments allows.

The advantages include the life-sharing with a loved and loving, known and knowing adult, with an ordinary but precious child, with fucked-up but witty friends and my kindly animals.

I have a sense of becoming more product oriented, a return to my native western culture. I want to manifest with my brain and soul a product which can be perceived by the senses. I know there are essences which may be beyond my ability to materialize but I intend modestly to make it all better, to lighten slightly the karmic load.

#### Jane

I am living with my man-lover-friend, D., and our five-month-old baby, G., in a three room apartment in the city. We have been living together for two and a half years-- first in an apartment with another couple and their baby, then separate from other people, part of the time in the city and part of the time in a cabin we built in the country.

We are thinking now of moving into a living situation



with other people again--single people, couples, children. A large flat, a house... maybe the fantasized apartment building. It's not that removing ourselves into a nuclear family was a mistake; I feel that we needed to do that at that time. It's been a good, a consolidating year for us. But I feel our separation now to act less as a protective environment in which we can grow closer to each other, and more as a barrier between our life together and our desire for a life shared with more people.

We found from living in the country last summer that we can't live happily together completely isolated from the city community. "The community" is a loose term for all the people we relate to--generally people with some kind of radical consciousness: several communal households nearby, people D. or I work with in the car-fixing collective, the Breakaway classes, midwife's class and karate class. I find myself drawn to the women in the community in friendships and shared work. It's hard though to give up - or expand - the consciousness of the couple-family unit. Except for brief experiences in work camps and communes, the model for me for a happy life has always been the nuclear family.

I am basically a love type of person, often lonely, sometimes very happy being alone. I think I know best how to live with myself. I usually equate "growing" in my life with becoming more aware of and excited by relations with other people. The kinds of experiences that have helped me grow towards other people have been ultimately more important to me than those (reading, painting) that have centered on myself. Sometime I hope I'll be able to integrate the two in my life; right now I pursue the need to grow with people - families - politics - and the need to paint lies dormant.

Because it's important to me, doesn't mean it's easy. It's because it's so easy for me to withdraw into myself that friendships and relating to people are important. The pattern of my life has been to have one best girlfriend, several other women to whom I related, one or none boyfriend, strained distant relationships with other men, sometimes good friend-

ships with children. This is more or less true now.

Many people come through the house, often to stay for supper. Most of them come because they know D. and have a casual relationship with me through him, although this is changing. Sometimes I enjoy the feeling of being carried along in his pocket; the good old monogamous appendage; very safe for the introvert. Sometimes it's frustrating as hell.

I love D. and I feel loved by him. I feel at home with him. We have been and are tremendously important to each other. Our main problem with each other is our difficulty in getting in touch with our anger. We have hopes that living with others will help us. That it'll be easier to accept criticism when it comes from more people--that it'll be harder to rationalize and deny. On the other hand, I wonder if communal living might not make it easier to avoid our conflicts. When we lived with the other couple this was a constant problem. There was always someone else to talk to, something else going on. It's important to me that anyone else I live with should be sensitive to and supportive of our need to struggle.

It's nice sleeping in bed every night with someone. Eating breakfast together. Sex becomes a more natural part of life; less alienating. We are sexually monogamous now, but doubt that we always will be. I find myself getting too blase about Married Life--out of touch with the reality of my sexual feelings, hiding behind my role as a married woman and losing an empathy for the feelings of unmarried friends. The prospect of sex with others seems natural and unthreatening when I think of it for me, but drastically threatening when I think of it for D.!

D. helps out with housework and caring for G. He loves G. His were the first hands to touch him when he was born at home. My own father meant a whole lot to me, I'm glad G. has a warm Daddy, too.

Our baby's arrival has been a great upheaval in our lives. I had expected to become a parent gradually, somehow, and it was a very sudden thing. G. was born prematurely



at seven months and was in an incubator for three weeks. By the time he came home I'd regained my strength and had an image of how things would be: I saw myself active and healthy with a happy baby on my hip, going out the door to take part in some kind of women's movement work. In fact, that first month I spent twelve hours a day nursing G., the other twelve trying to eat and sleep. I felt exhausted and confined, sometimes nearly hysterical. D. did what he could; the burden of the housework and my freakiness fell on him. Also, I had no interest at all in sex. If D. touched me affectionately while I nursed G., I felt like a numb, functional thing.

I've wondered sometimes what it would have been like if we hadn't wanted a baby. It was the fact that we did that kept our heads together through the first couple of months. Babies are surprisingly humorless at first. It's lucky for them they're very cute!

In G.'s third month I began the struggle to maintain my existence as a person as well as a mother. I began taking karate and I wrote the first draft of this paper. The time I spent away from G. was invaluable to me. Writing the paper helped clarify the conflicts I'm going through: The satisfaction in taking care of the little rascal; the desperate need to get away from him; feelings of love and delight that grow as he gets more responsive; feelings of being trapped; feeling bad about myself--that I'm dependant on G. to give meaning to my day-to-day life, that I'm only and can only be a baby sitter; feeling good about myself--feeling energy and security from my relationship with G. that carries me into other activities and relationships with people.

It's becoming important to me that I don't think of G. as being exclusively my baby. I want D. to relate to him as his child, and I want other people to love and care about him. At first I didn't realize the importance of this. I found myself making decisions about the baby (taking him away on a trip, choosing to breast feed him when I could have left him with a bottle) that denied D. and others the chance to be with him. I have a perverse tendency to feel guilty

about and minimize happy experiences and I think this was at work here: I thought of leaving G. with others - even D. - as imposing upon them, not thinking about how happy he makes me and how satisfying, as well as tiring, it is to care for him.

I feel comfortable with our solution at the moment. I take him in the mornings and D. in the afternoons. If we need to be away we each make arrangements with someone else to look after him.

His relationship to the community is less clear. My sister's household has offered to take him two evenings a week. These women and other friends of ours love G. and like taking care of him. It would be ideal if our children could be sared within the community. If single people could enjoy the relationship of mothers and fathers to them. But at this time the children are still their parent's. If D. and I decide to move, for instance, G. will go with us. When he's old enough, we will choose the kind of schooling he gets. I don't know how I would ever be able to feel good about sharing that decision-making power with anyone besides D.

Several women we know have recently had babies. In a few months I see the potential for a baby-farm for G. I think it would be a good thing for him to have friends and to be related to as part of a group, and a good thing for us parents to get feedback on how we are relating to our kids. That feedback is so important and so hard for anyone to give.

A last comment I want to make on my life style, is that while the city community is important to me, I still want to live part of every year in the country. Either with the three of us alone, or possibly with a larger group of friends. I need the reason of trees. I want it for G., growing up.



Sunny

I am married. X. and I live alone in a small cottage. Although the area of the city we live in is interesting and I want to live here, it is far from areas typically populated by young movement-oriented people. This isolates me from neighbors that I could have easy contact and flow with.

X. and I are a couple. For the greatest part of our relationship--3 years--we have done everything together; almost never doing anything alone. We both contributed to this togetherness. More recently, I have been struggling for more autonomy. Thus today I am in a period of change and struggle, questioning marriage, and seeking personal and separate interests.

The once total togetherness gave me much pleasure. This happiness continued for two years. The onset of problems a year ago--a minor stroke--resulted in discontinuing birth control pills, resulted in immediate pregnancy, resulted in an abortion, which brought me to an awakening and new awareness of my situation. From this point on I was no longer happy in the set up of our relationship--our marriage. Sex which had been easy and satisfying became problematic. I had never used any method of birth control other than the pill. Having to change my consciousness to associate sex with possible unwanted pregnancy and traumatic abortion lead to new evaluations of my dependency and to very unhappy times.

X. struggled to maintain the relationship as it once had been and I filled with frustration at trying to attain personal strength and independence. This crisis made me come to terms with my future and realize I have yet to decide the direction of my growth. I am 25. I am evolving and want to remain open and changing. I do not want to accept the life of someone else.

X. and I give each other stability, continuing loving and caring, sharing companionship, familiarity. These are key words in our relationship. Dependency, lack of autonomy, stifling, controlling--these too are key words.

Being part of a couple has encouraged relations with other couples (usually X's friends and 10 years older) and has discouraged relations with individual persons (usually people I met or knew.) I am currently keeping open friendships on my own. I find it difficult--partly because of neighborhood distance, partly because of the difficulty of separating myself from X. and his needs, and of encouraging people to relate to me as an individual person. I am making the conscious effort to interact with people without X and to have time alone. Although both X and I have been monogamous, I am interested in involving myself sexually with other men and perhaps women. These changes have come slowly, as I struggle both with myself and with X.

I find I need a lot of love and support from other women in order to realize and make these difficult changes. My contact with women in my small group, other personal friends, and this family class, has allowed me space to be me, to try out my ideas, and to receive the support and encouragement I need.

Presently I am trying to feel good about myself physically. Although I swim occasionally and work on our garden, I want to get in touch with my body more, re-explore a variety of ways of using it--dance, self-defense, sports.

Until 2 weeks ago I worked at a research project. I stayed with this job over two years because of the flexibility in hours, good pay, and health coverage. I now hope to draw unemployment and to have more time and energy to do what I like.

Below is a summary of some of the dynamics of being a couple.



Life Style: Couple

<u>Good</u>	<u>Bad</u>	<u>Ideal</u>
Continuity	Rigidity	Flexibility
Stability	Stagnation	Creativity
Love	Dependency	Autonomy
Sharing	Stifling	Personal Strength
Caring	Controlling	Freedom
Familiarity	Monotony	Variety
Companionship	Isolation	Community

Living Outside the Nuclear Family

Allison

My life style, in comparison to others, appears to me to be rather simple and uncomplicated. I live alone in a two room apartment in San Francisco with a five month old cat and lots of plants. I say that I live alone, yet that is not totally true. A friend of mine from my Chicago days lives in the adjoining apartment and we have worked out a system of eating dinner together, sharing the food and cooking, that has worked quite well. One night S. cooks and I clean and then we reverse the roles. This arrangement has the benefit for both of us of not having to cook and eat alone every evening. Beyond the material comfort of food, we talk together, take walks together and do other things together as well. S. is not involved in the women's movement (although sympathetic) and thus provides an objective sounding board for my problems and frustrations with the movement.

Living in a city is a conscious decision for me. I have discovered that I have difficulty functioning in a non-urban environment. Having grown up in the center of a city, I find that I need the city in order to stay alive. I find vicarious life and rejuvenation by living in the city, taking walks, talking with the neighbors, etc. In regarding my life and myself, I

must begin with a definition of myself as an urban creature. Smog and all, I need city life, museums, exciting architecture, parks and the feel of a city to give myself a sense of being a living, functioning person.

Because I am tuned into the life around me, I use my apartment as a comfortable retreat from the world. I have enjoyed fixing up the apartment I am in now (and have been for about four months) and am daily making small changes and modifications. I spend much time "at home". It is not out of necessity, for I have no pressing obligations at home, but out of choice, my apartment is a nice place to be. I am rootless, I have no family except for my father who lives in Chicago. This, I try to make my apartment my refuge, my little cell of security. I see real dangers in using my apartment as too much of a crutch. Although the temptation to retreat totally is tantalizing, it is tantalizing only for periods. Then in other periods I find myself over busy, over involved, doing more than I have time to do and rarely home at all. I do spend what seems to me to be a large portion of my time cleaning and puttering around my apartment, but probably not so great an amount of time as I think, for it is time grudgingly given to housework.

I am retired. I quit my last full time job (a welfare caseworker) in July, 1967, and have not worked at a so-called "straight" job since. I am fortunate in that I have sufficient independent income to be able to scrape by without feeling that it is absolutely necessary to seek employment. For all intents and purposes, I have rejected work in the straight world. I have too much pride to be able to take the degradation, particularly the degradation suffered by women in office-type situations, nor am I willing to play the games it is necessary to play to go on for further degrees (although I have toyed with getting my M.A. on several occasions). Since I am not in dire economic need, I don't feel under any undue pressure to seek paid employment, so I haven't. I, thus, have to define my work for myself. The main problem in not being employed is how to most productively use my time.



I have not as yet fully resolved it for myself. I do feel a responsibility to use the time I have in the most productive manner possible and become guilt ridden if I fail to do so.

For the past year my work has been in and around the women's movement here in San Francisco. It has been exciting and instructive work, but not particularly systematic or of long duration or commitment. The work that I am throwing my major energies into now, is researching the origins of women's oppression. I am approaching the question from an anthropological perspective, the woman I'm working with is approaching it from the perspective of ancient history. We are pooling our findings and hoping to come up with some papers on the subject. This kind of self-defined work is difficult, for there are no external pressures, no non-self imposed deadlines to work towards. I thus have to depend on my own resources for discipline. It is not often easy. Sometimes there is a battle raging within me, trying to get myself to get down to work. Once I do, it is relatively easy to pursue my research for a period of time.

Other activities related to the women's movement are: small group meetings, Gung-fu lessons (Chinese form of self-defense), a Breakaway seminar and monthly "SAEC" meetings where we talk about the state of the "movement." I have also been doing so-called research into soap operas on T.V. It is clear to me and to everyone that knows me that this research is more diversion than real research, but I have intentions of writing a paper on them some day.

I take photographs, primarily color slides. My photography is irregular and has not really extended beyond the "hobby" level. Every now and then I paint, water-colors and Sumie. I have difficulty in taking my artistic expression seriously, although I need to express myself. I tend to regard artistic expression more as a hobby than as an aspect of my work.

I have been characterized as a Puritan, and perhaps I am. My present life style is singularly free of unnecessary expenditures, booze and men.

Whenever I live alone, that seems to be my pattern. As it is not an unfamiliar pattern, I fall very comfortably into it. As an only child and a misfit in both my neighborhood society and in the private school where I was a scholarship student, I am used to being alone. Solitude does not terrify me as much as it does some, although it would be very dishonest of me to claim that I do not go through periods of fear at my aloneness. I do have my father who is very valuable to me. I am very close to him and value his friendship. Unfortunately he is entrenched in Chicago and I have decided to live out here. I also have good friends scattered across the country and feel secure in the knowledge of their friendship and don't feel quite so alone.

My life style is in many respects a very privileged one. I don't have to go to paid employment, an alienating and horrible aspect of many people's lives. I am free of responsibilities. If I don't want to get up in the morning, there are no children to make it imperative that I get up. I am a relatively free individual in a society where freedom, particularly for women, is a scarce commodity. As a woman I am able to avoid many of the situations that degrade women in this society, not all, but some.

The major negative aspect of my life style is the fact that I am alone. I have no primary love relationship, no person or persons upon whom I can depend and know that I can depend for years to come. (But then, who does have such an assurance in this society?) Freedoms come at a price. The price I have to pay for my freedom, my independence is a degree of loneliness, an uncertainty about my future, a general sense of rootlessness and an emotional vacuum.

All in all, I am satisfied about my present life style. It suits me. I am comfortable living the way I do. On the whole I enjoy the independence and self-sufficiency. I have my own space and my own life and at the same time I have a roommate who is not a roommate with whom I can share my day.



## Abigail

My recent move makes it difficult to analyze my life style--how many of the old patterns will continue, how many old problems will be resolved, and what new ones will evolve I do not yet know. What remains constant and ready for analysis are personal needs and bits and pieces of myself which find their way into my life style. For this reason I'll structure this analysis around those needs which remain constant.

Dance and Space - A place to create and realize fantasies of movement and body sculpture. This need means a place other than a bedroom--thus more \$\$ than renting a single room to live in, and reduced chances of finding a "commune" which will have enough available space. I also usually need music to inspire my dancing. Dance is a need as are food, sleep, air, water, love. Dance is an expression of self-love and also a release. Dance is inspired by my need to express rhythm, round angles, sharpness, abruptness, quiet, flutterings, sexuality and also to cross cultural lines--now especially Black culture (soul music). Inability to do this on ordinary people levels makes my dance need more critical.

Food - In many ways food affects my life. Through eating pure foods--untampered with natural sustenance-- I am trying to satisfy a strong need to feel at one with Earth and attain a purity of mind, body, and spirit. The search for this kind of purity has given me a curiosity about foods which I partially satisfy by working for a natural foods store. Being a vegetarian and restricting my eating to food that has been wisely selected and simply but creatively prepared and served, limits my eating out a great deal. Also, I often eat alone for this reason. Through my work I have met people of similar eating habits and this has eased slightly the lonesomeness of a radically different eating pattern from that of my culture. Still, however, I find I

must prepare most of my own meals, and when I have worked a long day I do not always feel much like cooking. At work we often fix meals together in the back room so this helps, too. About every month we have a staff meeting and either the owner of the store fixes dinner for all of us at his house, or we each bring something and have an organic pot luck feast together. This is very much of a family thing--like Thanksgiving--and there is much warmth and sincerity: friends, workers, brothers and sisters eating and talking and jamming together.

Shelter - I live in a large flat with another woman my age (21), my two kittens, and my roommate's dog and cat. I have not known my roommate for very long--we met on the basis of our common need for a roommate through a mutual friend. I have lived alone for over a year. The crises of identity, school, boyfriends, illness and general alienation from the society, plus tremendous daily commitments of time and energy necessitated an absolute refuge from others. While not all of these crises are resolved, I feel better equipped to deal with them. By leaving school and breaking loose from other commitments, I have lessened the need for such a complete refuge, and living alone became more lonely and the expense not worthwhile. Thus the move. It's too soon to tell if it will work out. There are certain dynamics of our relationship and the house which may help it to work:

- (1) Adequate space for projects, dancing, eating, and privacy.
- (2) Differences in work schedules so that time alone is not difficult to find (easier for me than for R.)
- (3) Both of us are vegetarians, are not fanatically clean or stinkily dirty
- (4) We have similar incomes.
- (5) We both have hang-ups about borrowing, but not about lending.
- (6) We both love animals and are willing to put up with troubles for them.



- (7) We both think of our animals as our children and live accordingly.
- (8) We can split the rent and costs of mutually desired services: utilities, phone, delivered spring water.
- (9) Lastly, and most importantly, we are becoming friends. We are in the same small group.

#### Problems

- (1) I am not used to living with someone else.
- (2) We are two different people.
- (3) We have different attitudes about self-protection in a hostile world; this affects policies of home and animals.
- (4) It is hard for R. to accept favors and gifts and doing and giving them is one of my greatest joys.
- (5) R. has to get up early so that we can't talk late at night.
- (6) I tend to plan when people may visit, and have difficulty enjoying unexpected visits of R's friends. R.'s friends are strangers and strangers make me nervous and shy.

I think living together will help both of us with the problems that are solvable in our present societal context.

Money and Work - Since my employer is a generous man, I am well paid for my work. While I dig my job as jobs go, I am often bored and feel that much of my work is tedious and many of my days filled with work tension. My job might be the beginning of a career as a food consultant, researcher, or natural healer, or it may just be part of my education. It supplies me with much more than money, in any case. I buy almost all my food (and some of my cats') there, as well as other life necessities. Much of my reading comes from the store's selection of books. Many of my friends I met through work--either as fellow workers or as shoppers or producers. The store is my main link to organized ecological activities.

Its bulletin board is the grapevine for the ecologically-oriented as well as a bartering place and rental service for myself and friends. Work has also been a place for me to realize fully my place--woman as nigger--no painless lesson to be sure. It has been a place to work on some of my hang-ups about being able to add and subtract, and being able to lift heavy things. I am learning how to deal with businesses and businessmen, how to order and find out what's in products and how they are made, how they compare with similar products. In short, I am learning all the mechanics of a natural foods (and life necessities) store.

I am also learning much about nutrition through employee and customer exchanges.

Friends and lovers - Because I am basically a loner, I tend to steer away from parties and crowded situations. I usually have one or a few close friends. This is another reason why I do not wish to live with a group, so great is my need for privacy. I haven't had a long term romantic relationship in a while because of various problems I've had in relating to men--many created by feminist awareness. I sometimes go out with guys and there are flirtations with fellow workers, old lovers and friends who briefly return to my life. Basically, though, my life is in a getting-myself-together stage and my lifestyle is structured around getting adequate mental, spiritual, emotional and physical nutrition.

My brother is one of my best friends. Up 'til now I have called upon him for help moving from apartment to apartment, to fix things I thought I couldn't fix and build things I thought I couldn't build. He is also my confidante (and I his), someone to deal with parents with, to share friends with (we hung out with the same people growing up and some live in the Bay area, others pop into our lives now and then). Also I comfort him and help him and sometimes cook for him the things he liked while we grew up together. We love each other very much. Now that he lives with J. we don't get as much chance to be alone together. The three of us spend a lot of time together and



share things. J. and I shared a financial project baking for the store where I work-- but J. does this by herself now, with only occasional help from me. We share tools and appliances and chores and talents: I'll tie-dye for them, they'll do something for me, and we take care of each others animals and plants if we go on a trip. We sometimes eat together, but not too often 'cause we eat so differently. We go to movies and watch Dick Cavett and play scrabble together. Most of this was a pattern while I lived at my other apartment, for I lived only a few blocks away and we saw more of each other. Now I think my brother will see more of me without J. J. and I both joined the Jewish Community Center. We take sauna's and swim together and I dance while J. practices the piano. We do exercises together and talk a lot both over the phone and in person. I love J. Our cats are related too, and in this way we are Aunts.

D. is a close friend whom I met at work. In some ways I am closest to her, because our lifestyles are alike: we both are investigating natural foods, we each live with another woman and work for the store. We recently did a five day fast together in the woods and really got close. We talk to each other, and miss each other--I sometimes see it as almost a "non-sexual,"(where does affection end and sexuality begin?) gay relationship--sometimes it's more two girlfriends, other times there's possessive feelings, rawness. We take sauna's together and eat together and drive to Santa Cruz every two weeks for a lecture series together. We take our lunch hours together sometimes, and trade jobs (I do the register when I sense her exhaustion and she packs, and vice versa). She was the first woman at work with whom I felt free to reveal my feminist thoughts and feelings. D. has become much stronger as a result of my feminist viewpoint on many of her problems and this has made me feel better about my ability to help my sisters.

M. is my friend who shares my dancer's perception of the world and we go to dance concerts together. She also works at the store and sometimes we get into long discussions. We also take an herb class one night a week together (all women, but very different from movement consciousness).

There are other friends and flirtations, but I feel that the pattern of unrelated friendships--friends who do not know each other, friendships which evolved from different aspects of my personality--is established by now.

The women's movement - This class is both a class and one of my main links to the movement. It is important because I don't have my life structured with lots of places to perceive life openly as a feminist. I look forward to not having to explain and to get it on with a feminist analysis of life.

I have a small group which meets Thursday nights. This is a place for me to help others and also I hope it will help me to get myself to the place where I can be happy about myself and mess around with life without being so afraid.

My cats sleep with me. I feed them. They are my babies and my responsibility. I worry about them and love them and hug and kiss them. When I'm cold they sit in my lap. Sometimes they are a damn nuisance.

I have a car and ride around in it a lot. I can go out at night and not be afraid. Also, I can help friends and spend time doing that.

I wonder if I haven't been analytical enough (in a direct political sense, especially) and would like to interject a few thoughts at this point. Capitalism has profoundly affected my life. As much as I enjoy my job, if I didn't need the money, I wouldn't be working for the store. I sincerely want more time to read and try different things, but I cannot accept financial aid from my family, as it fucks me up even more than does work. Many of my



fears and anxieties of dealing with people are based on life experiences where I have been fucked over by people--people who grew up in a society which taught them that selfishness and greed and money were more important than people and that I don't matter because I'm just a woman. I have had an identification with oppression and fought for the underdog my whole life. One of my biggest purposes is to make some positive meaning for existence for myself and others in a way that will make it easier for those yet to be born--this involves change-revolution-evolution. My politics and my everyday life are thus the same.

### Mary

I am a single woman. I live on 10 country acres on which I raise breeding bulls for ranchers. San Francisco is less than 2 hours by car so that the stimulus of urban culture is at hand. My widowed mother lives with me and helps with the housework in the house. The usual friction between mother and daughter has lessened over the years and I now relate to her as to an older friend with whom I take in the ballet in winter and tennis matches in summer.

I sometimes identify myself as an artist. My work has been shown in San Francisco and New York and museums across the country. For several years I shared a studio in San Francisco with another woman artist which was fun but eventually I discovered that my work went better when I had my own studio and painted in solitude, with occasional visits from fellow artists. My sale of paintings has not contributed appreciably to my economic support--possibly because I can't bring myself to sell the ones I like. So, to put food on the table and pay the taxes, I trade in commodities, land and art for myself and 10 male clients (mostly M.D.'s who are unskilled at business.) Securing my economic and personal autonomy has been a continuous thread throughout my life.

My day begins with caring for the bulls and cows.

This takes approximately 2 hours and is repeated for 1 hour every evening. This work is very enjoyable to me as I like working with animals. Then I usually work in the garden for 2 hours which puts me in touch with another side of nature. After which I paint in the studio for 3 hours or on an "off" day do housework. By 1:00 p.m. I'm ready for the first meal of the day.

Each day a 4 hour block of time--afternoon or evening--is devoted to my investments and those of my clients; either trading, communicating with clients or studying future possibilities. This work is fascinating to me as its breadth opens up avenues through the financial world, the management world, real estate, construction, and agricultural worlds and the world art markets--Sotheby's and Parke-Bernet, etc... This division suits me fairly well--4 hours physical labor, 3 hours creative work and then 4 hours of admitted "ego-trip" exercising my wits and skills and experience to rip off the male business world. This program took 15 years to evolve starting at 18 with investments, at 25 art, and at 30 breeding bulls.

Thus I work on the average an 11 hour day, seven days a week. But since everything proceeds from my own decisions it is not oppressive or alienating. Then, too, there are changes of scene built into the work: I attend cattle shows and sales and related social events--dinners, etc. throughout the country and similarly art shows and sales and connected receptions in various cities; then there are trips to examine real estate and farm land. But for all my so called deciding and planning I think most of us have about as much control over our lives as the projectionist in his booth. He can choose to run the film or not, but can't alter the content.

In addition I ride, sail, and fly. I read non-fiction and poetry and make films and tapes and do a little work for women's liberation. But I must, as Camus says, "have inner leisure."



My social and emotional life includes my present love "B"--very desirable but, I fear, transient, and a group of old flames (divorced or widowed) who accept the fact that I can't be conned into marriage." Also 4 close women friends of long standing--2 married and 2 recently divorced--and 4 God-children. "F" lives in Los Angeles and visits me frequently since her divorce. We share interests in art and literature and have many friends in common. "B" lives in San Francisco, is also a painter and has 4 children and a ranch in Sonoma. "D" lives in Marin and we laugh at the same things. There are also some more recent friends who are fairly close.

#### Dit

I am a natural speed freak. I do many things, and I'm gradually learning to become involved in the many things I do. I live in the here and now and in the future. When I feel the need for warmth and support I have to remind myself of the good people I know and the things I am doing.

I am a single woman seeking a more fulfilling life style. I have accomplished much of what I set out to achieve in schooling and work, though I have yet to get a paying job for the non-research aspects of my speciality--urban economist. Now that I am unemployed I have the time and energy to try to create a home for myself.

I need a home for the security it provides. My home is a space where I can be myself. A home is where I can be close to and share with people. A home is where I can tie together all my scattered activities.

Living by myself was a strain because it was so difficult to be with people. When I lived alone I could feel good about being by myself if I know I'd be seeing someone or even being with a group of people later that day or even the next day. But in that suburb at least I often went for several

days without seeing people outside of work. Arrangements to see people got in the way of a spontaneous California visiting style.

Presently I live in a house with three women, four men and two or three male crashers. The three women have all moved into the house in the past three weeks, so how we will all relate to one another is still in the formative stages. Three of the men have been living there a year and seem to welcome the chance to form a new household. So far there are a couple of barriers to sharing. The man who holds the lease acts as if he has final responsibility for the house. It will take some skill and persuasion to make him realize that we are actually all sharing the responsibility. One of the women has already slept with one of the men and another fellow in the house feels heartsick and jealous. She almost moved out but luckily has decided to stay. On the camping trip this weekend she was able to reach for the support of the two other women.

This house has the potential of being a good experience. The two other women in the house are strong women whom I can relate to. And the men and I are slowly getting to know each other. I have my own room for privacy as does everyone else including the crashers. I can go downstairs anytime of the day or night to be with my housemates and whoever has dropped in. We cook excellent food, we all like to go camping, and we are slowly getting to know one another.

Next to having a home, having one close girl friend has always been important to me. My life has a definite strain and a sense of rushing from one thing to the next when I have not had a girl friend.

I have felt a lack in my life during the times when I have not been close to a man. Yet, when I have been with a man, I lived with the ever present knowledge that he and I were not made for one another. I always hoped that the thrill of being physically close will create a mutual commitment. I believed



that I would be completely fulfilled when I met a man strong enough to consume me. Yet the one time I lived with a man I could not bring myself to drop all my outside activities in order to be just with him. I continued my own existence when with a man, but I thought it was wrong. Now I want to continue my own existence and am open to meeting a man with whom I could share part of my life, but not my whole life.

This is the first time that I have not been directing my life toward a future goal: college, being self-supporting, graduate school, and finding and holding a challenging job. Now I'm unemployed and not fighting it. Perhaps my goal is to be in better touch with myself and my needs and where I am as a woman. Being a full person is a vague, amorphous, exciting goal. It allows for anything from staying in the house all day to rushing from one thing to the next with cat naps in between to get myself together. I expect, though, that I'll resume my profession, preferably being paid for it, sometime this year.

I'll try to give you some feeling for how I spend my time. I find a fast pace comfortable as long as I allow myself occasional periods of complete relaxation. Keeping busy is inherited from several generations of active, socially involved people.

Right now I'm into many new and varied things. I go off by myself to the Bay or into the sactuary of my room. I bicycle and go running two or three times a week. I work with my hands on leather and house repairs. I capture moments with my camera. I take classes in carpentry with a group of drop outs where we hang loose. I belong to a women's small group where we talk about and analyze our lives. I am in a therapy group where we try to be in touch with our personal needs and help find ways to meet them. I have just moved into a house where there are five people to know and hopefully become close to. I have a new friend who is a pleasure just to be with. I starting going camping

with my friend and my housemates. I visit a woman with two small children and take care of them when I have the time.

I am in a Breakaway class on the family where we figure out the advantages and drawbacks of single, married, and communal living. I am helping organize a new semester of Breakaway. I'm working with the woman candidate of the left coalition for the Berkeley city council. I'm in a group that meets monthly to eat and to figure out where the Women's Liberation movement is at. In addition I started working half time driving a school bus. I do about four major things a day. Before I moved, when I was inactive, I was doing one major and two minor things (like shopping) each day. I try to schedule periods of rest by myself to recuperate and to assimilate all the things I am doing. Presently this means two periods of 2-3 hours during the week plus doing something relaxing like hiking with people or bicycling for a day each weekend. The major thing which I want to find more time for in my life is more reading.

I am a lover of nature. I am a mechanical producer of products. I am an analyzer of physical objects and of group dynamics and of government and increasingly of myself. I am a mind detached from my body. I am a well functioning healthy body. (I have always tried to keep my body in good shape so that it would allow me to feel good. Now I am allowing myself to feel the fullness and strength of my body.) I am a mind and a body throbbing with sensations. I am a natural speed freak.

### Claire

My present life-style can be described in terms of the household I live in, my friendships and sources of emotional support, work, and activities of self-expression.

Household. I'm not exactly living in a family. I still think of myself as 'single' though that is



not completely accurate either. I am a part of a household, a household of six white women in their twenties and one three-year-old woman-child. (I am 28) We differ from roommates in that we are not just sharing rent till a man comes along. One of us is going with a man she has known for a long time, two of us see men every once in a while, one of us has just started a love relationship with a woman.

By living together we are able to cut expenses and this means freedom to live by doing less alienating work. One of us lives on savings (me), one works at a department store, one is on welfare, one on unemployment, one's a secretary at a hospital part time, one is looking for a job. We view jobs in this society as a way to support oneself, not a means of creativity. We all pay an equal share of rent, utilities, and food, partly because as women we feel the need to be economically independent.

Our household is a growing thing. We have only been together for three months. (For the last month and a half the mother and child have been gone so it is difficult to include how they effect, and are effected by, the group.) To build what we have has taken time and energy, and it's certainly been helpful that most of us do not have full-time jobs right now. It is also important that we are all women. This has facilitated the development of trust, respect for each other as equals, and acceptance of household jobs on a rotating basis with a more or less agreed upon standard of cleanliness. The feeling of equality may be the most satisfying thing of all. No one has been built up as a strong mother (or father) figure with others as dependents. We still come to the household with varying skills and interests. The single most important thing for the working of the house are weekly house meetings so we can deal with problems as a group.

We each have our own room, our own space, which gives us privacy. At first I felt uneasy about retiring to my room. Would the others think I was unfriendly:

It turns out that we all have and recognize this need. Although the availability of baby sitters means that the mother can get out of the house, the mother is at a disadvantage in sharing her room with her child.

We are becoming closer and closer. From sharing the painting of the apartment, to sharing food (we take turns shopping and each cook once a week), we have moved on to sharing troubles. We are fairly good at helping each other talk out our problems. For some reason it has been harder to commit ourselves to having fun together, especially in the sense of pre-setting a time. It is probably because women are used to consoling each other, not having fun together.

The household provides people and a dinner to come home to and feedback on various experiences. What then is the difference between friendships in the household and a love relationship? In a love relation one is allowed to be grumpy, silly, childish, uncivilized, ask for cuddling. I feel able to be more cranky and difficult in the house than I ever thought I could be. The household knows me well enough not to be intimidated by me (for long anyway), to know that I have weaknesses and need support, and to be able to tease me when I am being uptight. The most concrete way I feel something missing from our household is to be able to come home after a long satisfying or frustrating day and receive a huge hug, kiss and a cuddle. After all the talking and listening I do I really crave this. But we are a lot less shy about hugging and touching than we used to be. We hug when we are feeling especially happy or especially sad. I am not at all clear what the contribution of sex is, or what my sexual needs are. I do now that in the past I have confused the need for understanding and identity with the need for sex.

I feel a need to relate to children. When I am with children after a spell of not being with them a whole part of me seems to come alive. It is



because of the physicalness of the relationship, the freshness of seeing the world as a child does, the ease of giving without feeling dependent (that is if you are not a mother). I used to think I had to choose between having five children like my mother or being cut off from children. Now I know that I can relate to children without having the heavy responsibility that being a mother is for us today. To have a child now, for me, would be a cop out from trying the new things that I really want to do but which scare me; from learning what my particular strengths and contributions can be besides being a mother. Maybe I will not have children, but that would mean a radical change in my self-image. At the moment I baby-sit for a woman in my small group, and in exchange for photography lessons. The little girl of our household just came back. Exactly how much interacting this will involve is undefined.

All of us in our house support the women's movement, but one other woman and I are more active than the others who are unsure how they want to relate to the movement. This makes it more difficult for me to come home and complain or be joyous about the movement. We are planning to add semi-monthly discussion on the women's movement to the weekly house meetings.

It remains to be seen how much of a commitment to each other evolves in our house. I am beginning to see how cautious I am about each step of increased involvement and commitment. Partly it is a general fear of commitment, but a lot of it is not trusting women, and also the difficulty of going beyond a relationship of only two as a couple. We have made no specified time commitments to each other, though with one possible exception none of us are likely to be leaving soon.

Other Friends and Loves. I came to live here a year ago to work in the women's movement and also to be with N. with whom I had spent the summer. Not without anger and sadness N. and I have gradually

seen less and less of each other. I have gone through a process of learning to see N. as he is, stripped of the projections of things I wanted him to be. At this point we feel affection, concern, and pride in each other and our undertakings. We see each other once a month.

At Christmas I started going out with D., a man with whom I could share my political interests as N. was too inexperienced to do. After a month he decided he had to choose between me and another, younger, woman he was seeing--and chose her.

I have done a lot of thinking about and a wee bit of experimenting in love relationships with a woman. I see this as a chance for a relationship between equals, without rigidly defined sex roles, combining intimacy with autonomy and a sharing of the woman's movement. I have had fantasies of such a relationship with B. However, though B. sees her relationship with her boyfriend as only temporary, she is not looking for changes now.

I have been in a small group for a year now. It is a very important source of support and acceptance for me. Through the group I have learned how hard it is for me to ask for help, that help can be given, that my anger does not destroy people, nor necessarily lead to rejection. I am sometimes impatient with how slow some of the women are to make commitments to the women's movement outside the small group.

My other friends are all women in the movement. We get together around different projects, meetings, etc. This common purpose lends a quality to our relationships that I value a great deal, while the nature of the women's movement, i.e. our taking seriously the personal situation of each woman, means that I get support and feedback as we work on projects together.

Work. My work is the women's movement. I am living off savings for another year so I can be active



more or less full time. I have large blocks of time that I can commit because I have neither lover, child, nor job. It also means that I frequently go through an anxious process of reviewing what I am doing to see if it is still significant. At the moment I work on several projects which are independent of each other though the personnel do over-lap. I am in the family class, work in the office one afternoon a week, work on the speaker's bureau, take self-defense, attend mass meetings, do some speaking. I would like to be part of a work collective that can define its politics, set priorities, and relate theory and practice. I see the possibility of this in the next year. I do have meaningful work, but I sometimes lose perspective, feel overwhelmed and frustrated.

Individual self-expression. By this category I mean things I do mostly just for me. This includes keeping a journal. I write about once a week unless I am having a lot of conflicts. It helps me to get close to my feelings, take my thoughts seriously, and think, using material that is mine (as opposed to school which was merely rearranging others, mostly men's, ideas). I am just beginning photography. It is quietly exciting and calming. Self-defense is also self-expression. It means a lot to be learning to have my body serve me and to experience the integration of intellectual and physical activity that self-defense is. Sometimes I get discouraged, though, and have to force myself to continue.

Summary. Many of my needs are being met by my current life style. Economically I live comfortably, cheaply. My money will not last forever, though, and teaching jobs are hard to get now even with a degree. Housekeeping duties are at a minimum. I have solitude and friendship, easy access to people in my house, plus my own space. I have access to children without the burden of motherhood. I can arrange to have structured time and unstructured time. I have meaningful work, though it must continually be re-examined. I have ways of expressing

myself individually and relatively non-politically. What I don't have is the intimacy, commitment, and continuity of a 'primary relationship'.

I am beginning to think that it is important to view our life styles as dynamic with certain needs being more dominant at one point in time than another. Right now my autonomy, and support from women friends is more important than the intimacy of a primary relation. I think I have been spending far too much time dwelling on what I lack--reminiscent of high school and college obsessions with not having dates. I would like now to get the very most out of the autonomy I have and the possibilities of growth that will give me independence. Partly that means coming to grips with the fact that ultimately we are alone--I believe that is true--even if you have a husband, children, friends.

#### Common Themes:

#### Some Similarities and Differences in the Profiles

When we decided to write about our life styles we limited ourselves to describing what our situation is, what we put into and get out of it, and what we feel is missing. Although we each wrote independently, certain common themes appear according to whether the writer is part of a nuclear family or not. These common themes occur because whenever there exists an institution or social pattern as firmly established as is the life style of those who live within it, and also of those who dare to live outside its structure.

All four of the wife-and-mothers state that they never expected to end up with the problems of the "typical housewife". Somehow they would be different. But not being legally married or keeping their maiden names has not been enough. The fact that they have not been able to avoid these problems is not a statement of



their inadequacies, lack of will, etc. Rather it is a clear reflection of the extent to which our problems as women are inherent in our social structures, in this case the nuclear family. Young women in our country have been raised with the threat that if they are not very careful they will not get married. The experience of these women suggests that the reality behind this myth is that if a young woman is not very careful she will end up with all the problems of the wife-and-mother.

The life styles of the single women in our group developed as alternatives to the nuclear family, rather than within a societal vacuum. It is not enough that a single woman be able to conceive of an alternative to the mother/wife role in a nuclear family. She must also learn to carry it out and satisfy her emotional needs by this alternative while her own parents, brothers, friends, and strangers regard her life style as either perverse (emotional support from other women), or a temporary stage "until the right man comes along." It is difficult to take seriously roles which one makes for oneself which differ so greatly from the societal norm. Being single is a little like walking into a store with your pockets bulging with a foreign currency (female autonomy) which the store will not recognize or accept ("ain't right for a woman to be alone.")

We hesitate to use the term "single" because it reinforces the idea that non-married women are absolutely alone and this is not true. On the other hand, the non-married are "single" in that others are not as intensively involved in any life style decisions that come up.

#### Autonomy

The desire for autonomy is a major concern for all the women in our group. For the married women obligations to husband and children leave little time and space for a woman's own self-definition or development apart from these family commitments. Experimentation is difficult because it would affect others so extensively. All the married women find themselves living within an oppressive institution with people they deeply love. Clearly

the feminist consciousness of this group of married women has influenced the kind of marriages they have. The amount of struggle that that institution imposes on their lives (to lessen the burden of total child care responsibilities, to revise the traditional division of labor within the home, etc.) qualitatively affects their relationships. MARRIED WOMEN MUST CONTINUOUSLY STRUGGLE NOT TO ACCEPT ALL THE THINGS THAT MARRIAGE MEANS. They have to CONSTANTLY re-define what they will not accept in a life with a man and child, otherwise the traditional division of labor and power will develop. A good deal of strength is necessary for this constant struggle.

Several of the women refer to marriage as a power relation, especially because of their economic dependence on their husbands. To recognize this is to see through all that we have been taught about a marriage being a relationship based on mutual respect, understanding, love, etc. Failure to understand the power aspects of marriage leaves us that much more vulnerable.

Greater personal autonomy is the hoped-for advantage of a non-nuclear family life style. With no commitments to husband or children, more experimentation is possible. Single women refer to their ability to vary their daily schedules, do housework or let it go, experiment with how much and what kind of work they do, change the people they see or do not see. They are also less under the influence of men--that is in the sense of daily, person-to-person encounters.

The qualitative difference between the single and married women is that the married women are EXPECTED to do certain things, and must decide NOT to do them. Otherwise, the institution has their daily life all mapped out: laundry, cooking, child care, etc. Single women's lives are not recognized as proper, no map is laid out for them. They must decide what to do with their lives or absolutely zilch will happen. A fear of withdrawal from life was more intensely expressed in one single woman's paper than the others, but the doubts and self-criticisms of all the single women's alternative commitments were numerous. The freedom of the single women in their use of time is a good example of their autonomy. It is an autonomy which makes it possible to



direct one's own growth, experiences, relationships, and achievements. But it is also a constant and heavy responsibility to use it well.

A nuclear family is made up of a wife-mother, husband-father, and children. The one woman living with a man but without children shares problems and rewards of both the women in nuclear families and the single women. The married non-mother in our group had trouble getting out of an almost total time commitment to her husband. Like the women in nuclear families, she described the economics of her marriage as creating a power relationship. She differs from the women in nuclear families because she does not have children and thus has more time and space for herself, for developing her own self definition. She emphasizes her desire for autonomy, meaningful work, and escape from the stagnation threatened by coupledness.

#### Meaningful Work

For the more or less middle class women in our group the search for meaning is a larger problem than the search for economic subsistence--as long as they are living with their husbands. Each woman has found the traditional wife-mother role inadequate in spite of what society says it is supposed to be. The women's movement is seen as a way of building meaning into their lives. Three of the five single women of our group have jobs--the other two live off savings and a small independent income. Although this means they are economically independent from a man and have developed certain skills, their jobs are not their primary source of meaning in life. The experiences of the single woman working in a hippie store are disappointing. The hoped for autonomy of a woman working in a "counter culture" situation does not exist. This woman found herself oppressed by both chauvinist work policies and the sexist attitudes of fellow workers. The single women see the women's movement as the most probable source of meaningful work combining self-expression with contributions beyond the self. However, the absence of institutional support in most areas of their lives creates fears of lack of personal discipline.

#### Emotional Support

Having the support of a husband can offer the advantage of a socially recognized form of support, continuity over time, and the integration of sex with friendship. Each of the women refers to her husband as a good friend. They also see other women and the women's movement as important sources of support.

For single women the problem of finding emotional support is difficult, but not insolvable as is usually suggested. They find support from friendships, work relationships, and sometimes a particular member of their original nuclear family. Because these alternatives to marriage are not recognized by society, women who adopt them are thought to be rootless. Consequently, there is the tendency for women in this situation to feel they have less support than they actually do and to use past relationships or the future as points of reference--e.g. "when I become a natural healer," "when I write the definitive work", "when the household develops more commitment".

#### Loneliness and Isolation

The isolation of women in nuclear families from each other, and from adults in general, is a major theme in each of the statements. Women are isolated by their physical separation--each in her own house or apartment with husband and children. They are isolated by their feelings that the routine of their lives leaves them little to share with others. But most of all, women in nuclear families are isolated by the societal expectation that their husbands are to be the source of their emotional support. Other sources of support are considered a threat to the marriage. Discussing the problems of a marriage with others is viewed as a betrayal or invasion of privacy. The married woman without children finds herself isolated from others because she is part of a couple.

If autonomy is the hoped-for prize of rejecting the nuclear family, loneliness is the risk. It is harder for a woman than a man to initiate relationships, and it is problematic to socialize with couples as a single



Each single woman also has to ask herself (constantly) how real is the alternative source of support she has created but that society refuses to recognize? Undefined by society, these relationships must sometimes bear the strain of "proving" commitment. The more one has no commitment to see other people, the greater the possibility that one will see no one that day (hour, week). That possibility is quite real to single women until they overcome the inertia and create an alternative life style with others. While stability may not be missed as long as they are experiencing growth, each woman has to deal with periodic loneliness asking herself if she can stand this and not cop out while trying to create an alternative to the nuclear family.

Such is an inkling of the freedom, fear, and loneliness of the single woman, and the stability, oppressiveness, and risk of stagnation of the nuclear family.

### Children

Whatever struggles or doubts a man-wife or woman-woman relationship may involve, the bond between a mother and child is a VERY real one. The mother-child relationship usually begins with the physical intimacy of pregnancy, birth, and nursing, and is continued by the child's absolute dependence on the mother for her/his physical needs, protection, emotional needs, and much of his education. The experience of motherhood can also be alienating, because when the responsibility of child care and growth is totally assumed by the mother, it consumes all her energy, isolating her from her peers and preventing her from achieving in other areas. Child care thus becomes an overwhelming responsibility. Moreover, with middle class norms demanding so much of a mother to insure her child's healthy development, it is little wonder that the mothers state that their husbands are actively involved in caring for their children. But in spite of this, child care still means expensive control of their daily lives.

All the women in our group shared the social conditioning to expect motherhood, indeed, to regard it as essential to their fulfillment as woman. The married woman without children has to be able to reject particularly strong social pressures to have children. Single

Women must struggle against the idea that the only way to fulfill a woman's need for physical and emotional fulfillment is through motherhood.

A single woman found that communal raising of a woman child gave her an opportunity to be with a child, to see the world anew, to love the child, etc., without becoming a mother. A mother helped organize a day-care center which made it possible for her child to enjoy a sense of community with the neighborhood and also for her to feel less isolated from other women. The most sensible solution for single women who want to relate to children and mothers seems to be that of sharing the joy and responsibility of child care.

### Sexuality and Bodily Awareness

Another aspect of loneliness which the single woman mentioned was a lack of sexual and non-sexual physical contact. Since our society labels most touching as sexual, and defines the only acceptable sexuality as that between a man and a woman, single women must either struggle against these taboos or suffer a very real loss.

Body awareness involves not only a physical, and/or sexual relationship outside oneself, but also an understanding of the capabilities of one's physical self. The married women acquired this awareness largely through their physical contact with their husbands, their pregnancies, their children, and found other physical exercise less essential to their daily lives. The single women had more sporadic sexual relations, and found it necessary to acquire this awareness through dance, hiking, self-defense, and the formation of relationships which are at least partly physical, but non-consciously sexual. These relationships, often with dear friends, still are a source of confusion. The single women ask: "Where does affection end and sexuality begin? What is sexuality?" Within a marriage women are less likely to ask this because whatever they physically do with their husbands is societal within (if not legal sanctioned!) by their marriage.

### Beyond the Nuclear Family

Three of the mothers have expressed plans to go beyond the



nuclear family. They are involved in shared child care arrangements, shared dining, and grocery shopping. There is talk of buying an apartment building. All of the women are cautious, however, out of knowledge of what other communes have experienced, out of the heavy responsibility of making decisions that shape a child.

Each of the single women sees herself as building a "home" for herself--a place to be at ease and have spontaneous access to people. None of the single women lives completely alone and two are presently living in collective situations. Single women, as opposed to women in nuclear families, are allowed more choice as to how much home vs. public life they have. The traditional choice is to emphasize the home. There is some indication that women outside of nuclear families are still tempted to try to work out the problems of society by improving their own home lives. On the other hand, it may also be difficult for a woman to take seriously her needs for a home for herself because she has always made a home for others.

### Conclusion

It has often been said that when people are totally oppressed and see no possibility for a better tomorrow they will not rebel. Only when hope exists can there be a revolution. We women experience a new hope for a better way to live, for we can visualize motherhood not being an alienating experience. We can see that family life does not have to be predetermined, but can be created from the individual needs and personalities of those within it, with flexible roles and sharing of household responsibilities. We are building toward a time when women can relate to each other on all and any levels without the shackle of taboo and guilt; when women and men can relate without using each other as a cheap source of labor or for economic or total emotional support. We hope the children will not grow up having their roles predetermined for them, that their imaginations will not be stifled by social ostracism and economic oppression, and that instead they will be able to choose from a variety of familial forms or create new ones without

suffering too strongly as we have from that creation. In short, we hope that relationships will not be structured by oppressive institutions, but that the needs of the people involved will structure those relationships.

We are beginning to build for this future. We compiled our thoughts and expressions so that if you are doing the same thing, you would not feel so alone; if you are not and want to, you could see it is possible. ♀

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