1975

Shared themes in separation and divorce in young women familiar with the women's movement

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SHARED THEMES IN SEPARATION AND DIVORCE
IN YOUNG WOMEN FAMILIAR WITH
THE WOMEN'S MOVEMENT

DAVID MARK ZWERCLING

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SHARED THEMES IN SEPARATION AND DIVORCE

IN YOUNG WOMEN FAMILIAR WITH

THE WOMEN'S MOVEMENT

by

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INTRODUCTION

This thesis employs a psychohistorical approach based on interviews, to study some shared themes in separation and divorce in a group of young women familiar with ideas of the Women's Movement. Briefly, the thesis is organized as follows. First, I suggest some ways of thinking about divorce which will not be used here to any substantial degree. Next, I discuss the psychohistorical approach in general and how I use it in this study. Then there is a presentation of the results of the study, beginning with the interviews themselves, moving to a discussion of some of the shared themes that emerged from the interviews, and finally to a consideration of some connections with wider and more theoretical ideas.

One character of American society today, often remarked upon by just about everybody, is the high divorce rate. Armchair philosophers, thinking about the present situation, point to societal factors such as the legal changes making divorce easier to obtain, of the easing of sexual mores and morality which enable some people to consider marriage no longer in the same binding terms that used to prevail—even if most marriage vows still include "till death us do part." In a vague way, many people feel that there is a kind of
revolution going on—a "sexual revolution"—and that other contemporary developments in our society are probably related to it. Examples would be the recent widespread increase in the use of drugs like marijuana, and some of the many movements that began or intensified in the 1960's—the antiwar movement, the women's liberation movement, the gay liberation movement; encounter groups, meditation, and so on.

Within the field of psychiatry, there are a number of ways of thinking which are, or I think might be applied to the issue of divorce. I mention some of them here only to indicate that I do not plan to consider the issue in any of these ways. One recent study compared divorced females with a central group of married females and found that "divorced female probands were significantly more likely to have a psychiatric disease (past or present) than were the married female controls," based on a history of affective disease or a history of having been treated by a psychiatrist as an outpatient. The study concluded that "psychiatric illness is probably a significant cause of marital breakdown." This study is an example of psychiatric thinking which focusses on intrapsychic causes, or at least intrapsychic contributory factors, for life events. My general sense is that psychoanalytic thinking about divorce would probably focus on unconscious factors, such as the continuing effect of early parent-child relations, within one or both marriage partners. In The Person, Lidz in talking about possible marriage difficulties considers neurotic motivations
to marriage and neurotic choices of partner, impulsive marriages, and mutual personality incompatibilities, among other factors. A family structural approach such as that expounded by Minuchin would consider issues like the boundaries between the married partners and each of their families of origin, and later the boundaries between the partners and their children. A transactional analysis approach might look at the combinations of interactions between each partner's internal "parent", "adult", and "child." In terms of the effect of divorce on the female, a review of epidemiological studies of suicide attempters by Weissman states: "These studies that do use general population comparisons show an excess of separated, divorced persons among both partners among suicide attempters . . . The high number of divorcees is consistent with the clinical observations that attempts take place in the context of interpersonal disorganization and a breakdown of personal resources." A British study, analyzing self-reported health experience in an interview survey of 150 women who petitioned for divorce during a three-year period, found that "the majority of respondents experienced a deterioration of health, with an emphasis on symptoms that are presumptively related to stress. The timing of the health effects suggests that the maximum disturbance is associated with the latter stages of marriage and the separation rather than with the divorce . . . It is suggested that the findings support the notion that morbidity is causally related to transition from married status."
THE PSYCHOHISTORICAL APPROACH

Having referred to several lines of approach, I will not employ, I will describe the one that will be used: the psychohistorical. Some of its chief exponents are Robert J. Lifton—my advisor for this study and the psychohistorian whose thinking has most influenced me—Kenneth Keniston, and Robert Coles. They draw on the thinking of Freud, Erikson, and other psychoanalysts, and on a variety of thought in psychology, philosophy, sociology, social psychology, literature, and popular culture. They are concerned with felt experience within the individual; with forces and influences in the society that impinge on the individual and on certain groups of individuals; and with the interface of universality (that which is related to the psychobiological questions of all men in all historical epochs), specific cultural emphasis and style (as evolved by a particular people...), and recent and contemporary historical influences (the part of the trinity most likely to be neglected in psychological work)." Many psychohistorians focus on "shared themes," which entails "working with groups of people who undergo an experience in common at same 'psychohistorical interface'—that is, who in some way can be demonstrated to affect, and be affected by, the historical process."

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Lifton has studied and worked with groups including survivors of the atomic bomb in Hiroshima and Vietnam veterans; Keniston has studied groups of aberrated and radical American youth; Coles has worked with groups including Black children who integrated schools in the South, and migrants, sharecroppers, and mountaineers. To say that these groups of people "undergo an experience in common at some 'psychohistorical interface'" does not necessarily imply that all people in the "group" conceive of themselves as members of that group; in fact, the main person who conceives of them as a group may be the psychohistorical investigator himself. Another way of conceptualizing the group is "groups of relatively ordinary people rendered extraordinary by certain kinds of psychological and historical experience."

The psychohistorical investigator's tools are basically (I should say 'hopefully') a fairly broad social science and psychological background, taped interviews with some members of the group he wishes to investigate, and his own thoughts, ranging from clinically oriented perceptions and associations to more general and frankly speculative ideas about the group, and its interface and interplay with the trinity of levels outlined above. Lifton says his "own way has to do with certain impressions derived mostly from immediate psychological encounters with certain groups of people, and then some extension of that, calling upon Freudian and other psychological theory in a critical way."

No statistical or other hard research techniques are employed.
For example, the investigator usually uses mainly his own informed intuition to ensure a reasonable bet that the persons he selects to interview do indeed share certain psychohistorical themes--his intuition, and then what comes from the interviews. Thus, there are empirical data, but there also is "a leap of imagination." There is a big difference between the kinds of evidence and the levels of fact that can be expected in psychohistorical investigation, and that in physical science or experimental psychological research. But "depth-psychological work is simply not, in its very nature, comparably precise in concepts or observations, nor comparably susceptible to proof or disproof. It is radically less predictive . . ." And, "one of the criteria by which one judges psychoanalysis" (and I would say psychohistorical work) is its ability to make sense out of a whole realm of experience. This point of making sense out of experience is very different from narrow verifiability, and is much closer to what happens in a novel. It becomes an issue of the capacity of a point of view to illuminate experience." (Italics in original.)

The group I have selected to investigate consists of young women in their 20's and 30's, recently separated or divorced, who are familiar with ideas of the Women's Movement. I thought this group would be interesting to study because one can look into their inner experiences of separation and divorce, and do some thinking about their interplay with the
levels of the universal psychobiological: male-female relations and marriage (or coupling relationships, to make it more universal than marriage); the cultural: American way of marriage and male-female relations and roles; and the contemporary historical: recent changes and developments in male-female relations, some of the recent social-cultural movements alluded to earlier, and changing outlooks and lifestyles generally in contemporary America. The Women's Movement, I know from reading and personal friendships and experience with many members and sympathizers, exerts a powerful influence on the thinking of some of them. By interviewing a group of separated and divorced women familiar with the Women's Movement—their familiarity ranging from living in a university community where discussion is widespread of many of its ideas, to friendships with active members of the Movement, to active participation in it—I thought I could get some understanding of a particular psychohistorical interface.

Lifton and other psychohistorians believe that the investigator should make clear where he stands on the issues and themes he is investigating. No pretense is made of objective neutrality. Lifton refers to this as making clear one's "advocacy." For example, in his work with Vietnam veterans, he was an active participant in rap groups of anti-war veterans, and he conceives of himself as "actively involved in oppositional political struggles." Lifton believes that there is nothing new or surprising about advocacy; that Freud himself had a "subversiveness" that "lay in his insistence
upon radical truth (mostly about our sexual natures) and radical honesty in investigating and reporting that truth. His advocacy concerning sexuality itself was by no means that of simple license or even of 'sexual revolution', but rather the freeing of sexual feeling from the repressive mechanisms that, in his judgment, so impaired psychic and physical health; and more broadly, the struggle against the inordinate hypocrisies, sexual and otherwise, of his time and place.  

At the same time, however, Lifton is by no means himself advocating an uncritical merger with the subjects he is investigating. "I have come to see advocacy itself as having a necessary ethical and conceptual place in the healing professions. And in my . . . study of Vietnam veterans, I have both joined their crusade against the war as a way of continuing my own, and stood back from it and then sufficiently to interpret their psychological experiences. I view this dialectic of advocacy and detachment (. . . Buber's distance and relation) to have great importance even in the most 'clinical' of situations."  

In terms of my own 'advocacy', I am obviously not an active participant or member of the Women's Movement. However, I strongly believe that many of its ideas and goals are extremely important. That undoubtedly has had some effect on the themes I will be emphasizing and the significances I will be pointing to. In addition, I can mention at least three personal reasons for my interest in the subject being investigated. One, I came to medical school with
plans to become a psychiatrist, after having studied polit-
ical science and history in college and obtained a law
degree. I remain very interested in the social and polit-
ical as well as the personal and psychological. Two,
throughout the past decade or so, I have been a participant,
from peripheral to fairly actively involved, in a number of
movements. These have included civil rights, the peace move-
ment, and the political primary campaigns of Senators Eugene
McCarthy and George McGovern on the one hand, and T-groups,
encounter groups, and non-verbal improvisational movement
groups on the other hand. Three, a number of friends of mine
have become involved in the Women's Movement. I wanted better
to understand it, and them. Largely as a result of my involve-
ment in this present investigative experience, I have become
interested in an analogous or complementary men's movement,
and am considering joining or beginning a men's rap group.
Despite these "directions of advocacy" of my own, I think
the necessary standing back and detachment referred to above
have been present.
PROCEDURE USED IN THIS STUDY

A more detailed description of my research procedure will now be presented. First, I familiarized myself with the ideas and feelings of the Women's Movement and its members. This involved reading fiction (mainly Jong's Fear of Flying and Piercy's Small Changes), non-fiction, and articles in newspapers and popular magazines; and many conversations with women friends active or interested in the Women's Movement and its ideas. Some of the reading was suggested by these friends; other reading was selected based on my own developing sense of what members of the Women's Movement are interested in and talking about at this time.

Next, I familiarized myself with psychohistorical work and concepts, through reading (mainly the work of Lifton) and conversations with Robert J. Lifton. I also concentrated on the ideas of John Bowlby and Ernest Becker. Bowlby's thinking on the importance of the early attachment relationship between mother and child as a model for future intimate relationships seemed very important for a study of marriage, separation and divorce. Particularly important, I thought, is his basic contention that the attachment relationship is the source both of the child's security and of his (her) base from which she explores and grows in autonomy. These two central themes, will be returned to (and explored
from!) again and again in this paper. Ernest Becker, until his death in 1974, Professor in the Department of Political Science, Sociology, and Anthropology, Simon Fraser University, Canada, originally a cultural anthropologist, was profoundly influenced by the thought of Freud, Otto Rank, Norman O. Brown, and Soren Kierkegaard, among others. I found his *The Denial of Death* valuable as a brilliant presentation of what could broadly be called the existential and humanistic psychiatric-psychological viewpoint. To quote one review of the book, it is "a profound synthesis of theological and psychological insights and man's nature and his incessant efforts to escape the burden of life--and death..." I thought that one important reason—probably a "universal psychobiological" reason—for marriage might be precisely that it is, in part, a very powerful way of dealing with and escaping from that "burden of life--and death." These ideas will also be discussed in this paper.

I developed my interview form based on my evolving thinking influenced, to a considerable extent, by the sources just described. The interview form appears as an appendix to this paper. In general, the interviews, all of which were taped and then transcribed verbatim, were informed by Lifton's method of a "continuing dialectic between structure (careful formulation and check list of areas to be probed) and spontaneity..." I structured the interview basically along two lines. First, I wanted a fairly free-ranging and, to some extent, loosely chronological account of the woman's
experiences in her family of origin; her relationship with
her husband, both before and after the marriage; the sepa-
ration experience and divorce, if divorced; her present
thoughts and ways of living since the separation and divorce,
and into the future. Second, I wanted throughout to concen-
trate on certain themes I thought might be among the crucial
ones--while being open to modify the direction of the inquiry
based on themes and feelings emerging from the interviews.
These themes include, among others, the woman's experience
of security on the one hand, and room for growth and auton-
omy on the other hand, in her early, later and future inti-
mate relationships; her early experience of her mother and
father as people, of their relationship, and her own early
expectations of marriage; her early and later experience
and thoughts about male and female roles in relationships
and in the world; her experiences, observed and participated
in, of self-assertion and the expression and handling of
anger; and other thoughts and feelings bearing generally on
her image of herself and her place in relationships and in
the wider world.

Lifton says that "crucial to this method is the in-
vestigator's own psychological and moral confrontation with
that which he investigates. That is, I have been aware of
myself in all of my work both as an investigator who observes
and as a person who acts upon, and is acted upon by, the
other person in the interview . . . and the social environ-
ment in which the research is done." In my case, interviews
with all the subjects except one were done in their homes; the other was in my home. I identified myself as a Yale medical student interested in divorce and in the Women's Movement. The fact that I am a man, and my affiliation with Yale, in some cases probably created at least an initial constraint on the degree to which the woman felt at ease in being open with me. However, I think in general that that initial constraint was diminished if not totally overcome by my familiarity with the Women's Movement; by my being friends with the contacts who gave me their names (I told all the subjects who their contact was); and by the open and at times back-and-forth, rather than detached and neutral, way in which I conducted the interviews.

About a dozen potential subjects were located by two friends of mine, both extremely active in the Women's Movement in New Haven. At this point, it should be stated that the Movement in New Haven includes many aspects: informal to more formally organized consciousness raising and rap groups; various activities, from discussions to poetry readings to dances with a women's rock band, at the New Haven Women's Center and elsewhere; and other more or less closely affiliated groups and institutions including day-care centers and a feminist credit union. Some of these other groups and institutions are not restricted to women, and see themselves primarily as being affiliated with what may be loosely termed the counter-culture, or better alternative culture network in New Haven. From these potential subjects I arranged to
to have interviews with six; a seventh subject was a friend of mine—a very casual friend with whom I had spent a total of several hours on a few occasions prior to the interviews. As discussed earlier, these seven women ranged widely in their familiarity with and involvement in the Women's Movement, but all had at least a substantial interest in and understanding of its ideas. Five of the seven are divorced; two are separated, one with definite plans for divorce and the other without such plans at this time. In most cases the divorce or separation was within six months or so prior to the interviews, but in two cases the divorce had occurred about three years ago. There were two interviews of about 1-1/2 hours each for five of the subjects. For two subjects, there was only one interview, in one case about two hours long and in the other about three hours.

A final word about the interviews may be in order before proceeding to the substance of them. What I obtained was each woman's own view of her experiences, thoughts and feelings, past, present and future. In no case did I talk with the former husband or anyone else about those experiences; I was interested in the woman's "selective personal narrative or 'myth'" rather than in any verifiable 'facts.' Also, due to having only three hours with each subject, and possessing almost no information about her other than what I learned from the interviews (and what could be observed from things like the way she furnished her apartment), I necessarily have had to do more inferring and guessing than
would, say a psychoterapist or perhaps an extremely close friend. The Women's Movement, like any fairly well organized body of ideas and attitudes, contains many ready-made, sometimes polemical explanations for a variety of phenomena, especially those relating to the relationships between women and men. Most of the time, I had a strong sense that most of each subject's responses were from the heart, and not a repetition of stock responses (one subject volunteered the information that she was not interested in "throwing any jargon" at me). However, at times I felt the need to use critical judgement in trying to differentiate between levels of accuracy in the subject's description of her own inner thoughts and feelings. Finally, as one subject said at the end of her interviews:

I've thought a lot about how I reconstruct history. I know what I'm telling you now is different from what I'd tell you about the same events two years from now. The selection of what I'm telling you says something about me now.

Her comments underline, I think, the gist of what has been said about the kind of material I have sought in this study. What I have studied is the felt experiences of a particular group of women and their interface with some wider cultural and historical currents, at this time and place.

The rest of this paper has three main parts. First, I will present my condensation (my selective narrative of their "selective personal narrative") of the substance of each women's interviews. There will be liberal use of verbatim
quotation, except that changes in all identifying details have been made to protect confidentiality (that holds for all references to and quotations from any subject).

Second, I will discuss some of the significant shared themes that seemed to emerge from the interviews, referring to material from all of the subjects (although not all of them in regard to any one theme). My criteria for a theme's having the status of 'shared theme' is that it seems to be important for at least a good number of the women, or that it seems to be a useful way to conceptualize the experience of at least a good number of them. Third, I will discuss some wider implications of these experiences and themes for, and their relationships with, some wider cultural currents and theoretical ideas.

The Interviews

Kelly

Kelly is now 26. She was married for five and a half years. A few months prior to my interviews with her—on the day that she took her Law School Aptitude Test—she moved out of the apartment she had been sharing with her husband Jack. She has not lived with him since, and recently took the initial steps toward obtaining a divorce. It can be stated here that Kelly's contact with the Women's Movement has been restricted to a relatively small amount of reading and to friendships with women, most of them also limited in their contact with the Movement, who have come to feel similarly to Kelly on many issues.

She grew up the oldest of four children in an extremely
conservative, middle class suburb of Charleston, South Carolina. She attended public schools within walking distance of her home, then a college nearby which she views as having been more of a finishing school than a center of higher learning. She met Jack after graduating from high school, saw him sporadically for two years, married, left college and moved with him to Boston.

Kelly describes her mother as "very bright, attractive, young," but also as "an incredibly frustrated woman and very frightened person who is very middle class--very concerned with what other people will think, terrified that other people will criticize her."

Her mother was pregnant with Kelly when she and Kelly's father married; Kelly views that as an important reason for their marriage. Her mother has told her, "you don't know what it's like to do something wrong and pay for it the rest of your life."

Her mother dropped out of college after two years to get married, never finished her B.A., and never worked until a year ago. Her life centered around the home, except for some charitable activities. "Her best friends were close by until recently; she didn't go out very often to see people." Kelly remembers that she was very generous to needy people and provided a good model in that regard. She still helps take care of a now retired maid they had for several years; Kelly is quite proud of her mother for "standing in line to get her food stamps and arguing with social workers for her."

Kelly says she does not remember many particulars of
her early interaction with her mother, except for some warm scenes like Sunday evenings when the whole family would eat dinner and watch television together in the parents' bedroom. At this point, she mainly remembers negative influences from her mother. For example, her mother was "ridiculously modest" and told her nothing about sexual things, menstruation, and so forth. "I had to learn my image of myself from my mother. I felt embarrassed." Later, her parents overrode her and Jack's ideas about their wedding ceremony. "It was a very nice wedding, but it didn't have anything to do with me or Jack. It was just my mother plugging into social norms."

Kelly describes her father as also a frustrated person. He had wanted to become a teacher, but for financial reasons dropped his educational plans and worked in a drugstore, "which he hated." She remembers him as "hard to reach, introverted, self-centered." Their relationship was marked by what Kelly describes as coercive tactics by her father. For example, he disapproved of Jack when they were going together before their marriage. Kelly remembers her father threatening to take her out of college in order to induce her to stop seeing Jack. Once, "he drove up to pick me up and take me home. My parents just about drove me nuts that year. It was me on one side and them on the other, screaming."

Such parental control was not exercised as strongly on Kelly's brother as it was on her and her two sisters. "When we were children, he was treated differently by Dad. He was never spanked or punished, but we were. He made us go to bed
earlier than him, even though he was younger than we. My father always wanted a boy from the beginning."

On the other hand, there were some nice times with her father, together with the rest of the family. Mainly, Kelly thinks she derived a sense of security from him.

In thinking about her parents' relationship with each other, Kelly focuses on their fighting: "When I was ten or eleven I told my father, 'I never want to get married because you and mother fight all the time and I don't want to live that way.'" And on their lack of communication: things festered for a while, then exploded; "they never talked about unpleasant things;" as far as Kelly knows, her parents have never celebrated their wedding anniversary, because of the shame involved in her mother's being pregnant before wedlock.

Kelly loved Jack in part because he was completely different from anyone else I'd ever known. I married him to get out of my life in Charleston, where I saw absolutely no possibility of living at all. When I thought about my future, it was like a blank wall in front of me. I had no conception of where I was going to go at all. It was like death, it was like trying to face death, because the life there that I saw people trying to live didn't mean anything to me at all. It seemed to me that they were dead in a way. Jack took me to a different kind of life, different kind of people, different ways of thinking. I would never be where I am now if it hadn't been for him.

The wedding was unpleasant: Kelly wanted a "nice, short, inexpensive dress," but her mother insisted on a "satin dress with a train, and a lace veil;" it was in June, "the hottest day of the year, and I never felt so ugly in my life." However, right after the wedding she moved with him to Boston, and soon left for ten "great, terrific" months in Europe. In
addition to this much more open and exciting life, Kelly felt "support, unqualified love for the first time in my life from Jack. We dealt with each other openly. I learned to be more immediate with my feelings."

Looking back on it, the problems in the marriage seem to have been inherent in a structure where "part of me wants to have a man around who is willing and capable of taking care of me." Jack "relished the fatherly role that I wanted to put him into." Along with that was a situation in which she felt "a lot of the rules in the relationship were made by him. I always thought it was someone else's arrangement I was having to conform to--like with my father at home."

In addition, I'm a very ambitious person. I had to turn to men to supply those needs. I always felt that the men I had relationships with had to be really successful, because as a woman, I'd have kids, I wasn't going to be able to have a career. My husband would have to succeed for both of us. I had to find some superman to give me some identity of my own.

When she decided she wanted to go back and complete her B.A., she felt Jack's reaction to be that "I should be satisfied with my secretarial job." He was getting his Ph.D. at the time. A further restricting kind of feeling was that "he had a more enclosed view of marriage. I started wanting to see friends by myself, but he thought a husband and wife should be everything to each other."

In short, Kelly had left a confining environment and grown in her relationship with Jack, but she had begun to chafe against new constraints. Many of the constraints were
in part produced by her own needs in relationships with men, but those needs were now changing.

He was frustrated with me. I was moving in new directions. He kept criticizing me and trying to rearrange me to be a better wife. It conflicted with my trying to become a better person.

In this regard, Kelly met another man who "believed what I was saying about myself, that I should go back to school."

Everyone else was treating me the same as when I'd left Charleston. No one would acknowledge my perceptions of myself as correct. There was a gap between what I thought was real and what others thought was real. I was miserably unhappy.

She saw this man occasionally for several months, as she gradually developed a desire to separate from Jack. When she did move out, it was not to be with the other man--whom she had stopped seeing--but because

I was feeling more and more that there are a lot of things that I want to teach myself, and I want to be alone when I do it. I've never been on my own. I had a sheltered family life, college was protective, Jack took care of me, in an overwhelming way at times. I've never had the opportunity to face things by myself ... the scared part of myself that wanted to settle down and be taken care of by a man--finally that part just sort of snapped.

At first, just after separating, Kelly and Jack saw each other up to several times a week. She still loved him (and still feels she does); she just needed to develop on her own. Gradually they saw each other less, but often it was hard to stay away: "We helped each other through a lot of hard times, so there was an impulse to reach out." One thing that made it easier to stay away was that there was a lot of anger, especially in Jack. "He was really furious. It became hard for us to be together because he was so angry. He said
incredible things." Over a few months, as their contacts decreased, sadness replaced the anger:

The time we were together suddenly seemed so far away, hazy. I felt sad—almost as though both of us were dead. My husband doesn't exist any more; he's just gone. And I feel a certain distance between myself now and even a few months ago—things have changed rapidly.

Kelly felt the impact of her aloneness. Having left Jack,

it was like someone pulled out all my insides and there's nothing there but this big gaping hole. That's a really terrifying feeling. Not wanting to go to bed at night, and turning out the light—because you're afraid that when the lights go out, you go out too.

But she increasingly developed confidence in her ability to take care of herself.

I've been on my own now for a while. Things I didn't used to think I could do alone, things I used to turn to him with—I've been doing them alone, like writing my applications to law schools. It's a lot easier to think about being alone now. I've had a little bit of success.

In turn, her feeling of having a "gaping hole" inside her has evolved:

I sort of drop things down every now and then to see when they'll hit bottom. They didn't used to hit the bottom. Now there's sort of an echo—a little splash—there's something I'm beginning to build, there's something in there.

Looking into the future, Kelly thinks about her career. "I really want to be a lawyer, a whole lot. That is the next phase, law school."

I would like to be a capable person that people can turn to for help. My profession is helping people in difficult situations. I've always been very shy and quiet, not very confident. I'm learning not to be so retiring, that I have things to say.
She also thinks a lot about her relationships. "I want to love a maximum number of people in my life, men and women. There are different ways of doing that. I don't know very many of those ways, and I want to learn more." She does know that she wants to "try hard not to clutch at the men I know, either friends or lovers . . . it will take a while to learn how to do things differently."

An interesting example of how Kelly has begun to do things differently happened recently around her oral exam for her B.A. The professors involved, all men, changed the date of the exam twice because of their scheduling difficulties. Kelly was exasperated. A woman friend, wishing her luck, ended with "just remember to smile--it will get you a long way." Instead, Kelly refused to take the exam on the day it had recently been changed to, and insisted on a date mutually agreeable to the professors and herself. She was quite proud of this self-assertive break with her former way of doing things.

At this point, Kelly does not know whether or not she will eventually remarry, and whether or not she will ever have children. She may live with roommates, with friends, by herself, or with a man. The important thing for now is her own continued growth. "I'd like to feel I was always moving, not stagnating as a person, always finding out new things about myself, getting to be better and better at who I am."
Kate

Kate, now in her mid-thirties, was married for thirteen years. She began the process of separation about two years before her divorce, which was final three months before my interviews with her.

With her older sister, younger brother, and parents, she grew up in the suburbs of New York, then Philadelphia, the choice of locations based to a considerable extent on the quality of the public school systems. Her parents are both Spanish. Highly educated and politically "very left", they emigrated to this country because they did not approve of France, and because neither could be employed any longer without signing loyalty oaths, which they would not do.

My mother is extremely vigorous and determined to the point of being dogmatic. She got a Ph. D. in chemistry and was one of a very few women in Spain who got one at that time. She did it because boy, no one's going to put her down or tell her what to do. Need I say more? She has very strong feminist views, always has. She grew up taken care of by a nursemaid, and all that kind of thing, but she broke out of that, I think just by determination. When she came to the United States, she was pregnant, she didn't know English--she never did get back into her profession. She had a lot of latent bitterness about that. She still lives by being very brisk and matter of fact about everything. She has very little tolerance for people of having feelings, she denies the fact that she has any. If I or other family members express any bad feelings, she says, "Oh don't be ridiculous, pull yourself together."

Her mother, like Kelly's, had limited her activities outside the home to charitable and other community
functions. However, she got another (American) B.A. and M.A. when Kate was in high school, returned to work, and has been an ambitious research scientist ever since. "I don't think she's a very happy person, but she's a very high achiever."

Kate feels that her mother's denial of feelings, "that denial of my perceptions, was very damaging to me. I grew up denying what I perceived as bad in my relationships with other people, and I think that had a lot to do with the way my marriage progressed."

In her relationship with her mother, she remembers fighting a lot. "Either you submitted and became nothing, or you fought back...I would get very upset and mad, but feel helpless. She has a tendency to make people feel helpless because she's so strong."

Kate describes her father as having been "a neutral person." "He was always there, always kind, but he never said much." He too did not show his feelings; "I don't remember him acknowledging much feeling even when his brother was killed or his mother died." Kate remembers interacting with her father mainly in activities like making a crystal radio and learning how to drive, and in family activities.

Kate's family did provide a secure base for her in some ways. Immigrants with no relatives, and few friends here for many years, "we did a lot together as a family...for the most part it was just us. We really were a nuclear family."
Of her parents' marriage, Kate emphasizes a few points. They were physically affectionate with each other; she thinks they had an active sex life, which "dissolved a lot of frictions" between them. They never used to fight openly with each other, except in political arguments. Recently they have been fighting more, which Kate thinks is due partly to a long buildup of suppressed anger at each other. Perhaps the point Kate emphasizes most strongly is that her mother, while "a feminist with respect to the world," made the adjustments in the marriage, like when he decided to move. She went along, she never said "I want to do this, let's talk about it." She believed that it is the wife who accommodates, and does it gracefully and well, that you make the best of the situation. But I think she resented it underneath. She resents the fact that she gave up a lot of her professional life; she didn't need to.

Kate describes herself as a child as "tomboyish and hoydenish." With her sister or best friend, she explored, played actively outdoors; "we never played with dolls, we never played house."

We were encouraged not to be little girlish. We never wore dresses, only pants, except when we had to, like in school. We were allowed to get dirty. We were brought up progressively. No assumptions were made about being feminine. On the contrary, squeamishness—the little girlish feminine thing—that was very bad. I was curious about nature, I had bug collections, worms. I was self-sufficient, encouraged to improvise, to know how to make do.

A caveat to this was that "I was encouraged to be independent, but the reason I could be given a lot of freedom was that I was so self-controlled that my parents
were quite sure I would never do anything wrong." Though Spanish, her parents were Protestant; she grew up with a sense that one is responsible for one's actions and that there was such a thing as sin and transgression, even if not purgatory.

Kate always assumed she would get married, but that was never a career goal. For eight or ten years, I wanted to become an anthropologist. It was well and good if I married in the course of that, but I was scornful of people who thought that marriage was what women did. I wasn't going to be like that. I was not interested in being like the girls in my high school group who married off after high school and had two kids by age twenty and settled in. At Smith College, I was excited about my options.

But then, "I latched onto Hal (her husband-to-be) right away freshman year. I'm still not sure why I did that."

He was strong, determined, well-directed. He knew exactly what he wanted to do. I started modifying my goals to fit in with his. He never asked, and it never occurred to me not to do that. We decided to marry. I had thought I would be a famous anthropologist, but since he would be going to medical school, I wouldn't be going off to exotic lands. I had been interested in anthropology for ten years, but I changed my major to economics because I knew I would be able to get a good job making good money so I could put Hal through medical school...

At Smith, no one cared. I could have used some advice. I remember one talk I heard there titled "The View from the Kitchen Sink", about how we needed a good liberal education for our women so we could think rich thoughts as we looked out the kitchen window...

I did OK in economics for a while, but then I flunked a course...

Kate finished college, they married, and she went to work to support him.

I'd felt all along that his drive to be a doctor was stronger than mine to be an anthropologist or whatever. And I believed in what he wanted to do. I was willing to support him, to think that a worthy goal of my life was to be his handmaiden.
This way of viewing things affected many decisions, such as their living close to Hal's medical school rather than to her job. She started developing resentment at the sacrifices she was making, especially as her husband spent more and more time on his education, then medical training, and less and less with her, except for vacations which always were pleasurable.

I guess my denying my feelings, having them denied... if I had listened to my gut responses, accepted them as valid...I should have gotten out, but it never occurred to me. You make the best of things; you made your bed, now you lie in it, that's what life's all about.

Kate had begun to derive much satisfaction from her job, when Hal got an internship in another city. "I didn't want to go, but it never occurred to me to say, 'hell no, I won't go, you can get an internship here.'" They moved, she had two children, felt "forcibly retired" from another job she had begun to enjoy, felt increasingly "cooped up", resentful, and depressed. These feelings intensified when Hal finished his surgical training and, contrary to Kate's expectations, things did not get better. He spent even less time with her, "he was not even off every other weekend, since he didn't trust his partner to take care of his patients."

It was at this time, now in New Haven, that Kate began to get interested in the Women's Movement. "I started, typically for me, by reading, reading everything I could get my hands on. Shocks of recognition hit me one after the other. I found I was not the only person with these feelings." She joined a consciousness-raising
As a result of my work in the CR group, I got up enough confidence to consider going back to school...I took the Graduate Record Exams with fear and trembling; it had been eleven years since I graduated from college."

Although Hal overtly approved of all these steps Kate was taking, she feels he was threatened by them.

"On the day I sent my application in to the University of Connecticut, he started sleeping with a nurse he knew. He later said the timing was coincidental, but I don't believe it."

Until her joining the CR group, Kate's resentment had been gradually developing over the years. Occasionally "it would spill out and I would cry a lot about the affection I was not getting. He made me feel I was too grasping. I would cry and cry, and feel better but nothing would be resolved." But the combination of her growing self-confidence and her discovering Hal's affair emboldened her to demand that he give up the nurse or move out. He chose to move out. There were several reunions and reseparations, but she began finding that "Yes, I could survive as a single person, I could manage with the kids. I was not destroyed."

There was much anger and sadness on her part, but also relief that the years of frustration and resentment were ending and that a resolution was nearing. On the other hand,

I had the feeling, and still do, that divorce is a little wicked...I really believed when I took those vows that it was for better or worse until death...also I had a feeling of failure. Society
considers marriage the woman's job. If it fails, it's probably the woman's fault. I think that's stupid, but it still has some impact on me.

Being alone was difficult. "I forced myself to go on with routines...I was holding onto myself very tightly...I even felt the tremendous seductive pull of madness, when a friend of mine was hospitalized. It would have been a relief to say I was not responsible, that someone else had to take care of me."

In this period, just prior to initiating divorce proceedings, Kate's strongest support came from her family, some friends, and divorce rap groups at the Women's Center. "That was the most important. I found out that what was happening to me was not my private pathology. A hell of a lot of people go through it." She saw that other women in the divorce raps were going through similar stages:

I'm sure it's like facing death. There's denial--this can't happen to me. Then depression, a feeling like the end of the world, I can't cope with it. Then some sort of resolution. I think the real grieving at the loss comes after the resolution, after you realize you're going to live through it. Then you stop being quite so angry. I think I'm still grieving. One of the things is the loss of the notion that I can plan my life. It's a myth, but a pervasive one, the idea that you have some kind of control, that you can say, until I die this is the way it's going to be. You really can't do that. It's a loss of a certain kind of certainty, a fantasized certainty, that if you do certain things right, it will work out right. I don't feel I've lost a great deal by losing Hal as a person, but I have lost a lot of illusions. That's sad, but it's better not to have those illusions in the long run. It's better to have a more realistic view of what life's about.
Kate feels that the most important thing she learned from the Women's Movement is "to be articulate about what I feel at a gut level."

I think I always believed in many things like the desirability of androgyny—if something is OK for men, then it's OK for women too—but I didn't know them, because I had never heard them expressed, never had to work these ideas out. The rap groups gave me a forum to think those things through...

Also, she "acquired models of strong women—not necessarily strong and powerful in society, but strong inside themselves."

She feels she has learned a lot from her experiences in marriage and separation: "there's no point in suffering if you don't learn from it." Now, as "others helped me, I feel some obligation to pay it back."

And I get a lot of positive feedback from helping other people who are at an earlier stage. It's a kind of ministry almost. When you help someone else, it helps you. Recently I was able to say something to someone which was the right person—the right thing—for her at that moment. There's a lot of payoff in that. Also, I still get help myself in talking with others. I'm still going through it; I haven't resolved the whole thing yet.

In thinking about her life now and into the future, Kate wants "to keep some balance in my life." She is working on her Ph.D. now; the next couple of years will be involved with finishing it and "hopefully getting established in a professional situation in which I feel comfortable and competent." Her two daughters are very important to her, as are her friendships. "Just as I could never in a million years be a full-time mother, I couldn't be a full-time professional either, though that would be
easy...I would like to get my degree, but if it requires an intolerable sacrifice in my personal life I would let it go."

In terms of her personal relationships, "I'm not as dependent on the idea that there has to be a man in my life."

I hope I can fulfill my needs for personal support and relatedness with different people, not necessarily pinning all on one person. I think I hoped when I was with Hal that we would fulfill all each other's needs, be everything to each other. I don't think that's reasonable now...I'm not too keen on getting married again, I don't know if it will change. I think I'd rather live with a man on a short-term basis without any long range claims.

She has several close women friends now. "I used to view women as competition, not consciously, but all my friends were men. I had nothing in common with other women. Now I feel quite the contrary." In her rap group discussions, the issue of bisexuality and lesbianism comes up frequently.

I don't know if the direction I'm taking now will take me there, but I hope if the situation arose I wouldn't be afraid because of conditioning and taboos. I think that there's a lot less hassle, less built-in power struggles with women than with men. You get reassurance, comfort, sympathy, that kind of support from another woman, where the sex thing is not built into it...I understand politics to mean relations among people and institutions, based on power. There's a difference between the power base of a man and of a woman, which carries over into personal relationships. It's partly all the conditioning that men and women are subjected to. It makes relationships between them inherently unequal, unless both parties exert a great effort to make it not that way. When you deal with another woman, it's not necessarily not that way—one dominant, one not—but it's not built into it because of gender.

Interestingly, the one sexual relationship Kate has had since her divorce was with a man several years younger than herself. She thinks that was due mainly
to the fact that as a student she meets generally younger men, but she acknowledged the possibility that because of their respective ages, some of the usual built-in male-female power inequalities were not a problem.

She has been "seriously thinking of some kind of communal living, given the right situation."

I would like to live in an 'extended family', with sharing of the emotional burdens I feel weighing on me. I would like a situation with some commitment to one another. It would take effort, but it would be good for the kids to have other adults to relate to, instead of just me. And since I have no family here, it would be more of a family for my kids and myself, like aunts and uncles...If there were other people they could go to when they wanted attention or conversation; if there were other people I could go to when I wanted conversation or whatever--stroking--it would be good for everybody.

Perhaps a fair summary of where Kate is now, is to say that in her upbringing and her marriage, she followed certain standards and expectations, putting the prescribed goals ahead of her immediate feelings. Now, in contrast, part of letting go of long-range planning is thinking that how I live this week is probably more important than what I am to achieve in 1979. I got in an argument with an adviser over that. He said women don't get Pulitzer Prizes or Nobel Prizes because they consider being a person more important than being a physicist or whatever. I said, "Yeah, right on!"
Briefer summaries of the interviews with the five other women will now be presented.

Nancy

Nancy was married for four years beginning at age 22. She was divorced three years ago.

She grew up in Connecticut with her parents and three siblings much older than she. Her mother always worked, and had many friends. When Nancy's father wasn't around, her mother was "very sociable, the life of the party, her own woman." When he was around, "she was very submissive to him... He was very jealous; she had to watch what she did when he was with her, or he'd get mad." Nancy was very close to both parents, and felt free to go to both of them with any problems she had. "They weren't very strict, they weren't very lenient. They always seemed to trust us. They left us to ourselves, they would never interfere." The only way Nancy remembers feeling dissatisfied with them is in how jealous her father was of her mother, how he used to accuse her, and in how her mother used to "cry a lot" in response, when "she should have stood up to him more." In later years her mother did do just that. Now, "she'll do what she wants to do, she knows he's going to yell at her anyway... She just says 'the hell with it.'"

In her early years, Nancy's expectations of marriage for herself were "like a story-book thing. You'd see things in the movies and that's the way it was going to be." In addition, she thought she'd like to have
"some glamorous job...I always wanted to work on a magazine, be a writer of some kind." Nancy spent a lot of time as a kid with her two married sisters. "The younger one had what I thought was a very happy marriage...They both worked, had a nice place to live in, seemed to have a good social life." The older sister "also had what I thought was a good marriage. They seemed to be happy and had a nice family."

Nancy met her husband at a party. She describes their relationship for the eight months before marriage as "stormy, very emotional, very fiery, always romantic. I guess soon after I met him, I realized I wanted to marry him. I just worked on marrying him."

He was the only man I had gone to bed with, the first man I had gone to bed with. So I got high on sex, and high on him, and that part was a lot of fun. We had a very good sexual relationship. That was probably the only time we got along, when we were in bed, so we went to bed a lot.

"I guess I didn't realize when I met him that he was from such a different background from mine in his attitudes toward women." He repeatedly made her jealous by flirting and even "making out" with other women in front of Nancy at social getherings. In addition, "his ideal was that the woman does everything and the man tells her what to do." Another problem was that he was a blue collar worker; "he resented the fact that I was in college, I guess because it's something he wanted to do. So he would insult me in everything and call me stupid and put me down."
At first Nancy "cried a lot and got upset" at his behavior toward her, "until finally I realized that I just couldn't take it any more. Then I started answering back...I started standing up and saying 'wait a minute, that's not wrong, what I did, you have no right to say that.'"

Within a couple years after marriage they had a child.

I was married. I was home, being a mother. He would come home and expect this to be done, that to be ready. I'm the wife, I should be doing this. But when I started to work—you know, I had my child, I was working, I was still doing everything around the house. He was doing absolutely nothing except telling me what to do. Then I realized—wait a minute—I guess I felt justified in not having done this or that, then I felt justified in arguing about it...at work I was seeing that other people weren't having the same types of problems I was...I realized no one else was sweating it but me...I guess I started to get really mad and resentful.

As she continued to assert herself and "argue back,"

Nancy's husband began walking out, and informing her that he was having sexual relations with other women. "I don't know how much I would have stood if it was just him treating me badly. But the fact that he was also going out—that just destroyed me." She left for the first of several separations. During the reunions, their relationship was limited pretty much to sex, and in the latter months of the marriage they had separate apartments. In time, "I had lived on my own for a while, and I realized it wasn't so terrible. I was enjoying it."

The last separation was when "I threw him out...I remember driving him to his apartment one night and saying, 'Get out, that's it.'" She initiated divorce proceedings soon thereafter.
On looking back at the marriage, Nancy thinks

maybe being with a personality like his that was
so contrary to mine made me get some kind of strength
within myself to start to defend myself. If I didn't
have him to deal with, I don't know what I'd have
been like at this point. I can say now what I feel
is right. I'm more assertive. I'm more of an
individual.

Since her divorce, "my life has been great." She
has two jobs, one of which is editing a small magazine.
She has an active social life. "There was a point where
I really needed to be involved with somebody, after
I first got divorced... but I don't have that need
right now." She did have one very good relationship after
her divorce, with a much younger man. "It was a very
different relationship. I had somebody I respected and
he respected me. We didn't have any of those power
plays that I had with my husband." Whereas with her
husband, "we never had any kind of relationship except
a sexual one and an arguing one—we weren't friends
in any way," she and the younger man were good friends.
"I had my friends, he had his friends. We each did our
own thing. We'd meet back at the apartment at a certain
time. It was very free that way." Nancy's definition
now of a good marriage is

two individuals who happen to be married, and get along
very well. They're very good friends. They do
everything together, but they also have their own
independence. They do their own things, they have
their own friends. They have no power plays.

She does not know whether she will remarry. "I'd like
to have a nice relationship with someone, but I'm not
going to rush around and search for it until I find it."
She has better relationships with women now than before her marriage. Some of that is the result of her contact with the Women's Movement.

I used to be friends with women, but it was very superficial. I never really talked about me to my friends. Now I have really good, strong friendships with women. I'd like to be able to have relationships with men like I have with women, but I find that hard... There are certain things that I know I'm going to do--this is me--some guys I've gone out with can't relate to that.

Nancy's participation in Women's Movement activities has not been as important to her as to Kate and Sara. On the other hand, she found her divorce proceedings, which were contested, to be "horrendous, very harrowing. The judge--the whole business--was humiliating." She would like to be able to get a job in the city government, or in some capacity where she "could be effective in changing the court system" as it relates to divorce. "It was terrible" for her, and she would like to help make it easier for other women.

Sara

Sara married in her late twenties, lived with her husband for a year, separated, and got her divorce a year after that, or about two and a half years ago. There were no children.

She was the only child of Austrian immigrant parents. Her mother died when she was five; she has only a few memories of her, all warm and nurturing. Her mother's death was
not communicated to her in an open way. In fact, it was never talked about. On the few occasions Sara brought up the subject, "my father brushed me off...I guess my father had a lot of trouble dealing with death; consequently, I have a lot of trouble dealing with death now." For a few years after her mother's death she lived with her father and paternal grandmother, then with her father and his second wife. In some ways Sara felt toward her stepmother as a mother, but in other ways she "never felt that close to her."

Her father was a "very cautious man whose thing was, 'look, you have to look to the future.'" He worked with one company as a white collar clerk "until the day he died;" he kept account of his finances to the extent "that many years later, he could tell you how much he spent the week of, say, Feb. 14, 1956." He was not open with his emotions. "My father really kept his feelings inside a lot. I was raised with the idea that you don't show your emotions." Another thing Sara was raised with was the idea that "you go by the rules. They were very 'a rule is a rule' kind of thing. Every once in a while I felt like playing hooky from school. My stepmother would never, ever write me a note saying I was sick unless I was on death's doorstep."

Her father did provide "a great sense of security" for her.
He was very devoted to me, his only child. No matter what happened to me, I always had someone to go to, I always had someone who would help me, support me. I knew there was a backboard there. I was dependent on him to take care of me in a lot of ways. I didn't have to worry about the future.

"Maybe because I was rebelling against the dependency I'd built up toward my father, beginning in high school I had a tremendous need to be independent." She wanted to go to the West Coast to college to get far away from their home in Philadelphia, but compromised on a Midwestern school when her father objected. After graduation she returned to Philadelphia to an apartment of her own. A few years later her father died suddenly of a heart attack. She got married less than a year later.

Sara met her husband at a Halloween Party where "he came as a coal miner with his face all blacked in." He lived in another city, so most of their premarriage time together was on weekends. "I remember feeling very relaxed with him." That was important, since "I didn't have a tremendous amount of confidence in myself; I questioned my ability to relate to men." Beginning in high school she had been awkward and considered herself unattractive.

I think a lot of it was I felt this tremendous pressure to get married. I was in my late twenties. I wasn't getting any younger. If I didn't marry him, who knows who would marry me.

"Maybe the main thing was that he cared for me a lot... he was always there if I needed something, if I needed help."

The first six months of the marriage were good. "It felt good to have someone to come home to, to share
things with." But then Sara sensed Bill pulling away from her. "I think it was too much for him. He had a problem, he couldn't tolerate the closeness." As he withdrew, she "chased after him. It just didn't work." His withdrawal was very threatening to her.

One of my basic needs is to share things with someone meaningful...I feel more sure of myself when I'm in a relationship. That permeates all areas of my life, not only socially but even at work. I wish it wasn't that way. I wish I could be the kind of person whose self assurance came from within, and I didn't need the external validation all the time. But I do, I know I do.

Finally, she gave him an ultimatum: stop withdrawing, or divorce. There followed a period of several months of reunion and reseparation. Sara went into therapy.

"That really helped me a lot. I think the therapist was terrific. He really helped me look at my own needs. I had a tremendous amount of guilt, because I felt Bill had serious emotional problems, and I was abandoning him." But she realized that "he would just drag me down with him." She began divorce proceedings.

Sara continued to feel guilty after the final separation. She also got quite depressed.

I was really miserable. I spent several solid months crying myself to sleep, waking up crying in the morning, driving to work with tears coming down my face. I spent a year in hibernation...I felt a total failure. I was extremely depressed...I felt ashamed: as a woman, as a wife, I couldn't even make it.

Finally, she pulled out of the depression and began to become socially active. At about that time she started going to divorce raps at the Women's Center.
It was the first time I had sat down with a group of women who had all felt the same kind of pain that I had. I had felt like some kind of freak. Other women too were isolated and lonely and felt there was something wrong with them...

Like Kate, Sara continued her participation in the divorce rap groups after she had pulled herself together. "I feel a sense of responsibility. It's sort of a good feeling. This is something we're doing for other women who really need it."

Following a period of dating, she began a serious involvement with another man several months after her divorce. They maintain separate apartments although they spend most of their free time together. "I think there's a certain reluctance to get that much committed." And, "we do have our differences occasionally. I'm worried that if we do live together, they will be exacerbated...it's kind of an escape hatch. When we get angry at each other, he can always go home."

Sara's father and stepmother's lives "revolved around each other," and Sara had similar expectations of marriage for herself. She tried that in her marriage; it was one reason for her isolation after the separation. Several months after her divorce, she took up painting in a serious way; it now is an important part of her life. She also has several women friends with whom she feels "a sense of compatriotism." "I get as much pleasure out of going to dinner with a woman friend as
with a man."

She views her current way of life as "not a transient thing." She will continue to live alone, or possibly with a man. She would not live communally, because "I need a certain sense of privacy," and because most of the communal situations I know of don't last much longer than a year. They start out with real high hopes, then one thing or another always happens. I hate to move. I don't want to feel like I'm packing up my tent and running off into the sunset all the time.

Marge

Now in her late twenties, Marge was married for five years, separated about a year ago and divorced several months ago.

She grew up in an extremely small town in Ohio, where The boys graduate from high school and get married. The girls get married sometimes before they graduate from high school. The boys go to work in a factory. The girls -- they're not women -- get married, have their kids and settle down in their little red house or trailer. The goal is to buy your own home and own a car.

"My family life was really happy. My parents were a lot different from most of my friends' parents because they were very liberal... they left us to do pretty much what we wanted to do." Her family was also unusual in that until Marge was seven and her younger siblings started to be born, she spent most of her time with her father rather than mother. Her mother worked in a factory, which she had begun doing at age sixteen to help support her own family. Marge's father worked the late shifts in another factory, so he could spend days with Marge. Marge describes her mother as a Very
strong woman."

She has the idea that just because she's a woman there's a lot of things she's really not supposed to do, but she does them. . . She's a very good organizer. She never waits for someone else to do something; she just jumps in there and starts going. She's in 50,000 organizations. She's always one of the presidents or vice-presidents or secretaries.

Marge describes her mother as not open with her feelings and affection; while "my father was much more open, much more affectionate. I was always very close to my Dad and still am. . . almost all my memories of my younger days are with him." Her father was in some ways less ambitious than her mother. He "turned down lots of job offers where he could have made a lot of money because he liked the simple life he had." He too was very sociable and had lots of friends.

As a child, Marge was always into a lot of things. I was aware even then, I thought it was really crummy that when you were a girl you weren't allowed to do things . . . I used to overstep those boundaries all the time . . . like you weren't allowed to play on the boys' softball team. I was a good player -- I could play as well as any of the boys -- but I wasn't allowed to play on their team . . . the way things were in school, you were supposed to be this defenseless little girl that had to be protected . . . I could take care of myself better than any of them.

And, as far back as I can remember, I always was not going to get married, and have a whole lot of children and be stuck in a house somewhere. I was going to go out and see the world and have a career of my own. Maybe if I met someone I might get married.

Early on she developed a great interest in travel, and in
biology from a male teacher she had.

When Marge was four an older cousin, to whom she had been very close, died in childbirth. A year later a great aunt died, to whom she also had been extremely close. Marge herself has had a serious, chronic disease since early childhood. On several occasions she has been quite ill. "My worst year was junior year in high school. I had to spend six months in bed. That's not the year to do it at all." On two or three occasions she almost died.

I've always kept it in the back of my head that I'm never going to let my illness stop me from doing what I wanted . . . I know signs to watch out for, I call my doctor and we start working on it. I've been really involved in my own health care.

"Coming from the same area, I knew my husband -- I knew who he was, pretty much all my life." Bob had a reputation as a ladies' man. Marge began going out with him in high school, found his slightly older crowd exciting.

That was the first time I became aware of my sexuality . . . I ended up sleeping with him . . . As I look back on it now, a lot of what I thought was love was really sexual awareness and lust . . . we didn't share a lot of the same interests. It's really sad we got into the marriage; we were like totally different people.

They began talking about marriage. "I really had my doubts about getting married and losing all my freedom," but on the other hand,

most of the people I'd gone to school with were already married. You grow old very quickly back there where I come from. I thought, 'Well, I've held out this long, why not.'

Her discovering she was pregnant stillled the doubts about getting married that continued to linger.
The first several months of their marriage, she and Bob did a lot of travelling due to his job. Then she got sick again and had to stop travelling. There began a few years of gradually mounting boredom. She had a daughter, went to work, and soon found that she got much more enjoyment from her job and her daughter than from her husband.

I just realized that I really didn't like him that much. We didn't have the same interests or value system. To me he was basically a boring person. I was growing in all these directions; he was in the same place we were when we were married.

Such feelings went against the values Marge had learned growing up in her community.

I was trying to suppress all these things because everyone around me was still married. Why shouldn't I be happy? I was a wife; after all, I was working and these other women weren't; so I should be happy.

And, women never left men back there, unless their husbands beat them up . . . A woman didn't just walk out on a man because she didn't love him any more. You just stuck with it . . . I thought, 'God, is there something wrong with me?' I couldn't fit in. All these other women could suffer through it; I knew how unhappy they were.

Some of her friends advised her to quit the job so she could spend more time with Bob. Reluctantly, she did, thinking "I'll try it. If that doesn't work, I'll get a divorce. So I took a year off from work. I almost lost my mind, I was so bored."

While in this state of mind, wanting to leave Bob but not really feeling able to, Marge got to know some young biology teachers from New York who had come to town with the
They started making me realize that the ideas I had weren't all that crazy. It was the way I was raised. . . here were real people to me . . . they actually had been out in the world, travelled to all these places I'd read about and dreamed of travelling to. . . they thought that divorce wasn't such a horrible thing, that I could go out on my own and actually make it. They gave me the confidence . . . it was like a consciousness-raising group for me. . . I was able to get the strength up I needed to say I wanted a divorce. . . all my other friends who'd listened to me for two years -- 'I've got to get out of this' -- that was a threat to them.

Bob precipitated the actual separation by accusing Marge of having an affair with one of the biology teachers. She moved out, with their daughter, and started divorce proceedings soon after. She mainly felt liberated from a confinement. In regard to Bob she felt guilt at taking their daughter away, pity "at how crushed he was", and sadness at having spent many years with a man from whom she grew to feel totally alienated.

She now has a job in a biology lab, but plans to get credits so she can teach biology, which she long has wanted to do. She describes herself now:

I'm exploring all these new things. I'm really open to trying new things. . . It's hard for people to see what a change it is now, how I live, unless they go back and see how I used to live. . . It's so easy and natural, it's like I've lived this way all my life.

She has two ongoing sexual relationships with men: "I don't like this act of being monogamous, I don't think it works. It goes back to my theory that one person can't answer all another person's needs." She lives in a communal house with
other women and children. "I can't see myself living with a man again for quite a while... because I like my independence... I can't see answering to anyone." She feels closer to her best women friends, "there's nothing we can't talk about," than to her lovers, because "they're men and I'm a woman and we perceive things differently."

Marge's contact with the organized Women's Movement is sporadic. However, she is active in a day care center, where she encourages girls to be strong and "to stand up for their rights." On her infrequent visits home to Ohio, she talks to her old friends and "I've even offered to help a couple of them" in getting up the courage to escape from their confinement, but "they're afraid... they're just like robots moving along." She hopes that as a teacher, she'll be able to reach teenagers before it's too late. "I guess I just want to save people from what I went through."

Ann was married for eleven years, separated two years ago and divorced half a year ago. She is now in her early thirties.

She grew up in a very close-knit family where her mother was home all the time caring for her children and doing a variety of home-based activities. Her mother was "very passive in many ways."
She had a lot of self-doubt... she was very shy. She didn't have a lot of self-confidence in anything except raising kids.

Ann had minimal contact with her father, who worked long hours and was not comfortable with children. "I was mostly scared of him. He was mostly the authority figure that my mother was always shaking over our heads." Of her parents' relationship, Ann notes that he had a terrible temper. He did a lot of things that were unfair to her. She never argued. She just prided herself in never talking back to him or losing her cool... until she started really getting sick from it... When I was eleven she had some sort of breakdown; she had hepatitis and couldn't shake it for four months... that was the first time I ever saw her cry or ever heard her raise her voice in any uncontrolled way.

While Ann's two brothers were "rebels" ("I was sort of envious of them"), she "was always trying to live up to Mother's expectations... I was the good child, with perfect manners. I never talked back." She was very dependent on her mother. On a couple of occasions she went away from home against her mother's wishes.

She found out. I felt so awful about having lied to her, and about having done something like that, so independent... that I just cried and cried.

When she was two or three, her grandfather died. "It was a tremendous loss to my mother," and she thinks "it must have been very traumatic in some ways" to herself.

I remember real warmth from him. I remember a few very specific things like a certain smell; I think it's tomatoes, tomato plants because I would work in the garden with him.

Ann came close to death herself at about age four from meningitis. She "blocked out" that memory in our interviews
and called me up later with the information.

I was in sort of a semicoma; it must have been a kind of experience of death ... ever since, any time I've had anesthesia, I've had a really depressed kind of reaction where I cry for hours and can't seem to pull out of it.

Ann's parents were willing to make sacrifices to put her brothers through college, but it was understood that, being a girl, she would have to do it on her own if she wanted that. She started college, but lost her scholarship, dropped out, and worked as a governess for a family with several children. Suddenly her charges' mother died, leaving Ann "feeling just overwhelmed." Just at that time she met her husband Alan.

He took over a lot of the burden. He was just wonderful with the kids and it was almost like a set in a play. He just walked into a vacuum. What isn't funny is that most of our married lives we were carrying out this kind of a rescue syndrome, and it's ultimately what destroyed the marriage.

They had four children. Ann did not have or want much of a life outside her home, because "there was so much life inside." She felt extremely close to Alan; if anything, they were "too much alike." The experience of the birth of her last daughter was just really great. ... I'd have gone out and done it again the next day, it was so fantastic. ... My only regret was that I couldn't nurse her longer.

However, "the rescue syndrome" began taking its toll as, in addition to her own children and the day-care children she took in, she started caring for homeless children Alan knew and brought home to live with them. It gradually became
more and more draining on her. She felt guilty complaining, since initially the decisions to take in these children were mutual. When she began to feel overwhelmed, and tried to express that to Alan,

I couldn't win ... He'd talk me into a 'yes' when everything inside me was screaming 'no'. But I wouldn't have the words or reasons, and would end up in tears.

Because of the expense in caring for all these children, Ann went to work, dropping out of college courses she had started part-time.

There was this tremendous resentment that built up that I couldn't express, that I couldn't let myself feel ... The more helpless I felt, the more bitchy I was at home.

What tipped the balance was that Alan brought a 16-year-old foster daughter to live with them. Increasingly, he devoted himself to her and withdrew to some extent from Ann. There was much overt seductiveness between them, and it continued despite Ann's entreaties to both of them. Finally, Ann developed physical symptoms.

I had splitting headaches, I woke up with my neck rigid and my teeth clenched, I was losing weight. I realized I'd become frigid.

She had been troubled by such symptoms on occasion since childhood, but since they waned when Alan left for weekends and waxed when he returned, she knew it had to do with her feelings toward him. Finally, "I felt hopeless and couldn't see any way to resolve what I was feeling." They went to a marriage counselor and Ann wound up in a private mental
hospital for several weeks. In the hospital,

for the first time I talked to other people
honestly about what my experiences had been, and
I got a perspective on how crazy the life was I had
been living, how impossible it was. I'd never
allowed myself to think that.

Ann left Alan upon discharge from the hospital and
got an apartment with her own children (only). She hoped
for a reunion, but it became clear he didn't really want
to change their life style or their way of relating. Sadly,
she filed for divorce. She now lives in a communal house,
like Marge and Kate, with other women and children. She
plans to go back to college soon, with plans eventually to
teach "family life training -- the realities of family life"
to teenagers, or perhaps to become an architect, designing
structures for "people's real needs."

She would like "to get into a close relationship with
a man again; I miss that," but

I feel good about taking charge of my life. I'll
have to feel secure about that . . . I'm still very
much in a state of suspense about who I am.

And,

I sort of took a role in my family of being the good
kid . . . I was always trying to please others . . .
I'd like to be able to title my story, "How a good
girl can grow up and finally find herself."

Jill

Jill was married for nine years, separated a year ago,
and has no current plans for divorce. She is in her mid-thirties.

She was an only child, always very close to her mother and
dependent on her in some ways. "I've always felt she really
cared, possibly too much. She made me the center of her life." In other ways, her mother "let me do just about anything I wanted to do; I was the most independent girl in my neighborhood." One point she emphasizes strongly about her mother is that she was "an extremely compulsive housekeeper." She had a rather peripheral relationship with her father, at least in comparison.

Her parents' marriage was "crummy".

They fought a lot, often violently. Somehow, they managed to make me feel guilty about it, as though I was somehow the cause of it, and I don't know if I was or not.

She thinks "some of their fighting had sexual overtones."

When Jill was five,

my mother took enough sleeping pills to have done herself in. I remember it because she took me to bed with her and decided that was how she was going to die.

Marriage never appealed very much to Jill; "I had great expectations of being able to be part of a career-type of thing." But she found herself unable to get an interesting job. She had met John, whom she liked, and "I decided I might as well get married." This was after her first love relationship, which lasted for three years, with a woman whom "I found to be probably one of the most exciting people I've ever met in my life."

As a girl, Jill had been very popular, a leader in her groups of friends. But an extremely late puberty changed that; she didn't fit in any longer. During much of the early years of her marriage as well, she felt socially
isolated, first because of the long hours she spent at a boring job and then because they moved to a place with few people to whom she could relate. The birth of their son added to her burdens; he brought her little satisfaction during his first few years. Meanwhile, her husband had interesting jobs. Jill increasingly resented the contrast between John's satisfaction in life and her own lack of it.

On moving to New Haven where John was affiliated with Yale, Jill finally got to be part of a "peer group" she again enjoyed. She took courses and met a teacher "with a lot of very radical ideas, about relationships, teaching, child care." Jill became sexually involved with the teacher. She was open about it with John, as the teacher was with his wife. "John said OK, but he didn't really feel OK about it." Jill and a friend began a women's consciousness raising group which was very successful and in which she further developed her ideas. Eventually John joined her in "an exchange" with another couple. "It was a very exciting period for both of us. We had been monogamous for seven years."

Jill became increasingly involved with her friends and activities connected with the "alternative community" in New Haven. She and John had grown somewhat apart apart: "He's still involved in a kind of thinking and mentality that belongs in a college, not in an alternative community." She wanted to remain with him, because she still loved him -- "he is a gentle, warm person." But she "asked him to have separate bedrooms . . . I just wanted to be more of an independent person . . . I wanted to have a place to go back to
by myself, like I do now... That was just a blow on top of the others that he couldn't take." When Jill suggested that they move together to a commune with other friends of hers, John refused. Jill did move into the commune, and they separated.

I didn't know what I wanted in the early years of my marriage. I just was some kind of malcontent. I kept trying the traditional kinds of things, that were supposed to work, but they didn't work.

Jill finds her present life very exciting and fulfilling. She maintains frequent contact with John, partly for herself and partly for the sake of their son. She has a sporadic sexual relationship with John and a consistent one with another man. She may become involved sexually with women again. Her commune, and her more extended peer group provide "dependence on and security from a group", which she sees as permitting her more flexibility and less dependency in any one relationship. She is involved in political activities; believes in some kind of "socialist-anarchist society" including "suppression of the family"; thinks that political change must come about through personal and cultural revolution as well as political.

To me, my story is a story of how people get born. I feel like I was born six years ago (when she began her involvements with the radical teacher and the women's consciousness-raising group). I just became conscious of myself in my relation to the world in a new way. I'd been groping for that for years and years before that, and it just whomped on me... historical events in the outside world crept into my own life.
SHARED THEMES

The remaining task for this paper is, as outlined in the introduction, to find and describe some of the shared themes that emerged from the interviews just presented; and to attempt to illuminate these themes and show their relationship to some broader social-cultural and theoretical ideas.

Obviously, I have used much selectivity in locating and extracting what seemed to be shared themes from the mass of interview material that has been presented in summary form. I have wanted to be as open as possible to letting the material speak for itself, to letting the themes emerge on their own. But my selectivity has been affected -- biased is more accurate -- by certain ways of thinking of my own: based on theoretical ideas; ideas from the subculture(s) of which I am a member (partly psychiatric, to some extent "alternate culture", politically liberal to radical); and my own idiosyncrasies -- probably in reverse order.

A final qualification is that from the point of view of a biographer, a novelist, perhaps a psychotherapist -- but perhaps not -- the differences among these women might well be more important than their commonalities. Each woman has her own personality and life story. However, that does not negate the validity of finding themes they do have in common. And often, factors which seem to be individual to a particular woman's experience can be seen as making their
contribution to more general currents.

Perhaps a more usual way for most people to think of divorce is as follows. Two people were mismatched, or something went wrong in their marriage which they couldn't work out. They split; each partner is lonely and/or elated for a while, gradually returns to equilibrium, and then continues life pretty much as before, either single or eventually with a new partner. In contrast, a general way of viewing the experiences of the women described in this paper, is as a process in which the separation and divorce (if any) were a transition between a rather global old way and a rather global new way of viewing themselves and the world; an old way of living and thinking and a new way of living and thinking. The extent of the change varied, of course, in each case. But I think it is fair to say that in each case presented there was substantial growth, not just a return to equilibrium (or as medical language would read, return to the premorbid condition). At the same time, one can view these women, and for that matter all people, as having certain important needs which must be satisfied for a feeling of well-being. In the rest of this paper both the process and the needs will be discussed in detail.

The old way that all of these women came from, to varying extents, was a complex and many-faceted way of viewing womanhood, of what is natural and proper for a woman to want and expect, think and live. This old way of viewing women has not existed from time immemorial; it is, however, extremely powerful in contemporary America.
One way of describing this old way is in terms of certain limited roles women are expected to fulfill. The title of an essay expresses some of them: "Woman as Secretary, Sexpot, Spender, Sow, Civic Actor, Sickie." All of these roles were filled by several of the women, and their mothers, who have been presented in this paper. For example: the limiting jobs of Kelly, Jill and Kate; Kelly's being reminded to try to get her way by smiling at men; Marge's memory of how the goal of women in her home town was to own their own home and car; Ann, and her mother's feeling unconfident at almost anything except producing and caring for children; Kate and Kelly's mothers limiting their outside activities to charitable ones; Ann's mother and herself needing to have a prolonged illness in order to permit themselves openly to express their true feelings, and Jill's mother's attempted suicide following a fight with her husband (at least as remembered by Jill). Another description of these roles is given in Erica Jong's Fear of Flying:

Somewhere deep inside my head (with all those submerged memories of childhood) is some glorious image of the ideal woman, a kind of Jewish Griselda. She is Ruth and Esther and Jesus and Mary rolled into one. She always turns the other cheek. She is a vehicle, a vessel, with no needs or desires of her own. When her husband beats her, she understands him. When he is sick, she nurses him. When the children are sick, she nurses them. She cooks, keeps house, runs the store, keeps the books, listens to everyone's problems, visits the cemetery, weeds the graves, plants the garden, scrubs the floors, and sits quietly on the upper balcony of the synagogue while the men recite
prayers about the inferiority of women. She is capable of absolutely everything except self-preservation. And secretly, I am always ashamed of myself for not being her. A good woman would have given over her life to the care and feeding of her husband's madness. I was not a good woman. I had too many other things to do.

In the cases of some of the women presented here (Kelly, Ann), they perceived these old roles in their mothers and they became part of their own expectations as soon as they had any expectations. In the case of others (Kate, Marge), they had strong mothers who did not conform to the old view in many ways, and as children they were strong, self-reliant, independent, tomboyish. Even in these cases, however, in important ways they still perceived the old image as the ideal. Thus Kate's mother, a "feminist with respect to the world", accommodated to Kate's father in important matters like moving because of his job; the mother kept her own work ambitions in frustrated abeyance while she raised her children. Thus Marge was surrounded by women who conformed to the old ideal, even if her own mother did not. Both Kate and Marge (and Jill) began losing their original independence and accommodating to the old ideal as they grew older and began thinking about marriage. An important reason for this turnaround in cases like theirs (note that Kate gave up her ambition of ten years' standing to become a famous anthropologist in order to support her husband through medical school) is discussed in "Femininity and Successful Achievement: A Basic Inconsistency," by Matina S. Horner, now the President of Radcliffe College.34 She quotes Margaret
Mead: "'Each step forward in work...means a step back as a woman..." She produces empirical evidence based on psychological testing to support her hypothesis that, at least when it might conflict with being accepted as a woman by men, women have an inner "motivation to avoid success."

In all the above, the main theme I want to emphasize is that the old ideal for women was limited especially in terms of fulfillment of strivings for autonomy, growth, independence, self-development, self-assertion, strength and power. Among other; Erikson emphasizes the importance of autonomy in much of his writing about the second of his stages in the life cycle. So does Bowlby in his emphasis that in the optimum mother-child relationship, the child in his first years feels secure enough of his mother (or "attachment figure") as a base for him to leave her while progressively developing his independence and autonomy.

In contrast to the ideal and need for autonomy, women following what I am calling the old ideal for women gave up some of the fulfillment of autonomous strivings in return for security and other benefits from marriage. Also, they were able to a limited extent to gratify the striving for autonomy and growth vicariously through the man. An example of this is in Kate's giving up her own ambitions in order to support her husband's career, "believing in" his career goal more than in her own. On the other hand, Jill grew unable to tolerate the frustration of her husband's having an exciting job while her own was so dull.
This vicarious process has other aspects. An obvious one is the woman's giving up her own name to take on that of her husband. Underlying this is the idea that in addition to vicariously fulfilled autonomy is vicariously fulfilled identity. As Jong says, "if no man loves me I have no identity;" "I want to really feel...united with someone, whole for once;" she asks, "Where were the women who were really free, who didn't spend their lives bouncing from man to man, who felt complete with or without a man?"  

Another aspect of this theme is related to sexual autonomy, or the lack of it. In the cases of Nancy and Marge, for example, it would seem that both married their husbands to a great extent because they provided them with their first experience with (post-childhood) sexuality. In recent American culture, boys have been encouraged in many ways to masturbate and have sex with women from an early age. Sex for boys thus becomes related (for better or worse) to self-development and autonomy in much the same way as does athletic prowess. Many boys are no more dependent on one sexual partner than on one tennis partner; sexuality is in large part a strength they develop and carry within them. In contrast, until recently fewer women have been encouraged to masturbate or have sex outside of serious relationships.
What might be, in part, a development of their own growth, frequently becomes instead permitted only in the context of a dependent relationship with a man. In this regard, it is interesting that Marge, in many ways an independent girl, was debarred by the general culture around her from developing herself sexually until she began going with her husband-to-be; and by specific rules of her school from developing herself athletically with the same encouragement as was given to boys.

Another main way of viewing the development of autonomy, growth, and strength is that the person needs to be aware of her true feelings and needs, then to articulate them and act effectively; all are necessary if the needs are to be fulfilled. In all these areas, the learning experience of the women presented here was deficient. Although part of the old view of women is that they are intuitive, "managers of emotion, experts in feeling," in many cases the women presented here were not trained to listen closely to their inner feelings and to accept them as valid and valued. Kate describes how her own perceptions of herself were denied and she was taught not to pay attention to her emotions; Kelly and others report similar experiences. It would seem that these women, at least many of them, were trained rather to accept certain given ideas about the emotions they should be feeling. An outstanding example is Ann, who was raised as "the good girl" and even now is in "a state of suspense" as to who she is. Not truly knowing their inner feelings,
It was difficult for them to articulate, or if necessary, argue them effectively. Jill and others describe trying to live according to old models, finding that it didn't work, but having only a vague sense of that. A result of such frustration was its expression often in "bitchiness," or in the case of Ann and her mother, in depression and physical symptoms. These often were the only outlets for anger and frustration in women whose mothers "did not stand up to" their husbands; who prided themselves on "not losing their cool." It is precisely the emphasis on the full and strong expression of their anger that now turns many people off to the Women's Movement. Many people would rather have women remain docile—or at worst, bitchy.

While probably the most important group of needs not fulfilled in these women were needs related to autonomy and growth, another groups of needs which were fulfilled to some extent in some (Jill, Kelly) but not in other cases were needs for security, intimacy, support. Thus Ann, Sara and Kate reached the end of their tethers when their husbands withdrew from them. Their needs for security from a man varied according to the life history of each. Jong speaks of "the terror of being alone" and "the promise to serve (her husband) like a good slave in exchange for any bargain as long as it included security..."³⁷ In another passage she describes herself "like a boat that always had to have a port of call."³⁸ It would seem that Sara, whose mother died
when she was quite young, and who married soon after
her father's death to a man she did not know at all well,
probably had "the terror of being alone." At the
other extreme, Marge seems to have been motivated much
more by a need for adventure than by a need for security.
Perhaps she needed "a port of call" but not much more.
In many cases, whatever the particulars, the problem
was that the women had a very limited range of models
of security-providing relationships from which to choose.
As Jill said, "I kept trying the traditional kinds of things
that were supposed to work, but they didn't work."
Basically, the only real model they had—the model
provided by the old way of doing things—was the nuclear
family. Those women who perceived their parents as
having a bad marriage, like Jill, thought early of
a career rather than marriage; they had not seen other
viable types of arrangements.

The next stage in the process these women experienced
was the stage of frustration, whether of needs for autonomy
and growth, and/or security. (Other needs will not
be discussed in this paper. Interestingly, sexual
frustration was not mentioned in a single case; on the
contrary, sexual needs often seemed to be the only
important needs fulfilled throughout the marriage.)
With frustration came increasing resentment, which was
consciously perceived, or not, to varying degrees. At
Some point, consciousness began to be raised. As one psychohistorian states, "humanity comes to consciousness of itself through blockage, deprivation, and frustration." In some cases (Sara) separation occurred before frustration had lasted for very long. In other cases, there was a long delay between the onset of frustration and separation. Why? In many cases, even when there was not much delay, separation was very frightening. For one thing, it went against values and rules that had been learned in childhood. Divorce was often considered as "scandalous, a last resort" by people like Jill's mother. In Kate's case, her parents had ingrained in her a sense of sin and transgression in general which may have been particular to their family in some respects, but which reinforced Kate's and the culture's feeling that those marriage vows were meant "until death". Perhaps more important in many cases, the "terror of being alone" gives many people pause before leaving even a shaky and unsatisfying marriage. Especially when some of these women depended on a man for vicarious identity and autonomy. As Jong says, "I simply couldn't imagine myself without a man. Without one, I felt lost as a dog without a master: rootless, faceless, undefined." Kelly described her feeling after leaving her husband, "It was like someone pulled out all my insides and there's nothing there but this big, gaping hole." And Kate said, "I'm sure it's like facing death." Coping with such fears
or with even dimly realizing that separation will lead
to such painful feelings requires support for most
people. In the case of some women, especially those
already involved in the Women's Movement (Jill) or in
another source of support (Marge with her friends the
biology teachers), the support was there. In other
cases, it was painfully lacking (Sara).

A final cause of delay in making the break is that
for most people, to take such a bold and painful step
requires being able to view it as a reasonable thing
to do, within a reasonable context. Instead, in many
cases the women viewed their difficulties as their
"private pathology" (Kate) or as that "something
was wrong" with them that "they couldn't fit in"
(Marge). As Ernest Becker states, people "need the
conviction of numbers in order to strengthen and
externalize something that otherwise remains very
private and personal—and so risks seeming fantastic and
unreal. To see others like oneself is to believe in
oneself."^ Many women found just that conviction, just
that "validation of their perceptions" (Kate) in
consciousness-raising or divorce rap groups, with friends
coming from more liberated backgrounds (Marge) or from
just meeting casually with other people at work who
were in similar situations (Nancy).

Having obtained the necessary emotional and shared
ideological or at least conceptual support, and in some cases before that support (Sara), these women were able to make the break. There then followed in every case, to varying extents, the panoply of felt reactions to the separation that has been described in the summaries of several women (and will not be repeated here).

The stages of the process I have described so far are the woman's origins in the old way of viewing womanhood; her frustrations when important needs are not fulfilled; and her becoming capable of and finally making the break out of her marriage. The last stage is the stage of new directions, renewal, or transformation.

This part of the process itself has a few components. First, the woman is alone, even if she has found other sources of support. Many of the women presented here found to their surprise that being alone was not so difficult. Others found that they "had to hold on to (themselves) very tightly" (Kate). As Jong writes, after she has finally left her lover and possibly also her husband, and is alone,

"No one, no one, no one, no one..." I moaned, hugging myself like the big baby I was. I was trying to rock myself to sleep. From now on, I thought, I will have to be my own mother, my own comforter, my own rocker-to-sleep. Perhaps this is what Adrian meant about going down into the bottom of yourself and pulling yourself back up. Learning how to survive your own life. Learning how to endure your
own existence. Learning how to mother yourself. Not always turning to an analyst, a lover, a husband, a parent.]

Kelly referred to the same phenomenon when she said,

I sort of drop things down every now and then to see when they'll hit bottom. They didn't used to hit the bottom. Now there's sort of an echo -- a little splash...

Jong sums it up: "People don't complete us. We complete ourselves. If we haven't the power to complete ourselves, the search for love becomes a search for self-annihilation..."

This new-found (at least incipient) identity and autonomy and strength within oneself includes a reformulated definition of oneself as a woman who has a need for and a right to that autonomy and strength. In the cases of many of the women, the CR groups were instrumental in such reformulations of self.

Along with this changed self-image, go changed views of the world and the woman's place in and relation to it. One reason that some of the women (Nancy, Kate) found they had begun to relate to younger men, and in some ways to other women more than men (Marge, Kate), is that it is easier to work on developing one's autonomy and strength with younger men and with women. As several women stated, the "power plays" are not as inherent in the relationship or as difficult to overcome. For some of the women, the need for security is also seen in a new context. Having learned, often with the help of others, to listen more closely to their own needs and feelings, they see that their need for security may be fulfilled by arrangements other than traditional
marriage. These arrangements range from an intense and exclusive involvement with one man where both people maintain separate apartments (Sara); to living in mixed (Jill) or women's communes (Marge, Ann); having sexual relationships with more than one man (Jill); considering sexual relationships with men and women (Kate, Jill).

A final component of the renewal or transformative process in many cases is that the woman, often feeling a "sense of obligation," helps other women transform themselves. Thus Kate and Sara actively participated in rap groups giving other women emotional and conceptual support; Kelly will become a lawyer, exercising her newfound strength and helping other people stand up for their rights; Marge would like as a teacher to be able to impart some of her ways of thinking to teenagers. Common to all these activities is a transformed view of the world which the woman wants to help convey to others. As Kate said,

I have lost a lot of illusions. That's sad, but it's better not to have those illusions in the long run. It's better to have a more realistic view of what life's about.
THEORETICAL DISCUSSION

The thinking of Robert J. Lifton provides an interesting framework which relates to much of what has been discussed in this paper.

The process described above is of an old way of perceiving oneself and the world and acting in it; frustration caused by needs unfulfilled by the modes of action and being provided by that old way; a break with the old way; and renewal, a new way of perceiving oneself and the world and acting in it. Lifton conceives of something like the above process in terms of "self process". He describes "centering, decentering, and recentering."

Decentering is the capacity of the self to detach itself . . . separation or alteration of the existing involvements of the self. . . necessary for growth and change. Decentering inevitably involves anxiety and risk, and often guilt, rage, and a sense of inner chaos. 44

Decentering also involves what might better be termed "uncentering"; or the unwilled fragmentation of one's world rather than the more willed detachment implied above. 45 Recentering is "achieving a new mode of still-flexible ordering." 46

In terms of the process I have described, the old way was the original "centering"; the frustration and the break were the "decentering" and "uncentering"; and the renewal and new way were the "recentering".
Another central idea of Lifton's is that of "Protean Man." Named after Proteus, the shape-shifting Greek god, it refers to contemporary people, especially young ones, who in their quest for renewal, for recentering, engage in many different and often changing images of self and ways of living. Many of the women presented in this paper could be described as having a Protean style at this point in their lives.

A more speculative and perhaps more meta-theoretical way of viewing some of the themes discussed in this paper is in the ideas of Lifton and Ernest Becker about death as a motivating force in human thinking and acting, and the ideas of John Bowlby. These ideas can only be very briefly summarized here.

Becker thinks that "The human animal is characterized by two great fears that other animals are protected from: the fear of life and the fear of death." Stemming from these two fears develop what he calls "the twin ontological motives": or basic motivations in life.

The first motive— to merge and lose oneself in something larger— comes from man's horror of isolation, of being thrust back upon his feeble energies alone... On the other hand he wants to be unique, to stand out as something different and apart... the urge for more life, for exciting experience, for the development of the self-powers... Psychologically it is the urge for individuation...

In my discussion of shared themes, the need for security, intimacy and support would correspond to Becker's motive to merge—to be part of a supportive, protective, "comfortable web", as he states. The need for autonomy, independence,
growth and strength would correspond to Becker's second motive, "to stand out". These ideas are close to Bowlby's. The need of the child to have a secure attachment figure, and attachment behavior like clinging, smiling and crying, are based, he argues ethologically, on the need of the animal for protection from forces in the world which threaten it. To some extent, Bowlby continues, all persons retain the need for an attachment figure throughout life, transferring the need from the mother (really the attachment figure, which can be the father or others) to other persons later on, like the spouse. In addition, the development of autonomy, beginning with the infant's first explorations away from the attachment figure, enables the person better to cope on his own with the dangers of life and death.

Lifton describes how the knowledge of one's own death, and one's encounters with death-like experiences, affect one's thinking and acting from an early age. The actual experience of death, or of a major or minor "holocaust" or "psychohistorical dislocation", creates intense feelings, chiefly "anxiety, risk, guilt, rage, and a sense of inner chaos," as mentioned above. These death-like experiences would include the experiences of separation and divorce: some of the language of the women I have quoted seems to support that contention. Lifton refers to the parameters of "connection-separation, movement-stasis, and integrity-disintegration" as being "subparadigms" of his chief paradigm or "controlling image" of "death and the continuity of life." Again, these parameters would seem highly applicable
to the experiences of the women presented in this paper.
Thus Kelly describes an experience of stasis where

when I thought about my future, it was like a blank
wall in front of me. I had no conception of where
I was going to go at all. It was like death...

The view Marge had of life in her home town and in her
boring marriage was equally static. As for separation,
some of the women in their marriages did not feel connected
in any meaningful way to their husbands. As for disinte-
tegration, Kate in subordinating her own ambitions to those
of her husband had estranged herself from an important part
of herself, and thus was suffering from a lack of felt
integrity; Ann and Jill, being unable effectively to
understand and express their discontent at how their
married lives were progressing, also suffered from something
like lack of integrity, or a feeling of disintegration.
And of course, most of the women experienced death-like
encounters, or dislocations, or feelings of separation,
stasis, and disintegration when they separated from their
husbands.

Such experiences create the intense feelings referred
to above. Lifton discusses how these feelings—he emphasizes
rage and guilt—can be "numbing, self-lacerating, or animating".
In the cases of Sara and Ann, it would seem that there
was considerable numbing and self-lacerating. Sara was
depressed, isolated, "in hibernation" for months after her
separation; Ann was so depressed that she was hospitalized
for several weeks and had continual suicidal thoughts.
On the other hand, all of the women, including Ann and Sara, moved on to "animating rage and guilt." In some cases these feelings provided the fuel for their making the break; in most cases these feelings, among others, animated them in the process of renewal and transformation, both for themselves and in their working with other people.

Some final speculation may be in order applying the ideas of Lifton and Becker to two women who had early and powerful death encounters. Sara lost her mother at age five. The fact that she married very soon after her father's death, together with other images in her language--such as not wanting to live in communes because they are transient, and "I don't want to be packing up my tent and running off into the sunset all the time,"--indicate that she may well have suffered from what Bowlby calls "anxious attachment":

persons of all ages who show unusually frequent and urgent attachment behavior...he has no confidence that his attachment figures will be accessible and responsive to him when he wants them...those (causal factors) about which by far the most evidence is at present available are experiences that shake a person's confidence that his attachment figures will be available to him when desired. 

In Lifton's terms, Sara is now in some ways the least changed or transformed in her life style of all the women presented. To some extent that undoubtedly is due to the model of her cautious, conservative father. But it is possible that her early experience with her mother's death had, to some extent, a numbing effect on her so that less transformation was possible when she later had a death encounter (her father's death) and then a death-like encounter (her separation and divorce). This would be so especially since, as she related,
she never was given much of a chance to work through the experience of her mother's death: it was never talked about.

Jill's mother made a serious suicide attempt with Jill in bed with her at age five; Jill was made to feel as a child that she was partly responsible for her parent's fights. Bowlby refers to "anxious attachment following threats of abandonment or suicide;" he claims that such threats can lead as well to "aggressive detachment." Jill says she had a lot of "mean, nasty feelings" when she was young; in her recent and current relationships she seems to have a need to remain unattached, or detached, to some extent. In Lifton's terms, the numbing effect of her early death-(or near-death of her mother) encounter may have kept her in an unsatisfactory relationship longer than she otherwise would have. Or it may have contributed to her being unable (or "connected") to get as attached/to her husband as she could have otherwise. On the other hand, her recent and current Protean experimentation may bear witness to a more animating effect of her recent separation from her husband.

A few final ideas, mostly my own, will now be presented. First, I would contend that there is a shorthand, all-inclusive way of summarizing the needs that have been discussed in this paper: those I called the need for security, intimacy, support, and for autonomy, growth, and strength; Becker's needs for merger with a protective web, and standing out and developing the self-powers; Bowlby's
needs for secure attachment, and confident autonomy; Lifton's emphasis on connection on one hand, and movement on the other (with integrity underneath, or overarching)—and the need I will describe as the need to be receptive to one's inner needs and feelings, and effectively to articulate them and create life styles in which the needs can be fulfilled. My way of summarizing that ungodly mass of ideas is to refer to them as the "inner" and the "outer"; or what is traditionally considered "feminine" and "masculine", "passive" and "active", even "yin" and "yang".

One word which describes the combination of these two general principles, their full development within each person, is androgyny. Perhaps this is a form of Lifton's integrity versus disintegration—or of Plato's original idea that each human was male and female, but the two halves had become separated from each other. Androgyny means each person is both inner and outer, passive and active, receptive (to oneself and others) and externally effective, connected to and supported by others and independent and strong on one's own. Androgyny is an idea whose time has come. The Women's Movement is concerned with developing the strong, autonomous side of women, while hopefully not neglecting the inner side. I think there is great need for a Men's Movement to develop the inner, receptive, connected side of men, while not neglecting the outer.
An example, relevant to psychoanalysis, of how androgyny is an idea whose time is coming, was presented in a recent talk by psychoanalytically-trained literary critic Norman Holland. He suggested that progressive psychoanalytically-oriented critics today are, or should be, not only objectively and rationally analyzing literary works (the "outer" or "masculine" approach), but also giving equal weight to feeling and listening to their own inner responses to literary works (the "inner" or "feminine" approach). Some of the comments following his talk, mostly critical, mostly by male psychoanalysts and critics, indicated that androgyny may be coming but has not arrived.

A final way of summarizing what has been learned from this paper, at least by me, is to say that people are best off when they know their real needs and go about fulfilling them. Our society, I think, would be best off if its real goals were to find and fulfill its members' real needs. As a waitress said (approximately) in the movie "Alice Doesn't Live Here Anymore" (to Alice, whose husband had died and who was trying to decide how best to achieve renewal in her life):

Honey, you just gotta find out what you want, and when you do, just jump right in there with both feet and let the Devil take the hindmost.
FOOTNOTES


7 Many of the intellectual sources of psychohistory are discussed or mentioned throughout R. J. Lifton, Explorations in Psychohistory, The Wellfleet Papers (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1974).

8 Ibid., p. 32.


12 K. Keniston, The Uncommitted (New York, 1965) and Young Radicals (New York, 1968).

13 R. Coles, Children of Crisis (Boston, 1967).


15 Lifton, "From Analysis to Form," p. 15.

17 Ibid., p. 229.
18 Lifton, "From Analysis to Form," p. 3.
20 See Lifton, Home from the War, and Lifton, "From Analysis to Form," p. 73.
21 Lifton, From Analysis to Form, pp. 70-71.
22 Ibid., p. 73.
23 Ibid., p. 70.
24 E. Jong, Fear of Flying (New York: Signet, 1974)
M. Piercy, Small Changes (Greenwich, Conn.: Fawcett, 1972).
29 Excerpt from Chicago Sun-Times review of The Denial of Death, on the back of the book jacket.
30 Lifton, From Analysis to Form, p. 19.
31 Ibid., p. 19.
32 Ibid., p. 15.
34. in Garskof, *op. cit.*, p. 97-122.
35. p. 277; 250:100.
37. p. 277; 127.
38. p. 79.
40. p. 179
42. p. 252
43. p. 299
44. Lifton, "From Analysis to Form," p. 31-32.
45. Lifton, personal communication.
46. "From Analysis to Form," p. 32.
47. See, for example, *The Wellfleet Papers*, p. 39, 281.
51. Bowlby, *op. cit.*
52. See, for example, much discussion by Lifton in "From Analysis to Form" and in "The Sense of Immortality: on Death and the Continuity of Life" in *The Wellfleet Papers*, p. 271-37.
55. at Yale University, Feb. 22, 1975.
APPENDIX

Interview Form

I. Introductory.

A. Current status of marriage (separated, divorce in process, divorced); summary chronology.

B. Biographical summary (composition of nuclear family, ages, where grew up, socio-economic background).

II. Early experiences with close relationships.

A. Mother -- what was she like; your relationship with her, especially in terms of closeness-intimacy-security, dependency, independence, and room for growth.

B. Father -- same questions.

C. Mother and father's marriage -- what was it like, specifically: closeness-intimacy-communication-fun-sex; room for individuality and independence; mother and father's roles in terms of decisions, responsibilities; did mother work; handling of anger.

D. Your early expectations of marriage and experience with divorce, if any.

E. Relationships with siblings, friends.

F. Early feelings about your body, sex; how you handled anger; self-assertiveness.

G. Experience with death, personal loss, separation, other traumas.

III. The marriage.

A. Summary chronological account of the relationship, touching on: meeting, wedding, major events, children, separation and divorce.

B. Particular attention to: same issues as in II. C. above.

C. Children: if exist, were they wanted, how has it been to be a mother; if no children, why not, feelings about having none, thoughts about the future.
IV. Separation and divorce (to extent not already discussed)

A. What caused it, what precipitated the actual break, sequence of reunions and res separations.

B. Your feelings -- denial, disbelief, anger, guilt, sadness, fear, aloneness, resolution, etc.

C. Who, what supported you, made it easier; harder.

V. Directions from this point into the future.

A. Thoughts and feelings about self-fulfillment and growth.

B. About relationships -- new directions, friendship and love relationships with men and women, sexual relationships with men and women (or thoughts about sex with women), with attention to the differences between woman-man and woman- woman relationships; living arrangements; children.

C. Thoughts and feelings about death, getting old.

VI. Final thoughts.

A. About "masculine" and "feminine" characteristics: are there any innate differences, should there be ideally any culturally-developed differences.

B. Association with and influence of the Women's Movement, to extent not already discussed.

C. How would you characterize your whole story in a couple of sentences.
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