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PATTERNS OF INTIMACY:
A STUDY OF 30-YEAR-OLD PROFESSIONAL WOMEN

A Thesis Presented

By

LYNN R. STARKER

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

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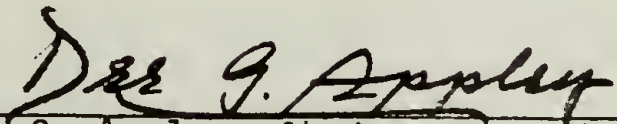
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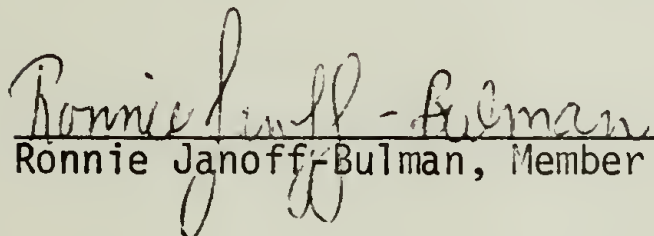
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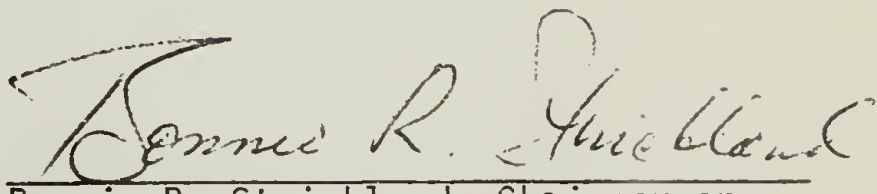
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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

The Problem

Intimacy, as it is generally discussed in the literature, is thought of in terms of heterosexual dyads, usually within the context of a marital relationship. Underlying much of this work, and implicit in it, is the traditional model for marital relationships: that the primary focus for the husband's life is his work, and the primary focus for the wife is her husband and family. Within this model, the woman's primary commitment is to her own relational life and to that of her family. She assumes the task of affective maintenance, while her husband demonstrates more instrumental competence. As women's roles change, however, the increasing number of professionally committed women, and the men with whom they interact, are rejecting this model. Instead, they are struggling to find new patterns of interaction based on a more equal sharing of both affective and instrumental tasks. As such, many of the models of intimacy and close relationships which are reported in the literature are no longer sufficient; although they accurately portray a part of the phenomenon, other factors must also be taken into account. In some ways, the problems which women are now confronting regarding the integration of relationships and career are the same ones which men have always faced. A primary difference, however, is that professionally committed women generally do not have another

person who is willing to assume relational maintenance functions. As women become more invested in their careers, new areas of gratification are available to them which may become equal to, or supercede, relational satisfactions.

This situation, in which women seek to balance relational and career commitments and derive gratifications from both spheres, is a relatively new one. Models for this type of relational lifestyle are not typically available, and many women feel they must chart a new course for themselves and their families. The attempt to integrate career and family has implications for women's marital (or other primary) relationships, their other relationships, and decisions about whether or not to have children. In addition, marriage is not necessarily a "given." Alternative styles of living one's relational life are gaining viability, among them is singlehood. As such, women are seeking to explore and establish new relationships and new patterns of relating, which are more congruent with these emerging lifestyles.

Within this context, this study was designed to investigate the ways in which professionally committed women who have chosen differing styles of living their personal or relational lives meet their needs for intimacy and close relationships. Both married and single women were selected to provide a range of relational lifestyles. Only child-free women were interviewed. This ensured a degree of homogeneity between the two groups, and suggested that the participants would be struggling with the decision regarding having children and the subsequent lifestyle changes this decision would entail. Women between the ages of 28 and 33 were selected because they were likely to be occupationally secure,

and considering issues regarding the career/relationship balance in an immediate way.

This study originated from my interest in examining how women in career-oriented lifestyles meet their needs for intimacy. In part, the question arose from my own experience as a single, professionally-oriented woman, and from that of my friends and colleagues. Many women choose a path other than the traditional one because of the benefits (primarily autonomy and professional gratifications) that route promises. Yet many women are not aware of the potential problems which also lie along that road--that autonomy might also mean aloneness, and that a professional focus for one's life might entail diminished time and energy for personal relationships and endeavors. Women who decide not to make the career or relationships choice are frequently faced with a time of conflict, as they try to satisfy opposing needs and meet seemingly irreconcilable demands. It becomes evident that the way one lives one's work life, and the way one lives one's relational life are the two major determinants of lifestyle. A firm commitment to one necessarily places restrictions on the other. Within this schema, I wondered how professionally committed women meet their personal needs for intimacy and closeness. How do these women talk and think about intimate relationships? Do professionally committed women choose to invest a significant amount of energy in primary relationships? Are there differences between women who are involved in stable, primary relationships as compared to those who are not? What effects are experienced by women who feel that their needs for intimacy are not met?

This study, then, explores the relational patterns of a sample of

28-33-year-old, professionally committed women; the relationships which comprise these patterns and the issues which surround them; and the impact which differing styles of meeting relational needs have on these women as they seek to fulfill those needs. The study was designed as an exploratory one, and as such, its scope is necessarily broad. In this attempt to clarify the salient issues and dimensions of the problem, it is hoped that some questions will be answered and others will be elucidated for future study.

In Chapter II, the problem under investigation as presented here is reviewed and elaborated with pertinent literature. Chapter III details the methodology which was employed, and Chapter IV discusses the results of the study. Chapter V elaborates the important themes and integrates some of the results.

CHAPTER II

INTIMACY AND ITS SOCIAL CONTEXT

The Social Context of Relationships

Intimacy and/or close relationships can be viewed as one aspect of the triad of occupation, family and relationship concerns, and leisure pursuits which together comprise one's "life career" (Lowenthal et al., 1976). This life career, which unfolds in the course of experience, evolves as a product of the interaction between the individual and the social milieu. Hence, the study of individuals, and of the development of the components of their life careers, must acknowledge the person within the social context. Not long ago, satisfactory adult development was viewed as conformity to social roles and norms (Havighurst, 1953). More recently, turning points in adult development have been recognized, and the evaluation of the alternative paths available to the individual at these "crises" has been acknowledged as being culturally relative (Erikson, 1968). Within this context, the importance of the historical time (i.e., Depression, World War II, Viet Nam War) during which an individual matures has been emphasized as having a profound effect on his or her expectations and behavior. Each birth cohort faces novel circumstances which alter the social context, and each has a unique pattern of experiences during its passage through the life cycle (Van Dusen & Sheldon, 1976).

The recent development of the women's movement has had a dramatic

impact on both women and men, and on their relationships, as it has altered the social environment within which they live. A look at the evolution of these changes for women follows.

Salient Contingencies of Development for Women

Traditionally, the female life cycle and the family life cycle have been equated; women's only socially sanctioned roles have been as wife and mother. Women's lives have been regulated by the family life cycle, and their "careers" have been circumscribed by family roles. Women, but not men, have tended to define their age status and social status in terms of the timing of events within the family cycle (Neugarten, 1967; Sheehy, 1974; Van Dusen & Sheldon, 1976). Even when women have worked outside the home, this work has been considered by women, as well as men, as secondary to women's primary role. Just as a man's primary commitment has been to his work, a woman's husband and family have been the central focus of her life (Appley, 1977).

Yet, there are indications that restriction to the family life cycle has had adverse psychological effects for women. Women consider themselves unhappily married more often than men do although marriage is socially more important for a woman's happiness and she tends to make more adjustments within her marriage since she is invested in its success in such a primary way. Married women have more emotional problems than single women; they are more likely to be passive, phobic and depressed. In addition, married women report having more emotional difficulties than married men. Twice as many women as men have felt a nervous breakdown was impending, and many more women experience psycholo-

gical anxiety, physical anxiety and immobilization (Bernard, 1971). It has been suggested that this difference between married men and married women may be as a result of the fact that the married woman usually has only one role, that of housewife, while the married man functions as both head of household and worker. Accordingly, the man has more sources of gratification available to him. A survey of seventeen studies comparing married men and women found that married women have a higher incidence of mental disorders than married men (Gove, 1972).

However, the restrictive role expectations which covaried with these patterns are loosening, as other alternatives are emerging and gaining social acceptance and viability. A primary factor which is changing is that women are now seeking more meaningful work, and are making a commitment to this aspect of their lives. Previously, a woman was more likely to devote herself to caring for, listening to, and believing in other people. She filled the relational maintenance functions in the family, and fulfilled her personal ambitions vicariously through others, usually her husband. As such she was dependent on the continuing need of her loved ones for her. Women who sought both career and family gratifications tended to view this situation as an either/or choice in early adulthood; they elected to pursue one path, and hoped the other would become available in the future. Some women did try to "do it all," and combine marriage, career and motherhood at the same time. Other women chose a single lifestyle, and frequently satisfied their affective needs through their work (Sheehy, 1974).

A recent study indicates that, at least for educated women, priorities and life career goals are changing, and accordingly lifestyles

are likely to change. In a study of 60 undergraduate women, Appley (1976) reports that 80 percent of the participants accord career equal importance with the wife/mother role. One hundred percent of respondents expect to be working five years after graduation, and 80 percent in ten years after graduation. In fifteen years, only 10 percent of the respondents see themselves as housewives with one or more children. All others plan a career. Seventeen percent of these women have decided not to marry; 10 percent have decided not to have children, and an additional 43 percent were unsure if they would marry or have children. All women expect egalitarian marital relationships in which the husbands and wives have equal voice in family decisions regarding social life, child rearing and finances. Many women planned careers in typically male professions, such as law, medicine and administration.

If the women in this study are representative of educated women across the country, important variations in lifestyles are certain to emerge which will have major repercussions on relationships and relational patterns. These college-age women are still planning their lives; however, even in older women, the trend toward career-oriented lifestyles is evident, and marriage and a family is not always seen as the ideal life career goal.

Singlehood as an Alternative Lifestyle

As lifestyles and work patterns for women change, relational patterns are also changing. The prevalence of single adults is increasing in America, and the strength of this trend can easily be seen in adult women. U.S. Department of Commerce figures (cited in Van Dusen & Shel-

done, 1976) indicate that the median age at first marriage for women has risen from 20.3 in 1950 to 21.1 in 1974. In addition, in the age group in which most men and women traditionally have married (20-24), the percentage of women remaining single has risen from 28% in 1960 to 39% in 1974. It remains to be seen whether these women are simply postponing marriage, or are opting for a single lifestyle. However, in 1973, 13% of female heads of households had never been married. Hence, a significant number of women are currently confronted with the problems and/or joys of a life of singlehood.

Some authors have suggested reasons for this trend (Stein, 1976; Van Dusen & Sheldon, 1976). At the present time, more than at any other in history, women are completing college, getting advanced degrees, and entering traditionally all-male professions. The women's movement has supported women in taking on these new roles, and has been in the forefront in expanding economic and employment opportunities for women. Also, the availability of reliable methods of contraception has enabled women to make choices other than motherhood or celibacy. Yet, in spite of all this, the choice to remain single still receives little cultural or institutional support. The woman herself may feel that a single life style is less than optimal.

It is well documented that girls have tended to rely on others for self-definition and have perceived their worth in terms of interpersonal acceptance and evaluation by others; hence, marriage has been more important for women than for men. Adult women who decide to seek a career may have a difficult time. They may have acquired self concepts and motives that incorporate traditionally feminine ideals such as marriage

and motherhood, as well as individuality, creativity, independence and competitive achievement. They are frequently best able to satisfy conflicting needs once they have formed a supportive, fulfilling relationship with a man which enables them to pursue career goals from a safe, interpersonal base (Bardwick, 1971; Bardwick & Douvan, 1971; Bernard, 1971).

But what of women who do not marry before seeking career goals? Much of the literature is descriptive. For example, demographic characteristics significantly correlated with singlehood in women are: religious affiliation of Catholicism, high educational achievement, high IQ, high occupational achievement and high income. In contrast, single men tend to exhibit low educational achievement, low IQ and low occupational achievement (Spreitzer & Riley, 1974). It is unclear from these data whether single women tend to achieve, or whether women who achieve tend to be single. However, the pattern is evidenced quite early; Feldman (1973) reports that women are more likely to be single in graduate school than men are (39% versus 29%).

It has been reported above (see Bernard, 1971; Gove, 1972) that married women experience more psychological difficulties than single women. How, then, do single women compare with their male counterparts? Recent studies indicate that single women tend to be better psychologically adjusted than single men. Knupfer et al. (1966) found that in terms of subjective assessment of overall happiness, the percentage "unhappy" is higher for single men than for single women. Previous work (Srole, 1962) indicates that felt unhappiness is a valid indicator of maladjustment. In attempting to explain their data, Knupfer et al.

quote Gurin (1960) who states that, "Women are seen as more able to form or maintain other than marital attachments; their ties to the family and friends can be very strong" (1966, p. 347). They hypothesize that women's interest in interacting with other people without specific instrumental goals, and their ability to do so, may be a critical factor in their greater psychological adjustment.

Seiden (1976) also hypothesizes that expressive competence is critical in single women's relatively better psychological adjustment. She cites data which indicate that, in many groups, women's self-reported life satisfaction exceeds that of men: married, no children, aged 18-29, by 17 percentage points; never married, over 29 years of age, by 12 percentage points; never married, 18-29 years of age, by 11 percentage points; widowed, by 6 percentage points; and married with children, 3-1 percentage points (declining as women have younger children). From these data, Seiden concludes that it is a myth that women need marriage and a family for psychological fulfillment more than men do, since it appears that marriage during the childrearing period is associated with less happiness and more stress for women.

However, the family unit does usually fill expressive functions in living such as supporting and stabilizing adult personalities, providing support in illness and disaster, sharing tasks of child rearing and socialization, as well as the more instrumental function of pooling economic resources. How, then, do people who are not engaged in family systems fulfill these functions? Stein (1976) points to the importance of a network of friends for singles. He enumerates the important aspects of friendship as being: care and support, reciprocity, intensity, ac-

ceptance and judgment, honesty, and sharing of feelings and activities. Singles may experience these qualities of relationships in women's groups, group living situations, and others.

The importance of support systems has been confirmed by others. A support system can be defined as, "an enduring pattern of continuous or intermittent ties that play a significant part in maintaining the psychological and physical integrity of the individual over time" (Caplan, 1974, p. 7). According to Caplan, mental or physical disease is more likely to occur if consistent messages about expectations and evaluations of an individual's behavior are not communicated, or if an individual is unfamiliar with these cues. In this case, the individual cannot feel safe and valued. Caplan sees protective social processes, such as group supports, as important buffers to the effects of social disintegration caused by ambiguous or confusing feedback from the environment. In a confusing world, support systems, which are continuing social aggregates, provide the individual with consistent feedback and validation and aid in offsetting conflicting messages from the larger context. In addition, support systems fulfill needs which must be satisfied in enduring interpersonal relationships, such as love, affection, intimacy, validation of personal identity and worth, nurturance and dependency, help with tasks, and support in handling emotions and controlling impulses. Most people have a range of relationships which meet these needs.

Support, as discussed here, may be of a continuing nature in ongoing relationships, or may be derived intermittently in acute need or crisis. In either case, three components of support are evident: sig-

nificant others assist the individual in mobilizing psychological resources and mastering emotional difficulties; tasks are shared; and extra supplies of money, materials, skills and cognitive assistance are provided to improve handling of the situation.

An important naturally occurring support system is the family or marital group, which is supposed to provide attitudes of sensitivity and respect for the needs of all its members and an effective communication system. However, it appears that many of the needs normally met by families (including needs for intimacy and, more generally, close relationships) can also be satisfied by networks of friends, neighbors, colleagues and acquaintances.

Intimacy

So far, the social context within which relationships in general occur has been discussed, focussing specifically on the relational context for women. An examination of the more qualitative elements which exist within relationships, and which are critical in enabling the individual to feel cared for, loved and secure, is also in order. While relationships have many properties which contribute to the development of these feelings, only intimacy will be discussed in depth. In many ways, a highly intimate relationship has been seen as the pinnacle of interpersonal interaction. Yet the delineation of the phenomenon which is called intimacy may be an arduous task. Intimacy, by its very nature, is not concrete or objective, but is a phenomenon or feeling, the very perception of which is defined subjectively by the individual, and which

may vary according to his or her needs, values and general state of mind at the time. In other words, intimacy is intangible and fluid, and the degree of it to be found in a relationship (whether by subjective report or external observation) is likely to vary inconsistently over time and space. Some of this variance may be due to the interaction of the individuals in the relationship with their social environment, and with the factors which have been discussed above. This potential effect on intimacy, however, is not discussed in the literature. Instead, intimacy is discussed as if it could be objectively defined.

Some Descriptions of Intimacy

It has frequently been assumed that humans require interpersonal relationships to satisfy basic needs and to avoid loneliness. According to Weiss (1969), the individual has a set of intrinsic needs which can only be satisfied through relationships with others. These include needs for affection, power, recognition, prestige, intimacy and others. The intrinsic nature of these needs is central to this theory, and this view has been adopted for the purposes of this study. According to this view, if these needs cannot be gratified in appropriate relationships, the individual will suffer.

Lowenthal et al. (1976) have outlined four types of dyadic relationships which fulfill interpersonal needs: acquaintanceship, friendly interaction, friendship, and intimacy. They state that:

Each type is distinguished by an increment of knowledge about the unique individuality of the other, as contrasted with a role-reliant or stereotyped conception. . . . The intimate relationship is even more personal and, ideally, totally free of the formal, involving a higher degree of closeness, spon-

taneous interaction, emotional commitment, responsibility and mutuality (p. 48).

Ramey (1976), in his book Intimate Friendships, never defines intimacy, but rather discusses it in terms of the attributes associated with it. He details six components of intimacy: intellectual, emotional, sexual, social, family and work, and states that the individual will frequently achieve varying degrees of intimacy in different relationships with respect to each of these six components. In this schema, the willingness to be vulnerable promotes the sharing of intimacy and love. In a primary relationship, this is identified by caring, sharing and helping that involves active concern for the other that transcends one's own need. Love, according to Ramey, is viewed as the mutual desire of two people to put meeting the needs of the other before having their own needs met. (Although it is implicit in the foregoing that intimacy is critically associated with love, the precise nature of the relationship is not specified.)

According to Rubin (1973), intimacy is one of three component parts which in unity make up love, and it refers to the bond or link between two people. This bond is usually evidenced by close and confidential communication between two people through both verbal and non-verbal channels. However, it is unclear whether the critical feature of intimacy for Rubin is the intangible "bond" or the open communication. The other parts of love are attachment and caring. Attachment is manifested as a group of needs which are fulfilled by the other, and caring is seen as giving or self-surrender for the other and the satisfaction of his or her needs. A mature, intimate relationship, for

Rubin, would be characterized by fulfillment of need complementarity between the partners, as opposed to value consensus which is more typical of the early, developmental stages of relationships.

For White (1976) intimacy is a close and confidential friendship marked by the exchange of thoughts and feelings coming from one's innermost being. The specialness of this relationship derives from sharing what would otherwise be private. An intimate friendship in this view is a special case of friendships in general, which are seen more in terms of companionship. This more prevalent type of friendship exists without intimacy, but does possess qualities of loyalty, strong mutual support and certain shared validations of external experiences. Nurture and dependence, as opposed to confidential sharing, are likely to be the bases of this type of relationship.

Five categories of relational functions have been enumerated by Weiss (1969), all of which seem to be necessary for psychological well-being. Although each of these functions is usually met by a different relationship, overlaps may occur. A primary function discussed is intimacy, which Weiss describes as, "the provision of an effective emotional integration in which individuals can express their feelings freely and without self-consciousness" (p. 38). Attainment of intimacy prevents the individual from experiencing a sense of emotional isolation or loneliness. In order for a relationship to become intimate, there must be trust, effective understanding and ready access. This type of relationship is most often accomplished in marriage, and occasionally between an individual and a same sex friend, the latter more commonly found among women.

Another important function is social integration, which allows for the sharing of experience, information and ideas, as well as the exchange of favors and concrete help. In this type of relationship, people share concerns because of similar situations or because they are striving for similar objectives (as in professional relationships); friends and colleagues most frequently fill this function. In its absence, a feeling of social isolation and/or boredom is likely to be experienced.

The other three functions of relationships can be met by nonintimate others, but are still of critical importance to the individual. An opportunity for nurturing, in which an adult takes responsibility for the well-being of a child is important lest the individual feel that his/her life is unfulfilled, meaningless and empty of purpose. This function is usually met through parenting. Another function of relationships is to provide reassurance of personal worth, in which an individual's competence in some role is affirmed. This function is usually met by colleagues, family or through other supportive relationships, and if it is not fulfilled there may be a loss of self-esteem. Weiss' fifth function of relationships is that of assistance, in which services or resources are provided to the individual. This function is usually met by family and friends, and its absence results in a sense of anxiety and vulnerability.

The function of social integration appears to be similar to White's discussion of nonintimate friendships. Yet for the purposes of this study, a blending of these two aspects of relationships forms the most useful and comprehensive definition of intimacy. A truly intimate rela-

tionship, in this schema, would incorporate unselfconscious sharing of emotions, feelings, thoughts and experiences. Functions of emotional and social integration would be filled. Properties of the relationship would include loyalty, mutual support, nurturance, interdependence, validations of both internal and external experiences, and open communication between the participants. There would be a mutual desire, at least at some times, to attend to the needs of the other before having one's own needs met. Attainment of this type of relationship would aid the individual in avoiding feelings of loneliness and social isolation.

This description of intimacy is not meant to imply that every intimate relationship must possess all of these qualities all the time in order to be considered intimate, or that it even must possess them all at some time or another, although it may be assumed that the ideal, intimate relationship might look like this. Each individual has varying needs for each of these dimensions of intimacy, and therefore it can be assumed that in any pair of individuals the balance of each of these qualities will be unique. However, it is hypothesized that each individual feels some intrinsic need (as postulated by Weiss, 1969) to share emotions, be supported, nurtured, be validated, etc., and that if these needs are not met the individual will suffer negative psychological consequences.

At this point, it seems important to note that in all of the definitions of intimacy in the literature, the relationships discussed are most often assumed to be primary relationships composed of heterosexual dyads, usually within a marital context. In fact, intimacy is rarely depicted in other than marital or family relationships. In addi-

tion, it is generally assumed in this literature that an individual's need for intimacy can only be met through these dyadic relationships. This is in contrast to the work on support systems discussed earlier.

A word is in order about sexual intimacy and its connection to emotional intimacy. Sexual relations certainly need not be intimate, but in intimate relationships sexuality may be an important expression of feelings. It is probably very difficult for a male-female pair to maintain an intimate relationship without discussion of and/or acting on sexual feelings. However, in same sex pairs, or in pairs which for any reason are not considered appropriate sex partners, emotional intimacy can apparently be maintained without difficulty (Weiss, 1969).

The Process of the Development of Intimacy

The development of intimacy follows the attainment of other levels of relationship, which may be defined as awareness, surface contact and mutuality (Levinger & Snoek, 1972). Awareness is viewed as a state of acquaintance in which one person is aware of the other and forms opinions about him or her, but is not involved in any significant interaction with him/her. In order for the relationship to progress beyond this stage, the two people would need to be in spatial and social proximity, and the "aware" member would need to have cause (personal needs, attractiveness of the other) to pursue the relationship.

The surface contact stage is marked by bilateral interaction, but with very limited interdependence between the two parties. Their interactions tend to be role-oriented and regulated by external norms. The individuals' perceptions of satisfaction with the outcomes of their

interactions determines the degree to which the relationship will develop to a stage of greater depth. The extension of their behaviors beyond those of surface roles is likely to signal a readiness to explore new ways of relating, frequently accompanied by self-disclosure, and direct communication of one's own values and desired outcomes.

Mutuality is viewed as a state in which each partner's actions and attitudes are markedly influenced by the other's actions, views and attitude eventuating in an interdependence or intersection in their two lives. It is characterized by the development of joint attitudes, behavior and attributes. Each partner has knowledge of the other, and assumes some responsibility for his/her outcomes as they begin to develop mutually satisfying patterns of interaction.

A crucial part of the development of mutuality (and intimacy) is self-disclosure (Levinger & Snoek, 1972; Rubin, 1973) which involves the risk that what is revealed (one's self) will not be enough, adequate or acceptable to the partner. It is through the process of self-disclosure, in which approval, experiences and feelings are shared, that the individual is able to explore the other's potential as a friend or lover and subsequently indicate trust, liking and the desire to move to deeper levels of intimacy. The process tends to be reciprocal, and in situations where disclosure is not responded to in kind, disclosures usually cease. The thoughts and feelings shared tend to progress from the impersonal to more private information (one's past, feelings about the other, conflict-laden emotions) which, if disclosed, result in vulnerability. If this information is revealed and is accepted by the other, the bond between them is strengthened. In the fully mutual (in-

timate) relationship, nothing is intentionally withheld and everything of interpersonal importance becomes shared knowledge.

Another aspect of the development of a fully mutual, intimate relationship occurs through the evolution of "pair communality" (Levinger, Senn & Jorgensen, 1970), a property which supercedes the characteristics of the individuals. Through this process, which arises from mutual investment in the relationship, the relationship becomes a gestalt whole which is greater than the sum of the two members, and the relationship becomes the common property of the partners.

Intimacy, and close relationships more generally, are discussed in the literature without regard to the social context within which individuals live. Variables such as age, education, work patterns, lifestyle and the impact of relationships other than the primary one are rarely considered. As such, this view of intimate relationships is narrow, and in failing to recognize these more social variables, may be omitting some of the salient characteristics or parameters of intimate relationships.

CHAPTER III

METHODOLOGY

The Qualitative Model

The study of women's close relationships was approached with many questions but with few formal hypotheses. Therefore, an exploratory orientation was adopted. The major intention was to discover the ways in which women think about their relationships, and to arrive at a conceptual framework for the phenomena in question. Raush (1974) suggests the use of a qualitative methodology, in which the investigator adopts the role of a participant-conceptualizer, as more appropriate for clinical research questions, and coming from an exploratory stance, this approach seemed applicable. A qualitative method offered an opportunity, at least to some degree, to enter into the experiences of the participants, to gain access to their thought processes and spontaneous insights about their relationships and to arrive at an idea about the ways in which women think and feel about this very important area of their lives. The goal was, as much as possible, to know the phenomenon, and not only to know about it (Lofland, 1971).

The conceptual framework for designing the study was influenced by the literature, discussions with colleagues and friends, and by personal experiences and questions. The goal was to provide an open-ended setting which would evoke and develop insight and open communication between the participants and the investigator. The interview setting thus

corresponded in many ways to any other interpersonal relationship, and it offered an additional dimension to the data--not only what the participant said about her relationships, but also the interviewer's experience of her in relationship.

The final reason for choosing to use a qualitative methodology is largely a personal one. I have always viewed research as most useful, viable and "alive" if it can be seen as relevant or helpful not only by my colleagues and myself, but also by non-psychologists. I have chosen to investigate a topic of great immediacy not only for academic researchers, but also for clinicians and professional women more generally. Qualitative methodology offered a route to the investigation of this area which would be accessible to all of these groups. The synthesis of the experiences of the participants can act as a validation of experiences of other professional women, and can catalyze their own thinking. The composites of women who are satisfied with their relationships can in part become a model for "healthy" relationships of use to clinicians, and the more empirical and theoretical findings will be of especial interest to researchers. The personal benefit which I have gained from the use of this methodology derives from my interest in each of these areas in my own life, and my commitment to try and integrate them.

Participants

The participants were ten single and ten married women, all of whom worked outside the home and resided in Amherst, Massachusetts.

Amherst is a small, rural community. Its primary distinction is that it is the home of two colleges and a university (Amherst College, Hampshire College and the University of Massachusetts). These schools are the major employers in the area, and the community truly fits the description of a "college town." Amherst tends to be politically progressive and liberal. It is not representative of American communities; it is a locality in which alternative lifestyles are more common, accepted and are generally validated.

Of the single women, seven had never been married and three were divorced. Two of the married women were currently living apart from their husbands. The range of number of years married was from two years to 13 years, with a mode of seven years and a mean of 6.9 years. All participants were between the ages of 28 and 33, with a mean age of 29.9 for single women and a mean age of 29.5 for married women. This age range was chosen because the single women were beyond the age by which women usually marry, and it was thought that they might be considering a single lifestyle. Also, this age range encompasses a time of life documented as an adult life "crisis" (Sheehy, 1974). Evaluation of one's life pattern is common at this time. Therefore, it was hoped that the participants would be more sensitive to the issues in their lives, and would be readily able to discuss them. In order for the two groups to be as similar as possible, differing only in the presence or absence of a marital relationship, women without children were selected. Married and single groups were chosen to ensure the existence of at least two different lifestyles within the sample.

All participants were involved in a career which was critically

important to them. Both married and single women were represented in the occupations of social worker, professor, psychologist and librarian. The other participants were distributed among other occupations in the arts and human services, such as teacher, college administrator, painter and writer. No women were employed in business or industry. This may reflect sex biases in occupational choice, but it may also be typical of Amherst more generally, which is a rural and non-industrial community. Although the narrowness of range of occupations may have had an impact on the data, these effects have not been ascertained at this time.

All of the women had been living in Amherst for at least one year, and many had returned to the area after having lived in other places. The range was from one year to 18 years, with a mean of 5.8 years for single women and a mean of 4.1 years for married women.

The diversity of living situations of the participants reflects in some measure the variety of lifestyles they have chosen. Single women lived alone, with roommates or with lovers. Married women lived alone, with husbands, or with their husbands and roommates. Women in both groups, then, lived in a range of situations from alone to communal arrangements. Women in both groups lived in houses (rented or owned), in apartments in houses, and in apartment complexes.

Procedure

The participants were recruited from the Amherst street directory, a compilation of census data which includes the name, address, year of

birth and occupation of all adult residents of Amherst. The names of all women who fit the criteria (regarding age, marital status, career, no children) were extracted, and their telephone numbers obtained. Individuals were then selected in an attempt to achieve a balance in regard to types of occupations, geographical subareas of Amherst, and type of dwelling. The sampling procedure was designed to elicit a representative sample of this one group of women in Amherst.

After the potential participants were identified, letters were mailed to them explaining the study and requesting their participation (see Appendix A). A follow-up telephone call was placed to ascertain their decisions. If women agreed to participate, an appointment for an interview was scheduled. Forty single women were contacted by mail in order to obtain the ten participants. Of the thirty women who did not participate, fifteen had moved out of Amherst, twelve did not fit the criteria of the study (i.e., they were divorced or widowed and had children or were not working), and three declined. All three of these women stated that they did not have enough time due to their work commitments (i.e., finishing a thesis, working more than one job). Thirty-eight married women were contacted in order to obtain the ten participants. Of the twenty-eight women who did not participate, seven had moved out of Amherst, fourteen did not fit the criteria (i.e., they had children or were not working), three could not be contacted by telephone, and four declined participation. These women were simply not interested, or did not want to discuss personal material with a stranger.

After the interview, each woman was given the opportunity to discuss the study with the investigator, and was told that she would re-

ceive a summary of the findings upon completion of the project. The participants were also informed that a copy of the manuscript would be available to them if they wished to read the entire study.

The Interview

The data were collected via a semi-structured personal interview conducted by the primary investigator (see Interview Guide, Appendix B). This type of interview can be seen as one whose goal

. . . is not to elicit choices between alternative answers to pre-formed questions but, rather, to elicit from the interviewee what he considers to be important questions relative to a given topic, his description of some situation being explored. . . . Its object is to find out what kinds of things are happening, rather than to determine the frequency of pre-determined kinds of things that the researcher already believes can happen (Lofland, 1971, p. 76).

The process of constructing the interview guide centered around the consolidation of the original hypotheses and questions--those which were distilled from a review of the pertinent literature, discussions with colleagues, and some personal experiences which have previously been discussed. The guide was constructed with the dual objective of covering these major areas, while simultaneously encouraging the individual participant to provide her own perspectives on her relationships. These dual goals necessitated walking a kind of tightrope--giving the interviewee free rein to express her feelings about the questions, while at the same time returning gently to the interview guide. In an attempt to attend to each of these divergent aims, the interview was divided into

three segments:

1. The participant was asked to describe spontaneously each of her four closest relationships. If she required more guidance, I asked her to describe the relationship to me, a stranger, so that I could gain a sense of what made it "close" or "special" to her. This part of the interview was included so that I could discover the ways in which the participants described their relationships "in their own terms", and before I imposed any structure on their thinking.
2. Each relationship was discussed again, but this time I asked any questions which the participant had not spontaneously addressed, and frequently I asked for more elaboration even when the questions had been answered. Many participants found this section of the interview especially helpful; they thought about their relationships in new ways, and realized areas of similarity or difference in their relationships of which they had previously been unaware.
3. The third part of the interview addressed more general issues about the participant's relational life. It was designed to elicit a broader picture of her relationships, the ways in which she conducted her relational life, and her satisfaction with her relationships. During this part of the interview, participants synthesized some of what they had been discussing, and it was here that many of their own, more subjective feelings became most apparent.

At the end of each interview, the participant was offered the time to discuss the experience of participating in the interview, to raise any questions she had, and to discuss the study with the investigator.

In most cases the interview was conducted in the participant's home; however two women requested that the interview occur at their place of work. It was hoped that by being in the participant's home, and "on her turf", an atmosphere of maximal comfort would be engendered. Indeed, the interviewees frequently offered me coffee or snacks, and the meetings were generally relaxed and informal. We met wherever the

participants felt most at ease; rooms within the house included the living room, dining room, kitchen and bedroom. The only requirements were that we be comfortable and have total privacy. The two interviews which occurred at the workplace were generally more formal, more businesslike, and took a shorter amount of time.

The length of the interviews varied greatly, from one hour to 4-1/2 hours, and was affected by several variables. The primary one appears to be the way in which the individual woman approached the issues being addressed. Some women related several anecdotes, and out of these a pattern emerged, the theme of which provided the answer to the question. Other women's thought processes were more directed and focussed, and their answers more concise. The longest interviews were ones in which the women used the interview situation as a catalyst for their own thinking, and explored new levels of the issues being addressed. It was in these interviews, especially, that the participants reported feeling excited and exhilarated about the interview experience, as they learned new things about themselves and their relationships. In these cases, anxiety levels were low, and a genuine rapport developed between the participants and the interviewer.

The strategy upon entering each interview was to try to be as open and flexible as possible in orientation to the individual woman. The goal was to encourage her to express herself as freely as possible. The participants were usually somewhat tense in the beginning of the interview, since they did not know the interviewer or what would be asked. Quite rapidly, however, they relaxed and spoke more openly. The process of developing rapport was an important one, and sharing the in-

interviewer's experiences which corresponded to the ones the women were relating facilitated the process. At these points there was often a marked change in the woman's demeanor, as she became calmer, more relaxed and felt understood. However, there was a considerable degree of variability in the amount that the respondents chose to disclose. The methodological danger inherent in this approach is that of interviewer bias. The subjective nature of the phenomenon under study, as well as the necessity to establish rapport and the decision to facilitate that process through interviewer self-disclosures, could open the door to distortions or misinterpretations resulting from the interviewer's personal attitudes or behavior. In each interview the interviewer tried to monitor her behavior and in self-disclosures attempted to select experiences which were comparable to the ones the participant had related, so that she would feel understood, but so that the statements would not in any way lead her to connections she would not otherwise have made. The goal of this process, then, was to enable the participant to freely recount her experience without the imposition of a conceptual structure.

In two cases, the participants may have experienced some distress as a result of the interview. One woman contacted feelings of loneliness which she usually kept buried. Another woman, at the end of the meeting, said the interview had been difficult for her because it brought back to the surface some painful issues with which she had previously worked in psychotherapy. In each of these cases, the interviewee was offered more time to discuss these feelings which they did not feel was needed. In no case was the interview left with an uneasy feeling about the participant's psychological state.

Data Analysis

The method of data analysis evolved as a result of the question under study and the qualitative nature of the data. In order to achieve ". . . an explicit rendering of the structure, order and patterns found among a set of participants" (Lofland, 1971, p. 7) four of the six units of analysis discussed by Lofland were utilized:

1. Meanings. The verbal productions of participants that define and direct actions.
2. Participation. Persons' holistic involvement in, or adaptation to, a situation or setting under study.
3. Relationships. Interrelationships among several persons considered simultaneously.
4. Settings. The entire setting under study conceived as the unit of analysis (p. 15).

The primary distinction between Lofland's work. This is that in this study all of these levels of analysis were addressed via the interview data, and there was no direct observation of the participants interacting with others at each of these levels.

The first step in analyzing the data was to read over the interviews and allow broad categories and themes to emerge. In subsequently returning to the data with these categories in mind, increasingly specific categories and concepts arose from the richness of the data (Glaser & Strauss, 1967). The final level of concept specification, and of truly delineating the phenomenon in question, came as specific quotes from the interviews were selected to illustrate directly the concepts and categories under discussion. The last step in the process of ana-

lysis was one of concept generalization (Glaser & Strauss, 1967). As each category was specified and defined, interconnections between them emerged and a more integrated picture of the phenomenon was achieved.

CHAPTER IV

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Attributes and Dimensions of Close Relationships

An essential first step in this study of close relationships was to delineate the phenomenon in question. Although the attributes of close relationships are discussed in the literature, it was imperative to establish how this sample of women thought about and described their own close relationships.

Attributes Associated with Close Relationships

In describing their own close relationships, the participants in this study cited all of the properties of relationships discussed in the literature, but also added others. The following list of qualities embodied in close relationships was culled from interviewees' responses to certain questions (On what is this relationship based? How close are you to this person, and what makes it that way? How well do you know each other?) as well as on their spontaneous descriptions of each close relationship (see Interview Schedule, Appendix B). All items listed were offered spontaneously by the participants to open-ended questions. It should be noted that certain properties undoubtedly existed in some relationships, but were not independently cited by the participants. In this case, they do not appear in the frequency count below. No inferences have been made here by the investigator. Table 1 is a compilation

Table 1

Qualities of Close Relationships and Frequency Cited (N = 20)

| <u>Frequency</u> | <u>Attribute of Relationship</u> |
|------------------|---|
| 18 | Free sharing of feelings and problems |
| 14 | Shared past experiences; a link to the past |
| 13 | Common interests |
| 11 | Mutual support |
| 11 | Share professional self, life, goals, aspirations, problems |
| 9 | Mutual trust |
| 9 | Mutual respect and admiration |
| 9 | Share similar "issues" regarding relationships, profession, politics, striving to be independent; Similar outlook on life |
| 8 | Family bond or tie; unconditional love |
| 7 | Sharing of everyday experiences |
| 7 | Differences in personality and style--are "good for each other" |
| 6 | Commitment--knowing the other will be there |
| 6 | Comfortable companionship (as a function of time) |
| 6 | Help each other (or helps me) |
| 6 | Confide in each other |
| 5 | Honesty--tell each other things which are difficult to hear |
| 5 | Common events in past life (not experienced together) |
| 5 | Shared values |
| 5 | Being known instinctively |
| 4 | Sympathetic listener (nondirective, nonjudgmental) |
| 4 | Provides "complement" to one's lifestyle |
| 4 | Playfulness and fun |
| 3 | Allows separateness |
| 1 | Nurturing (a child) |
| 1 | Open communication |
| 1 | Intellectual stimulation |

of actual responses by the participants.

The attributes of relationships listed here can also be categorized according to the function each serves in the formation and maintenance of relationships. Some attributes may fall into more than one category. The totality offers a picture of salient aspects of important relationships (see Table 2).

In general, the attributes which fall under the heading of reciprocity are the properties of relationships which other authors discuss as the critical dimensions of intimacy. Exceptions to this are mutual respect and admiration, commitment, family tie or bond, playfulness and fun, and intellectual stimulation. On the whole, however, these "reciprocal" qualities of relationships are the ones which make the truly intimate relationships special. They speak to the depth and mutuality (Levinger & Snoek, 1972) of the relationship and are rarely experienced in more distant relationships.

Attributes of relationships which are bases for identification are generally those which bring people together. Most can also be seen in terms of value consensus, and they are especially important in the initial stages of the development of relationships, although their importance persists into deeper levels of relationship as the partners continue to feel that they have fundamental things in common with the other person.

The categories of attributes of close relationships which are not discussed in the literature reviewed above are "unilaterality" and "bases for differentiation." Until future investigations are conducted, only speculation as to their significance in the formation and mainten-

Table 2
Salient Parameters of Relationships

| <u>Parameter</u> | <u>Function</u> | <u>Attribute of Relationship</u> |
|--|--|---|
| Similar roles within the relationship --reciprocity | facilitates equal status in and maintenance of the relationship | Free sharing of feelings and problems Mutual support Share professional self, life, goals, etc. Mutual trust Mutual respect and admiration Family bond or tie Sharing of everyday experiences Commitment Comfortable companionship Confide in each other Help each other Honesty Playfulness and fun (mutual) Open communication Intellectual stimulation |
| Complementary roles within the relationship--unilaterality | provides something to the participant--non-reciprocal meeting of one's needs | Helps me out (not mutual) Sympathetic listener Playfulness and fun (elicits that part of interviewee's personality; not mutual) Nurturing (participant gains feeling of being needed) |
| Similarity of partners--basis for identification | facilitates formation of the relationship | Shared past experience Common interests Share similar "issues" Family bond or tie Common events in past life Shared values Being known instinctively |
| Complementarity of partners--basis for differentiation | facilitates growth and individuality | Differences in personality and style Provides "complement" to one's life-style Allows separateness |

ance of close relationships can be made, yet they seem to hold the most promise for future study. One dimension of relationships which may underlie these categories is that of dependence versus independence (or, perhaps in some cases, counterdependence).

Participants who cited attributes such as "helps me out" or "sympathetic listener" spoke of relationships in which the other gratified a need of theirs, yet they did not respond in kind to the other. In some way, the relationship was defined, at least in part, as one in which the interviewee was the helpee, and the other person was the helper. Most often, these were relationships in which the pattern had been developed quite early, as with a mother or older sister, but were ones in which the guidelines for patterns of relating had not changed over time. For these women, the presence in their lives of someone with whom they could be dependent, and from whom they could receive help unilaterally, filled an important perceived need.

Relationships which demonstrate the attributes which are included under "basis for differentiation" have a different quality from those discussed above. The participants who talked about a relationship which provided a complement to their own lifestyles did so out of a sense of strength in themselves; although they had chosen one path for themselves, they recognized other parts of their personalities that were not primary, but could gain some expression through these other relationships. Lisa, a 30-year-old, single social worker, presently living in a collective household, describes her relationship with her older brother this way:

He's married and has two kids. So I think he also offers-- he's enough older than me--that he offers sort of, that part of me that wants that straight, conventional life. It's nice to go to his house every once in a while and get a dosage of family, I guess. I don't think I could stand living the way he does, I don't think that choice would be right for me, but I think that the part of me that wants that gets something from being around him.

Elena is a 29-year-old, single psychologist. She and Pat became friends in college, and have maintained their friendship, especially since Pat married one of Elena's relatives. Elena describes their relationship:

We're close. Our values are very, very different. Our lifestyles are very, very different, particularly since she's gotten married we're leading very different lifestyles. I think we respect the lifestyles that one another leads, but it gets more and more difficult for us to identify with each other. And yet at the same time, I think the small area within ourselves that identifies with that lifestyle lives vicariously through it. . . . I adore her little girl. She's probably the kid that I will never have. She's pregnant again, and this pregnancy means a lot to me because as I'm dealing with this whole idea myself, I'm dealing with it through the pregnancy. . . . I'm sure there are a lot of my needs that are filled through that, just as the lifestyle that I lead, particularly professional competency, is something that she can live through and identify with, so there's a sharing along those lines.

Wanda is a 29-year-old married woman who works as a museum curator. She describes a similar situation with a close woman friend whom she has known since college:

A lot of the reasons I like her are the reasons I hated her when I first met her, all the eccentric flamboyance and flitting from one thing to another all the time. Sometimes I feel jealous when I'm with her, I think oh, that's more fun, but it's funny because then she asks me the same questions that I ask her in reverse, like, "Gee, it must be nice to be all settled down and have a house to go home to at night, and a hus-

band, the same person," so we both have sort of, desires to be doing what the other is doing, and in a way it's a neat relationship because I get vicarious thrills from her activities and she does the same with me.

Hence, while there is an equal sharing in this quality of relationship, these women also are able, through these friendships, to further solidify their own identities and lifestyles. Their ability to acknowledge the attractive parts in another's life seems to arise from their own security in knowing that the path they have chosen is the right one for them. Yet they can still gain something from another whose style is so different.

Women talk about "differences in style and personality" in a similar way. Here, too, differences are perceived as opportunities for growth and learning. The other can temper one's own extremes and serve as a balancing force, as well as acting as a catalyst for modifying parts of oneself that are perceived as unsatisfactory. This function of relationships appears to be similar to the dimension of friendships which Lowenthal et al. (1976) call the role-model type of relationship. Assuming that some people choose friends who seem to epitomize their own "ideal selves", this type of relationship is based on the presence in the other of attributes to which the individual aspires, or looks up to and respects in his/her friends. For most of the women in this study who cited this characteristic of relationships, however, this quality was only one aspect of a complex relationship which gratified a number of other, more reciprocal needs.

The attribute "allows separateness" may be somewhat different. Betsy, a 28-year-old, married health educator, describes her relation-

ship with her husband by saying, "We don't have a smothering relationship. I don't like it when we're apart, but it's nice to get back together. We support each other, and help each other decide what each of us wants out of life." Betsy's relationship appears to be one of two individuals coming together to share their experience.

Penny, a 30-year-old, married professor, discusses separateness with her husband differently. She talks about love, friendship and mutual concern as being important in the relationship, but also says that, "It doesn't interfere with my life, it's conducive to everything that I do." The primary difference here is that a critical dimension of the relationship is that "it doesn't interfere with my life." This aspect of some women's close relationships will be discussed in more detail in another section. The underlying dynamic here may be one of counterdependence as opposed to the more autonomous, interdependent relationship which Betsy describes.

Important Dimensions in Close Relationships

One more point can be made regarding the attributes of relationships listed in Table 1. Five attributes were cited by more than 50% of the women: free sharing of feelings and problems; shared past experiences; common interests; mutual support; and sharing of professional life, self, goals, etc. These five attributes would seem to indicate the qualities of relationships which are most primary for this sample of women. They seem to comprise a constellation of factors which are most commonly valued, and perhaps sought, in close relationships. The first factor is meeting emotional needs (free sharing of feelings and prob-

lems; mutual support), and reflects the reciprocal qualities of mutuality and intimacy discussed above. This dimension of relationships has been discussed by Lowenthal et al. (1976) as requiring a high degree of involvement, commitment and understanding, such that the individual experiences the receptiveness and openness with another that enables the sharing of one's private self.

The second factor corresponds to bases for the initial identification, which Lowenthal et al. refer to as similarity of behavior and interest (shared past experiences; common interests), and which are the qualities which bring people together, but also retain a central role in the maintenance of the mature relationship.

The third factor is represented by the attribute "share professional self, etc." It is likely that this factor has only recently become of critical importance in women's relationships, and is probably one which would not be present in many other samples of women. However, as more women choose lifestyles which involve a commitment to a career, the desire to meet this relational need is likely to encourage more women to specifically seek this type of relationship.

A Cluster of Relational Needs

The concept that relationships fulfill a set of interpersonal needs has been discussed by several of the authors cited in the previous chapter. The participants in this study confirm this notion. They point to several important types of relationships, each of which satisfies a different type of relational need.

Types of Important Relationships

The participants in this study met their relational needs in a variety of types of relationships. A diverse assortment of patterns of relationships was evident, reflecting the types of relationships which were primary for the participants at this time in their lives. Three of the participants did not have four people in their lives with whom they felt they had close relationships. These women, all of whom were married, discussed only three relationships. Other women had a difficult time choosing only four relationships, and had a wealth of important people in their lives.

Closeness with relatives was important to many of the women in this study, and for some, family of origin ties predominated in their close relationships. These are detailed in Table 3. Fourteen women listed at least one relative among their four closest relationships.

Friendships with others who were coworkers or professional colleagues were also prominent. Ten women (five single and five married) specified that relationships with coworkers had evolved into friendships, as they shared their work lives and moved to a sharing of personal issues. Other relationships originated in graduate or professional schools, and continued into the present. In most cases, these relationships were viewed as professionally supportive, and as important to the individual's future professional, as well as personal, development.

Another category of relationships which was prevalent was that of friendships from previous phases of the participant's life. Seven women (four single, three married) maintained close ties with friends that

they had known since junior or senior high school, and six women (one single, five married) with friends from college (these six women detailed nine relationships).

Relationships with men were significant. Six of the single women were currently involved in a "romantic" relationship with a man, and four of these were primary relationships. None of these women included another male friend among their four closest relationships. Of the other four single women, three mentioned at least one male friend among these four. All married women included their husbands among their four closest relationships, although two women were not living with their husbands at the time. Five women also maintained relationships with a close, male friend (or in one case, a lover). A more complete picture of the participants' patterns of relationships appears in Table 4.

A Cluster of Relational Needs

An important finding which has emerged from these interviews is that these women were conscious of a variety of interpersonal needs which could be fulfilled only through relationships, and which is being called by this author a cluster of relational needs. The fulfillment of each need offers something unique to the individual and her sense of well-being, and cannot be replaced by the fulfillment of other needs. These five needs are: a relationship which offers emotional intimacy; a relationship with a close, woman friend in the immediate geographical area; a relationship with a friend of long-standing, from previous phases of one's life; family relationships with mothers, fathers or siblings; and a relationship within which one can share professional

Table 4
Patterns of Close Relationships

| Marital Status | Participant Number | Frequency of Each Type of Relationship* | | | | | | |
|----------------|--------------------|---|-------|---------------|-------------|--------|--------|-------------------------------|
| | | Husband | Lover | Female Friend | Male Friend | Mother | Father | Sister Brother Other Relative |
| Single | 1 | | D | BC | | A | | |
| | 2 | | A | B | | | D | |
| | 3 | | | D | | A | | C |
| | 4 | | D | AC | | | C | B |
| | 5 | | | AB | C | | D | B |
| | 6 | | D | B | | A | C | |
| | 7 | | | AD | BC | | | |
| | 8 | | | ABC | D | | | |
| | 9 | | B | ACD | | | | |
| | 10 | | B | CD | | | A | |
| Married | 11 | A | | D | C | | B | |
| | 12 | A | | | | B | C | |
| | 13 | A | | CD | | B | | |
| | 14 | A | | | | B | C | |
| | 15 | A | | BC | | D | | |
| | 16 | A | | B | | C | | |
| | 17 | A | | BD | C | | | |
| | 18 | A | | CD | B | | | |
| | 19 | A | B | CD | | | | |
| | 20 | C | | AD | | | | B |
| Total | | 10 | 7 | 33 | 7 | 8 | 3 | 5 3 1 |

*A--First relationship participant discussed
 B--Second relationship participant discussed
 C--Third relationship participant discussed
 D--Fourth relationship participant discussed

concerns. (These needs will be discussed in depth later in this section.) In order for the individual to report high satisfaction with her interpersonal relationships, and fulfillment of the needs met in these relationships, several of these needs must be fulfilled. In addition, each need is usually gratified in a different type of relationship, although in some cases, overlaps may occur. (This schema is similar in many ways to that of Weiss (1969), and is viewed as complementary to it.) The fulfillment of each of these needs varied in importance among the participants, and each woman would probably be able to rank order them according to the primacy attributed to each need in her own life. However, the lack of a relationship to meet any one of the individual's essential relational needs, was reported as causing psychological distress for the participants in this study.

What has emerged, then, is a cluster of relational needs, each of which is usually satisfied in a different type of relationship, and each of which offers to the individual a unique aspect of the sense of being interpersonally grounded in and connected to the world. The lack of fulfillment of any of the most critical relational needs is experienced by the individual as engendering various forms of psychological distress. Five distinct relational needs have been identified. Of these, two were viewed as being primary, and of critical importance, to all but one of the participants in the study. The other three were seen as possessing varying degrees of significance in each woman's life. Table 5 depicts the number of relationships fulfilling each relational need for each participant.

A relationship which provides emotional intimacy. An emotionally

Table 5
Persons Fulfilling Each Relational Need for Each Participant*

| Marital Part. Status # | Relation. Satisfac. (1-10 scale) | Relational Needs | | | | | |
|------------------------|----------------------------------|-------------------------|-----------------------------|-------------------------|------------------------|-------------------|--------------------------|
| | | I Emotional Intimate | II Female Friend in Area | III Friend from Past | IV Family of Origin | V Professional | Other friend or relative |
| Single | 1 | D✓ | C+ | B+ | A+ | | |
| | 2 | A✓ | | B+ | D✓ | | C+ |
| | 3 | | D+ | | A+B✓C+ | D+ | |
| | 4 | | | A+ | B✓ | C+ | C+D✓ |
| | 5 | | A+B+ | C✓ | D+ | A+ | |
| | 6 | | | B+ | A+C+ | | |
| | 7 | D✓ | A+D+ | | | C✓ | B✓C✓ |
| | 8 | A+ | B+ | B+ | | | C+D✓ |
| | 9 | A+B✓ | A+C+ | | | A+ | D+ |
| | 10 | A+B✓ | C+D+ | | A+ | | |
| Married | 11 | A✓ | | | B+ | C✓ | D+ |
| | 12 | A✓ | | | B+C✓ | | |
| | 13 | A✓ | C+ | | B+ | C+D+ | D+ |
| | 14 | A✓ | | | B+C✓ | | |
| | 15 | A✓ | B+ | C+ | D+ | B+ | |
| | 16 | A✓ | | B+ | C+ | | |
| | 17 | A✓ | | B+C✓D+ | | | |
| | 18 | A✓ | | D+ | | B✓ | B✓C+ |
| | 19 | A✓B✓ | | C+D+ | | A✓B✓ | |
| | 20 | A+C✓ | | D+ | B✓ | | |

*Some relationships may fill more than one relational need.
A, B, C, D--represent four relationships discussed by each participant in the order mentioned.
+--represents female.
✓--represents male.

intimate relationship incorporated unselfconscious sharing of emotions, feelings, thoughts and experiences. Properties of the relationship included mutual support, loyalty, nurturance, interdependence, validation of both internal and external experiences and open communication. Twelve of the twenty participants in this study described having one fully intimate relationship which corresponded with the explication above. Ten of these relationships were primary relationships with a man, a husband or lover, and two of these relationships were with close woman friends. From these relationships, the participants gained a unique sense of being special to another person, of truly knowing another and of being known, accepted and loved for their true selves. In these relationships, the woman could be herself completely, without erecting facades or affecting pretenses about themselves. Through the sensation that the other person would be there for them, the participant was able to avoid the feeling of aloneness, and attained instead a sense of connectedness and belonging. Several women talked about their emotional intimate as their "life partner", and as someone with whom they could build and plan their lives. Women described these relationships in many ways:

. . .a strong feeling of comfort with one another. . .you feel comfortable being yourself around someone else. We love each other very much. After ten years together we aren't amorous or passionate, but very comfortable and affectionate. . . . We've gone through alot of our life's changes together. . . alot of our growth has been with the presence and support of the other.

We have a 95% open relationship. I'd say we talk about 95% of the things on our minds. We were both fearful about opening up. Now I'd say that there is more than an everyday caring there. There's a very close relationship between the two

of us. I trust him terrifically.

He knows everything about my life in the present and alot from before. I tell him everything I feel. . . . Some kind of feeling brings us together. We're sure we can make it together. . . . When I'm upset, the warmth of his body makes me relax. I get strength from him.

We're extremely close. We say the exact thing in the exact same way at the exact same time, or I'll think something and she'll say it or vice versa. . . . We have insights into each other's thinking. Each of us has a need to be confronted with things, we trust each other enough for that. We're each other's therapists. . . . She knows me like a book, better than any other human being. . . . It's vitally important to both of us to know that we're cared for. We've been through some hellish fights, we know we can make it through anything. I think when I got to that point I was encouraged, because how could anyone know that they cared about another person so much that it wasn't going to change? How could they make that kind of commitment? In this friendship, I am committed to her and she is committed to me. The relationship may grow and change, but I can't conceive of us not being a major part of each other's lives. . . . Having that commitment is central to both of us. She's one of the few people I trust enough to lean on.

We're really close in the sense that we share alot of things. We turn to each other more than we turn to anyone else. I like being with him. . . . The relationship is based on intimacy and history, we've spent alot of time together, and we care alot about each other. There's closeness. By now we don't have to say things, we have a private language, private culture that's been built up over a long time and nobody else shares that. We rely on each other for love, intimacy, closeness and warmth more than anyone else. It makes me feel not alone, that there is one person there who really cares.

We have the understanding that he will be there if I need him and I will be there if he needs me. There's a very deep sense of commitment that covers trivial as well as significant problems. We both believe in two people living together, opening up, and being at ease and honest with at least one other person.

Until she moved, I saw her every day. I feel at ease with her. She can kid me out of a depression, I feel supported. We're so close, if I didn't have her I would have needed a therapist. I feel not alone. . . . She supports me to be me.

Sexual intimacy can be a very important part of emotionally intimate relationships, as it offers another modality of sharing and experiencing the other. Although sexual intimacy was a fundamental aspect of the heterosexual, intimate relationships cited above, it is not a necessary component for emotional intimacy. The women who described intimate relationships with women, and who did not have a similar relationship with a man, felt the lack of sexual intimacy in their lives, and felt it as a need they wished to fulfill. Other women spoke about nonintimate sexual relationships with men, which did not fulfill needs for intimacy. (It should be noted that all of the participants were heterosexual. This was not a criterion for participation in the study, but occurred in the random sampling procedure.) Women described the sexual component of their relationships:

It is a different level of love and way of expressing our feelings.

It serves the need of being close to somebody. It fulfills a security need. We feel good if we can please each other. It gives emotional fulfillment more than physical--it fulfills more in me than anything else.

I have a need for physical intimacy and being physically close. That positive reinforcement and sexual validation.

I'm struggling with my expectations about what sex should be or could be versus what it is. I perceive it to be something I get off on emotionally, the one space in which I feel the most security and vulnerability. I need my female, security needs to be met, otherwise a relationship isn't enough.

Without a physical relationship, all of my needs would not be answered. He wouldn't know parts of me.

I want physical intimacy with the act, I don't want casual sex. It is necessary in a relationship to have sexual compatibility, it takes you out of the realm of the everyday. It's a safe place, I forget myself. It's magical when it's

good; I feel calm, in a good humor. It makes me feel a real connection with the human race, and being touched makes me feel connected with myself.

The need for emotional intimacy can, indeed, be met even in women who do not have one, intensely intimate relationship, such as the ones discussed here. Some women, who have several very close friends, report feeling that the need for intimacy is fulfilled. In these cases, the total gestalt of close people who are available to the individual can offer the same sense of security, although the perception of one "special" person is missing.

A close relationship with at least one woman in the immediate geographical area. With only one exception, the participants in this study expressed the need to have a close woman friend nearby. In some cases, "close" meant emotionally intimate, while in other cases the interviewee was referring more to companionship or a less intense form of friendship. For the women whose emotional intimate was a woman, this need could also be satisfied through that relationship. However, if a woman's primary intimate relationship was with a man, she felt a need for a second and distinctly different type of relationship.

The functions this friendship with another woman fulfilled varied according to whether or not the participant was involved in a primary relationship with a man. Women living alone were, in general, more invested in developing and maintaining close relationships with other women, as they depended on these relationships in a more basic way for fulfillment of their interpersonal needs. From these relationships, they derived a sense of connectedness to others, as they shared every-

thing from major problems to the ups and downs of daily living. Although several women had recently relocated to this area, and did not have intimate relationships here, they developed "companionships" which promised greater mutuality and actively maintained relationships with more geographically distant friends, with whom they would frequently spend vacations.

Friendships with women served different functions for women involved in primary relationships, especially in the married group. Nine of the ten women in this sample did not have a close woman friend in the immediate geographical area, and six were dissatisfied with this lack. Women expressed the sentiment that they needed more than one person to be close to; that they wanted people with whom to go to the movies, or whom they could drop in on for coffee. Another expressed wish was someone with whom to discuss their marital relationship, and any conflicts they were experiencing in that area. One woman expressed sadness because she did not have a group of friends who shared her specific interests and talents. Yet there seemed to be an additional aspect which these women felt was absent: that another woman could more fully share their own perspective on the world and their particular problems, since she would have a greater similarity of experiences than a man would. The open and confidential sharing between close friends was not replaced by the primary relationship.

These two needs, for an emotionally intimate relationship and for close women friends, were cited as primary by nineteen of the twenty women in this sample (one woman felt that her marital relationship met all of her interpersonal needs, and she did not seek or desire others).

Ten women had an emotionally intimate relationship, but no close woman friend, and three women had close women friends, but no emotionally intimate relationship. Four women had both needs fulfilled, and three women had neither need satisfied. In general, the women who had one need met expressed a strong desire to fulfill the other and felt that the unmet need impinged negatively on their overall happiness. Women without either of these primary needs satisfied were actively seeking both types of relationships.

Three other categories of relationships have been identified, each of which offers the satisfaction of a unique relational need for the individual woman. Although they were not cited as universally as the first two relational needs, these latter types of relationships were viewed by some women in the sample as equally important to their psychological well-being.

A friend of long-standing, from previous phases of one's life (usually junior high school, high school, or college). Thirteen women cited at least one relationship of this type, and seventeen individual relationships were discussed. It was not necessary for the participant and her friend to have much in common with each other in the present, and some women reported that if they met these friends today, an alliance would probably not develop. In other cases, the two people (in all but one case, the other person was a woman) had developed along similar paths, and the friendship was a very current and central one in the participant's life. In either instance, the relationship provided the partners with a sense of continuity, a feeling of "you knew me when . . .," and a forum for remembering and sharing past experiences, es-

pecially ones of developmental significance. The woman reported feeling a connection to her past--her less adult self, prior relationships, and maturational issues.

She's one of my oldest friends, I've known her since junior high. When I think of her, she feels alot like my sister. Part of what makes us close is that sense of history. Although we've lived close to each other and far from each other, we've kept in pretty constant touch. She's somebody I've shared alot of different stages of my life with, both good times and bad times, and somebody I still feel I can talk closely with. We've grown up to be similar enough to still stay close.

I've known him for seventeen years. . . . He's the person closest to me and I think he always will be. If I could write a novel, I'd write about my friendship with him. It's amazing that a friendship can last over that many years. We'd lost touch for alot of years, then we went out to lunch and found out that we still shared alot of similar views. He's the person that understands, automatically, the hassles I've been through.

We've been friends since junior high school, we grew up together, we went through Spanish classes and ballet lessons together, we used to drink and smoke in her house. We used to go out together alot, to bars or to meet people. We're close emotionally, we've supported each other through relationships with men. . . . It's a matter of being with yourself, almost, we have so much in common. I'm as comfortable with her as I am with myself.

We talk about common relationships, what's happening to what's her name or what's his name since we saw her or him last. We've known each other for 12 or 15 years, there's trust, love, I care alot about her. We don't have to maintain a weekly phone call to maintain the friendship. She's become part of the family.

She's my closest friend, I've known her since I was seventeen. We've been roommates off and on. . . . We look alike, like cousins. We use each other as our alter-egos, she represents the hard-ass part of being a woman to me. We call each other by our baby names when we're alone, she's the only person I do that with. She's the only person who calls me by my family nickname. . . . We can see each other as 60-year-old ladies, together somewhere, sitting in a park. . . . We spend alot of time remembering what we think it was like being a child.

There's a weird relationship. She and I have been friends for eight years, and we've been through a lot together. We got divorced together, we lived together for a year after the divorce. I feel like she's my sister, and sometimes I get really angry with her, but I give her a lot of room. There's just a bond of time and a lot of common experiences.

She's my best friend from college. We've lived together and travelled together. I don't know what we have in common, except that we've spent time together. We don't have that much in common, except that we're friends. When we get together, we have long, long talks, and we visit common friends who I wouldn't get to see, otherwise.

These relationships, then, provide a link to one's past and a sense of continuity. In many cases, the bond between the two people, which is intense and has been evolving over a long period of time, is thought to be analagous to family ties, and there is the sense that "we'll be friends no matter what happens." Strong feelings of loyalty, and faith in the basic indestructibility of the relationship are evident.

Family relationships with mothers, fathers or siblings. Fourteen women cited at least one familial relationship along their four closest, and twenty such relationships were discussed. The participants described these relationships as giving them a unique grounding in their identities--a fundamental sense of who they are and how they came to be the individuals that they are. Women also felt that they were known instinctively by another person.

I grew up sharing the same room with my sister, she's just 11 months older. Things happened to Linda first, she broke the ice for me and helped me out. . . . I don't know if we'd be close friends if we weren't sisters. She knows all about your past, she knows why you are like you are, she knows all the good and hard things that happened when you were growing up. If you have a problem, she sees things in a context that others couldn't.

I have an intuitive relationship with my father. . . . It's an intangible something. I think he knows me better than anybody else in the world. . . . I'm most like him in temperament. . . . I don't talk to him about certain things because it would embarrass both of us, we're not that close on a verbal level, but we're very close on an intuitive level.

Since we're sisters, we confide in each other alot, and she and I share things from our family that neither of us understood until we got to be friends as adults, and then we found out that each of us had similar hangups which we thought were our own weirdnesses and it turned out that when we both realized we shared these things we began looking back at where these things might have come from and that made us very close.

My mother knows me very, very well. She knows the instinctive things about me. She doesn't know what I did today at work or daily frustrations and daily joys, but she has a very good feeling for how I'm going to handle a particular situation and she can usually penetrate to the reason why something turned out the way it did. I used to rely very heavily on her, I try not to any more, but I really do. I rely on her for telling me the root causes for what I do.

The sharing of the very personal and private culture of the family, then, contributes to the establishment of powerful interpersonal ties. The sense that one is known by someone who has always been there, sharing one's experiences, is primary in giving these women the feeling of stability and constancy in their lives.

A person with whom to share professional concerns (regarding one's identity as a professional, and one's hopes, fears, aspirations, goals and problems). Ten women discussed thirteen relationships of this kind, usually with a coworker or a friend from graduate or professional school. From these relationships, the participants gain a grounding in their identities as professionals, as they struggle to define the personal meanings of their careers in their lives, and of their own place within their occupational field. Frequently, these collegial re-

lationships develop into more personal friendships, and may also meet some of the relational needs discussed above.

She's a woman who I work with. I admired her working style, and we've gotten pretty friendly over the last couple of years. Some of it has been we both said it would be nice to do X together, to go to a professional meeting to get to know each other, and not just work things, we've done alot outside of work. I'd say the relationship is based on professional sharing. . .talking over what happened at the office, talking about other kinds of possibilities in the field, where you think you're headed, what kind of training we got--we came from the same graduate program.

She was a fellow graduate student in my program. . . . We share things about developing as a professional, and expectations that we have of ourselves and of jobs, and also she has small children, and I have watched the way she's integrated or is trying to integrate a career into her family life. It's made me glad that I got at least some of my training before I decided to have a family. . . . We never did alot together outside of school or work--we shared an office one summer.

An important relationship is with my agent. It's important for business reasons, but it's also a partnership, and there's personal warmth there. The two of us are on the same work team, he's a friend to some extent. It's a very important relationship in terms of support for my work and in dealing with the anxieties that arise. . . . We talk about business and things related to business, and how we feel about what we're doing. . . . He reads what I'm writing and we talk about that a lot. . . . The relationship is symbiotic at this point. He is building his career and I am trying to build mine. What we do for each other will help ourselves and the other person in business terms. He really likes my work. He gives me the time and attention that I need. He protects me.

She's a woman I've worked with for five years. We know each other very well both professionally and socially. I admire and respect her ideas and thoughts. She's helped me to grow a lot, professionally. The relationship is based on our careers, mutual respect, and shared experiences and frustrations, especially around what happens at work.

This relational need, probably more than any of the others discussed here, is reflective of the particular sample of women utilized

in this study. Non-professional women, it can be assumed, would not present this specific need, although another might appear in its place (i.e., a sample of full-time mothers might require supportive relationships within which they could discuss problems with their children), and the function filled by the relationship might be very similar. This need, more than any of the others, illustrates the significance of considering the socio-cultural context within which individuals' lives are embedded, if one is to truly understand the factors operating on their lives.

The relationships which fulfill these five relational needs, in toto, provide the individual woman with a solid support system, and with a vast array of resources from which to draw for help in problem solving and attaining emotional support. These findings that the cluster of relational needs is met by having several important relationships is congruent with the recent work on support systems cited earlier.

Satisfaction with Relationships

Asking the participants about their level of satisfaction with their relationships yielded a wealth of information regarding the processes by which women think about these issues. The complex nature of these processes, and the idiosyncratic ways in which they are intertwined with the individual woman's unique life situation, makes generalization impossible. Many variables impinged on the participants' feelings about their overall satisfaction with their relationships: their present work situations, and the amount of time, energy and primacy in

their lives which their work demanded; the presence or absence of a primary relationship, and their degree of contentment with the status of that relationship; the presence or absence of a friend, or a solid network of friends; the length of time they had been in the community; and their feelings about themselves at this particular time. All of these factors, and many more, influenced women's level of satisfaction with their relationships.

Satisfaction versus Dissatisfaction

Participants were asked to rate their general level of satisfaction with their relationships on a one to ten scale, on which one represented "unsatisfied" and ten represented "very satisfied." The range of responses was from 5 to 9, although two women responded that they were completely satisfied (i.e., 10) in some areas of their lives, and completely unsatisfied (i.e., 0) in others (these responses were averaged to a 5 for the purposes of analysis). The mean response for all participants was 7.25, with a mean of 7.7 for single women, and a mean of 6.8 for married women. Single women, then, report higher satisfaction with their relationships. The participants were also asked whether or not their relationships met their needs for intimacy, and how they arrived at their determination. Table 6 gives responses to this question.

The single women who reported that their intimacy needs were met discussed the range of relationships (friends, lover, family) which in toto met this need. Single women who reported that their needs for intimacy were not met, talked primarily of the lack of a primary rela-

Table 6
Do Relationships Fulfill Intimacy Needs?

| | | Single | Married |
|-----------|----------|--------|---------|
| Responses | Yes | 3 | 5 |
| | No | 2 | 3 |
| | Somewhat | 5 | 2 |

tionship, or of someone who was special to them and to whom they were special. Single women who said their need for intimacy was "somewhat" met, focussed on the range of relationships in their lives. For some, the deficit was experienced because their truly close relationships were not geographically accessible. Others expressed a need for a closer woman friend to provide an alternative outlet to their relationship with their lover, or to develop more fully their existing, close relationships.

Some married women who felt that their needs for intimacy were fulfilled, spoke about it in terms of the totality of all of their relationships meeting that need: "We share what troubles us, our fears and joys. I know that I can rely on them for help and they can rely on me." Others, however, focussed only on the marital relationship as the vehicle through which these needs are met: "I need one person in life to share everything with" or "My relationship with my husband is the crucial relationship. Without that, things are rough." Two of the three married women whose intimacy needs were not met were not living with their husbands. One woman reported that if her husband were present her needs would be satisfied; the other, however, was feeling a great deal of loneliness and anxiety which the marital relationship could not alleviate. In all three instances, the lack of fulfillment of intimacy needs was seen as corresponding to the lack of several close relationships in the woman's life. The "somewhat" satisfied women stressed the absence of close women friends in the community, although their marital relationships were satisfactory.

It appears, then, that for some women, intimacy needs can be ful-

filled through only one, intense relationship, but if that person becomes unavailable the woman suffers without any other supports. For other women, a network of close relationships is necessary in order to feel that intimacy needs are met. These women feel more consistently and securely grounded in their relational lives, because the cluster of relational needs discussed previously is being sufficiently addressed.

An example of a woman for whom the cluster of relational needs is successfully met at this time is Betsy, age 28, a successful educator. She describes her relationship with her husband as supportive, affectionate and very close but not smothering. The other close relationships she enumerated were with her mother, and two female friends, a co-worker and a woman with whom she was a graduate student. She has a large number of contacts in the community, and maintains contact with friends from high school and college. Her only regret regarding her relationships is that:

Sometimes I feel I know too many people. There are too many people that I want to do things with, and I have to set priorities. There are some relationships I would like to nurture, people I admire and would like to get to know, people I could learn from personally, but I don't have time.

Betsy also states that her relational needs are met:

I have a lot of needs to share with people and do things with people. There are lots of people for me to do that with. I can't imagine a problem where I couldn't find anyone as a resource. In a positive sense, I feel that there are a lot of people who make my life better.

A woman whose relational needs are unmet at this time is Nora, a 30-year-old, single, director of a social service agency. The four

close relationships Nora discussed were with her mother, two younger siblings, and a female coworker. While she has many acquaintances, these ties do not meet her needs for intimate sharing. She tries to assuage some of these unmet needs by volunteering in community activities. Nora talks about her feelings this way:

I'm lonely. I miss having a romantic relationship, someone I can come home to who is affectionate. And I want kids, that depresses me more than anything, I feel a press about having children due to my age. . . . I feel isolated in a sense. It's difficult for me to meet people my own age. . . . My career is fulfilling. I can spend as much time at it as I want, and activities keep my mind off it. . . . I'm lonely, but I have a fuller, happier life than most people. I'd rather be alone than be with the wrong person. . . . I need more people I feel very close to, single people who I can keep up with on a day-to-day basis, who I can call anytime, and go on trips with. I'd like a romantic relationship with a potential husband. People need more than one person to confide in. I need someone who needs me as much as I need them.

Most of the women in this sample who reported dissatisfaction with the degree to which their relational needs were fulfilled were aware of what was lacking in their lives, and knew what would be necessary to put things in better balance. However, the ways in which women chose to manage this insight varied. Many women, who generally tended to be single, adopted an active posture toward the problem (i.e., the fulfillment of their relational needs) and energetically worked to seek out, develop and nurture appropriate relationships to meet their needs. These women tended to continue to assign a high priority to these various types of relationships even after they entered into a primary relationship with a man. It was as if the stable, supportive network of relationships fulfilled one set of needs which could not be superceded

by the subsequent development of the primary relationship.

Most married women, however, approached the situation differently. They tended to be much more dependent on their husbands for the fulfillment of all or most of their relational needs; although they realized that they lacked other types of relationships (i.e., with other women), they displayed a tendency to adopt a much more complacent or passive attitude toward their dilemma; they were inclined not to seek out new relationships, but instead continued to feel some loneliness and discontent. It seems as though the primary relationship, although it was not "enough", fulfilled a sufficient amount of the individual's interpersonal needs so that the motivation to actively pursue new relationships was not stimulated. This dimension of activity--complacency (or passivity) which is evinced in the individual's attitude toward her relationships--would appear to be an important one, and one which would merit further study.

A related phenomenon has been reported by Starker and Appley (1978) regarding a clinical sample (a short-term therapy group of women aged 27-31, married and single, professional and with no children) comparable to the one investigated in this study. The women in the clinical sample, in contrast to the nonclinical sample, did not have a support network and were overinvested in their primary relationships. They were also examining their commitment to their careers, and due to the difficulty of maintaining the balance between relationship and career, they were feeling the need to put one ahead of the other. The stress which this dilemma engendered brought these women into therapy. The primary difference between the two samples is that the women in the

clinical sample were trying to meet all of their relational needs in the primary relationship, and did not realize, as the women in the other sample did, the infeasibility of this approach. The authors recommend a short-term therapy group as the treatment modality of choice, since the group functions as a transitional model in learning about developing a support system for meeting the cluster of relational needs previously discussed. This conclusion highlights the critical importance of having several types of relationships to meet one's needs for interpersonal contact.

Factors which Influence Satisfaction with Relationships

Relational goals. The participants' reported satisfaction with their relationships appears to be a product of the interaction of their relational goals (i.e., the types of relationships they want in their lives and what they hope to gain from these relationships) with their perceptions of whether or not their relationships actually meet these goals. A considerable amount of variability was evident regarding the relational goals which these women held, and their relationships differed significantly as a result.

A woman who represents one end of the continuum is Penny, a 30-year-old university professor. The interview with Penny lasted only one hour and was by far the shortest interview. Penny answered questions very tersely, and rarely elaborated her responses unless she was specifically asked to do so. She seemed quite closed in the interview; she did not disclose much of herself, and this style appears to be typical of her relationships more generally. Penny mentioned only three

close relationships--with her husband, mother and father. More than for any other participant, relational issues did not seem important for Penny, and she had not done any independent thinking about or analysis of the relationships in her life.

Work is the primary focus of Penny's life, and she said this explicitly. She reports that she works every hour of the day and evening except for dinner, and also works on weekends. She does not have any friends in the community, and she and her husband rarely go out. She is involved with one community group whose activity is related to her field of study. She does not take vacations, and stated that when she can work on her own research and writing, without teaching in addition, that it is a vacation for her. She travels when she attends professional conventions and does not want to do any more.

The only other people with whom Penny has any contact are her graduate students and one other faculty member. Yet she reports very high satisfaction with her relationships ("9" on a scale of 1 to 10) and would not change them in any way. She reports that her relationship with her husband fulfills all of her needs for intimacy and closeness; that she needs only one person with whom she can share everything in her life. She says, "I guess I'm satisfied with my relationships. I can't think of any way to change them. I don't concern myself with them. I'm doing what I want to do and no one interferes." The only suggestion that she might have underlying concerns came when she said later that, "The only thing I'd want to change would be to be like in the movies--to be with Prince Charming, who would be handsome and have a million dollars." The meaning of this somewhat adolescent fantasy is unclear,

but it may indicate some unrecognized needs which are not being fulfilled. However, on the surface Penny appears to be content with the lifestyle she has chosen.

Karen is a 30-year-old, single high school teacher who presents a somewhat different picture. In the interview, Karen was very open about discussing her private feelings, and seemed eager to explore relational issues. This was in contrast to her statement about herself that she is a very private person; however the way in which she conducts her relationships seems to reflect her self-perception and not her behavior in the interview. The four relationships which Karen discussed were with her mother; a female friend from college with whom she shares many past experiences but not daily events; a female friend in the area with whom she shares more current and daily experiences; and her lover. She does not have many social contacts apart from these four relationships. In many ways, Karen's interpersonal needs are being adequately met by these four relationships, each of which fulfills a different relational need. However, one of Karen's primary relational goals is presently not being realized.

For the past seven years, Karen has been living with her lover, Don, and she deeply wants to marry him and have a family. He is not willing to make that commitment, and the relationship appears to be ending, as a result of which Karen is experiencing a great deal of distress. Many of her important needs for intimacy are met in this relationship; without it she will feel isolated and alone. She says that this relationship is the only one she really needs, that the others "fill in the gaps" for her. Without Don, she feels she will have no one she can com-

fortably call in the middle of the night if she is upset. She described her satisfaction with her relationships as a "10" on the surface, but as a "0" under the surface. She says:

I'm in a state of suspension. I'm happy day-to-day, but not with my life. I don't want to be where I am, and I feel that I can't do anything about it. I tell people I'm happy, but I'm not getting any closer to my goal in life. I'm not unhappy, but I'm not happy. I'm getting older and I don't want to. I don't think I'd mind if I was married and had children. If I could marry Don and have children, I would give up all the other people in my life.

Karen, then, feels a very deep and fundamental dissatisfaction with her relationships. Her four closest relationships reflect her interpersonal style. They are separate from each other and compartmentalized; her social network is a disconnected one. Although this structure is satisfactory for her most of the time, it seems inadequate in times of stress, such as the one she is presently experiencing.

Polly is a 31-year-old, divorced educator who has very high relational goals, and who reports that her relational needs are generally met. During our initial telephone contact, Polly said that she was eager to participate in the study because she had discovered how to have satisfying relationships. In the interview, Polly was extremely open and shared readily of herself. The fulfillment of relational needs is an important priority in Polly's life; she is clear about her requirements in relationships, and generally does not pursue relationships with people whose relational goals differ from her own. The four relationships Polly discussed were with three female friends, one of whom is also a colleague, and her lover. In addition, she maintains many other

contacts with people in the community, and across the country. She says, "I know alot of people. Sometimes I just don't answer the phone. I have too many friends and not enough time." When she was asked who her best friend is, she listed three people.

Each of the four relationships Polly listed appears to encompass the qualities associated with intimacy which were discussed above, including free sharing of feelings and problems. She reports that two of the four people know 99% of her innermost thoughts, secrets and fears; the other two people know at least 80%. Polly reports that her relationships meet her needs for intimate contact, "I don't have relationships with people unless we really sit down and talk. I don't have time for small talk."

Polly's attitude toward her relationships in general is illustrated by the way she described her relationship with her lover, Jack:

Jack is my lover, and that relationship is new. It's four months old. It's very affectionate, and it's the first good relationship I've ever had with a man. We interviewed each other very thoroughly before we started getting together, I work with him, too. (What do you mean you interviewed each other?) The first thing we noticed about each other was that we're both vegetarians and both ate the same food. We interviewed each other about how we felt about relationships, about life, what kind of lifestyle we wanted to live, feelings about marriage, women's issues, men's issues, energy, just everything. We were pretty careful before we even started going out. We'd each done a lot of values clarifying and knew what we wanted from the other person and we weren't going to pursue it unless it was there.

Polly views her relationships as being in process, and attending to that process is primary to her, although at times it leads to some frustration. She says:

With Jack I'm impatient. I want to be there already. I want to have a child, and that is a frustration. I want to have a here-and-now relationship with Jack, but the wanting a child is there too.

There are some other aspects of her relational life she would like to change. Although she now lives alone, both Polly and Jack hope to develop a lifestyle based on cooperative living, in which a community of people strive to be self-sufficient regarding the basics of daily life. In addition, she desires a long-term commitment to a man and a child. In general, however, Polly reports high satisfaction with her relationships ("9" on a scale of 1 to 10, because "there's always room for improvement"), and reports that she does not feel lonely, isolated or bored.

Polly, then, is a woman who has set high relational goals, and who has developed relationships which meet those goals. Her relational life is of the utmost importance to her, although she devotes equal amounts of energy to her work and to her leisure activities. Her sense of knowing who she is and what she wants for herself permeates all aspects of her life.

The comparative primacy of relationships versus lifestyle. Polly's outlook on her relationships illustrates a trend in the data which, although not applicable to every woman in the sample, tends to differentiate married and single women. In general, single women who want a primary relationship with a man demand that the relationship fit in with their existing life and lifestyle; the man's values and goals must be congruent with their own. These women have developed strong identities and senses of who they are and how they fit into the world which they are

unwilling to compromise. They want the primary relationship, but only within the context of the lives they have already determined for themselves. This is not meant to imply rigidity, but a primary commitment to their own being in the world. Most of these women stated that they would rather be alone than be in a relationship with a man who did not share their world view. This relates to a point which was discussed earlier--that single women who develop primary relationships tend to maintain their relationships with others, and to consciously assign those other relationships positions of importance, more often than married women do. Their commitment to their lifestyles and ongoing support systems is as important as their commitment to the primary relationship.

For married women, however, the marital relationship is frequently the determinant of the lifestyle. In some cases, this may be because the woman married early, and she and her husband developed a mutually satisfying lifestyle together. In other instances, however, the woman appears to have changed her usual pattern of relationships upon marrying, and the marital relationship has become the determinant of her lifestyle, as opposed to being integrated into her lifestyle. In this situation, the woman is likely to experience some psychological distress.

Wanda is a 29-year-old, married woman who reports feeling some dissatisfaction in both her relationships and her career. Her husband, Jed, is the primary support person in her life, and, although she reports having social contacts with several other people, it appeared from the interview that these other relationships do not meet many of her relational needs. In the past, Wanda has had at least one close friend,

usually a woman, in her life, but such a relationship is lacking in the present. She says, "I rely on Jed for everything--friendship, companionship, moral support. It's scary, sometimes, when I realize how dependent I've become." She would turn to Jed first for help with three kinds of problems: if she needed someone to talk to; if she needed a favor, such as someone's time; or if she needed concrete assistance such as money, and Wanda did not mention any other people as alternative resources. She reports feeling lonely "sometimes when Jed and I are together with no break, I want a change of scene. There's not much to do about it." Feelings of isolation also occur: "I felt clamped down by Jed wanting to have an exclusive relationship, but now I see other people. Jed is more solitary than I am." It seems as though Wanda has adopted Jed's more solitary lifestyle and is, at least to some degree, sacrificing the fulfillment of some of her own relational needs. Yet, Wanda's dilemma illustrates a point discussed earlier--that for some married women, the primary relationship appears to meet a sufficient number of their relational needs such that the motivation to seek out and develop new and different relationships is diminished.

It should be reemphasized that this dichotomy between single and married women represents only a trend, and is not valid for each relationship or each woman. However, the difference between having a primary relationship within the context of one's pre-existing life and lifestyle (as single women tend to do), and determining one's lifestyle according to the context of one's primary relationship (as is more typical for married women), may be one of the factors which influences married women's lower overall satisfaction with their relationships.

Relational Style as a Determinant of Relationships

It was stated earlier that a woman's perception of whether or not her relationships meet her relational goals is a primary determinant of her satisfaction with her relationships. Implicit in this concept is the idea that one's relational goals will have a direct bearing on the types of relationships one forms, and on the qualities those relationships will embody. Other factors, which can be thought of as comprising one's relational style, also have an impact on the more qualitative elements which a woman brings to her relationships. These elements do not determine the types of relationships a woman develops (i.e., with lovers, women friends or relatives), but rather contribute to the less tangible aspects of the relationship which make it uniquely the creation of, and in some senses also the projection of, the individual woman.

The role of the sense of self. It is axiomatic that the ways in which a woman thinks and feels about herself will influence her relationships. The people with whom she chooses to relate, the processes of engagement she adopts, that which she offers in and demands from the relationship and her expectations regarding its outcome all are affected by her basic feelings about herself. In attempting to define the self-concept, Esptein (1973) submits that:

. . .the self-concept is a self-theory. It is a theory that the individual has unwittingly constructed about himself as an experiencing, functioning individual, and it is part of a broader theory which he holds with respect to his entire range of significant experience. Accordingly, there are major postulate systems for the nature of the world, for the nature of the self, and for their interaction (p. 407).

This position suggests that the greater the diversity of options which

the individual views as congruent with the self-concept, the greater will be the perceived sense of the solidity of, and satisfaction with, the self. In other words, the depth and richness of the acceptable alternatives which are considered to be encompassed within the nature of the world, the nature of the self and their interaction, contribute to a sense of stability within one's self, and allow alternative styles of living to be seen as not only tolerable but as acceptable.

In connecting this hypothesis to the present study, it follows that the participants who experience this sense of solidity of self will view more ways of conducting their relational lives as satisfactory, if not as desirable.

Joanna is a 30-year-old, single college instructor. The four relationships she discussed were with two female friends, a male friend and her sister. She is quite satisfied with her relationships ("8" on a scale of 1 to 10) and, regarding her overall happiness she says, "I'm content, at peace with who I am. I'm growing, not static." An area of dissatisfaction is in regard to her relationships with men. She is not presently involved in a primary relationship with a man, and views that as a lack in her life:

I want to be married, to have an open relationship with a man. By the time I finish my dissertation I will be 32, sometimes I get anxious that I'll be old. I want a husband and children. If I continue to be single I will accept it and deal with it, although it won't be by choice.

In spite of these feelings, Joanna views alternatives for herself, alternatives which will enable her to live a satisfying life:

I love children. I'm not sure if I want or don't want to give birth to my own child. I want to share what I have with a husband or children, but it could take many forms. If I'm 35 and single, I'll adopt a child. There's a need I have to give to a child.

Joanna, then, sees herself as in process and as growing. She communicates a strong sense of who she is and of what she wants for herself in her life. Yet, she remains flexible, and is considering several options regarding the ways in which she will go about meeting her relational needs. In addition, she derives a great deal of her satisfaction in life from herself--from her own growth and development as a person. She values her relationships highly, yet she does not seem dependent on them for her happiness or sense of contentment with herself.

Elena is a 29-year-old, single psychologist. In the interview, Elena's sense of security in her "personhood" was extremely apparent. The interviewer had the sense, while talking to her, of a woman who had thought a great deal about who she is, what she wants for herself, and how she fits into the world. The ways in which she interacts with the larger environment seem to be governed by her internally based feelings about the directions which she wants her own personal development to take. She has personal goals regarding her growth, yet also exudes a sense of acceptance in respect to her perception of herself in the present. She is quite satisfied with her relationships ("8" on a scale of 1 to 10), and regarding her overall happiness she says, "I'm not ecstatic but I'm content. I have my ups and downs, but I'm feeling good about myself as a person." At the present time, Elena sees her primary area for growth as being her relationships with men:

I would feel relieved about being able to establish a positive, committed relationship with a man, because I question my ability to do that. Before I can really send myself a strong message of, "You're okay," I've got to find out whether I can do this. But you've got to acknowledge life's limitations, it's got to be with the right person and the right person just may not come along. If he doesn't, I can deal with it. I thought about that a lot when I broke up with my fiancé, what I wanted out of life and where I was going. . . . I'm seriously considering a single life. I've been living alone for nine or ten years now, I haven't lived with another person. I'm comfortable. I get lonely at times, but married people are, too. I have close enough friends so that if I'm really lonely I have someone I can call. I feel good about my professional career. . . . I'm excited about what I'm doing and I see the potential for a lot of growth there. I feel like I can lead a meaningful life and I can contribute something worthwhile, to me that's important. . . . I haven't ruled out marriage, children are more unlikely although I haven't ruled it out, I don't think it's a need that I have. I need to develop myself to the fullest of my ability; I need to keep pushing myself past my limits.

Elena, then, is considering two divergent lifestyles, singlehood and marriage, and she conveys the sense that either style will be acceptable and congruent with her sense of self and the ways in which she sees herself interacting with the world. Her orientation is flexible; she is approaching these two different relational lifestyles from a position of strength and solidity.

A different feeling is conveyed by Karen, a 30-year-old high school teacher who was discussed earlier in this chapter. Karen wants desperately to marry and have a family, but her lover, Don, is not ready to make that commitment and the relationship is ending. Karen's happiness appears to be tied to her relationship with Don. She described her overall happiness as a "5" on a scale of 1 to 10, and said that, "I'm in a state of suspension. I'm happy day-to-day, but not with my life. I don't want to be where I am, but I can't do anything about it." Kar-

en's feeling of helplessness is striking. Unlike Joanna and Elena, Karen did not talk much about professional gratifications, and while her other relationships are satisfying, she stated that she would give them all up if she could marry Don. She seems to be relying totally on that relationship, and on her wishes for its future, for her feelings of fulfillment in life. It appears that her goals for herself are based outside herself and as such, she is dependent on another for her own contentment.

The range of feelings about one's self, then, greatly influences one's relationships, and on a broader scale, one's interactions with the world. This view is also held by May who maintains that:

My sense of being is not my capacity to see the outside world, to size it up, to assess reality; it is rather my capacity to see myself as a being in the world, to know myself as a being who can do these things (1958, p. 46).

The more complex ramifications of the solidity of the sense of self (or sense of being) for the women in this sample can only be inferred. The interview was not designed to elicit this type of data. However, throughout the course of the interviews, the implications of this phenomenon for the more qualitative aspects of women's relationships were striking. Because of the nature of the contract with the participants (that the data would be used for research and not clinical analysis), and in order to ensure the protection of confidentiality, this issue will be discussed from a more theoretical perspective and with less specific reference to the data.

Modes of relationship. Karpel (1976) discusses four modes of re-

lationship which differ along two dimensions. Relation-distance is concerned with the nature of the self in relation to another, the states of "I" and "We", the decision, at a specific moment in time, to set oneself apart or enter into a relationship. The second dimension is of immaturity-maturity. In this sense, immaturity refers to the stage of human development in which relationships are characterized by a desire to give over responsibility for oneself to another and are based on identification. Maturity is typified by the ability to accept responsibility for oneself, and relationships are thereby based on differentiation. The types of relationships determined by the interaction of these dimensions are represented diagrammatically below:

| | Immature | Mature |
|----------|---------------|---------------|
| Relation | fusion | dialogue |
| Distance | unrelatedness | individuation |

The mode of unrelatedness is characterized by the elimination of the "We" from one's life, and as such it is non-relational. Close relationships with others are avoided. Any semblance of dependency, on either an infantile or an adult level, is rejected to preclude the sensation of merging with another. The only avenue for maintaining the autonomy of the self is through avoidance of relationships.

A fused relationship is distinguished by a high degree of identification between the partners. Their total dependence on each other makes them almost exclusively relationship-oriented. Differences cannot be tolerated, since they signify a threat to the symbiotic bond which is

perceived as crucial for survival. The "I" is eliminated from one's life, and the self is seen as incapable of an independent existence; the "sense of being" is absent. Both of these relational modes are additionally characterized by rigidity, or by a paucity of alternatives congruent with the sense of self. The experience of the existence of the self is tenuous; hence ambiguity is viewed as threatening.

The relational mode of dialogue is characterized by the integration of the differentiated "I" (individuation) with the differentiated "We." The relationship is founded upon two distinct and whole selves who are able to enter into relationship because of their separateness. As the self is known, it becomes possible to know the other as a whole person and not only as a part of one's own experience. Differences are acknowledged, cherished and encouraged. Each aids the other in the continuing process of individuation. Security is derived from the trust that each partner will be sensitive to the other's needs. Patterns of interaction within the relationship are flexible, as each partner responds openly to the nuances in their internal and external experiences.

These modes of relationship obviously represent the extremes of what is possible. Most relationships would fall somewhere in the middle of the fusion to dialogue continuum, and fluctuations between relative fusion and relative dialogue are likely to occur frequently. Yet most relationships could be characterized as having more of one mode or more of the other. Karpel does not clarify the range of variables which in toto determine one's relational mode. However, it is apparent that one central variable is the degree of differentiation of the self, which leads to the feelings of solidity and security in one's self discussed

above.

Perceived optimal level of intimacy. As the women in this sample described their relationships, especially those with husbands or lovers, the interviewer gained an idea about the place on the fusion to dialogue continuum each might occupy. Betsy's marital relationship, which she describes as, "very close but not smothering," appears to fall on the dialogic end of the continuum; it sounds mature, with qualities of separateness and interdependence. Penny states that she shares everything with her husband, yet also says that the relationship does not interfere with her life. This relationship, then, has more of the quality of two "I's" and less of the characteristics of "We."

In discussing their relationships, most of the women in the sample espoused the value that, in general, "the closer the better." Most women were striving for fully intimate relationships (in terms of dialogue, not fusion) in which each partner was fully known by the other. In response to the question, "How close are you to this person?" most women responded with a "9" or a "10" for their closest relationships (especially husbands and lovers). In many cases, the response of "9" was followed by a statement such as, "I'm closer to him than I've been to anyone else. I can't imagine being closer to someone, but over the years we've gotten closer and it probably will continue. As we experience more together, we will get closer." In this case, the participant responded "9" as opposed to "10" because she sensed the continuing process of growth in the relationship. A "10" would have meant, "we're there already. There's no more potential for growth." For most women a "10" was considered to be the optimal level of intimacy or closeness,

and one which they sought to attain.

Two women in the sample, however, maintained a different view. Each of these women, both of whom are married, described their degree of closeness with their husbands as an "8", and stated that this was the optimal level of intimacy for them. One woman described her position as:

I'm closer to him than to any other human being, but I can't imagine saying "10" for anybody. There are some things I couldn't totally share. I'm not very demonstrative, that's part of it too. It's important to me to be independent. I couldn't ever say "10", it would say something about my dependency I wouldn't have.

Yet in response to the questions, "How well do you know him?" and "How well does he know you?" this woman responded "10" for each, saying:

He knows me better than anybody else. He knows me as well as I know myself, if not better. We know the changes in each other, the evolution of each other as individuals. We're completely honest with each other.

The other woman described her relationship with her husband this way:

There's warmth, physical and emotional affection, but without being engulfing and I don't want it to be. A "10" is as bad as a "1." We have closeness and support, but it's not excessively demanding. I need a lot of freedom.

In discussing how well they know each other, she responded "8" to both questions, saying that, "For him to know me fully would be as bad as not at all. '8' is as high as is acceptable. Any more would be dull."

For these two women, a high level of intimacy and closeness (as

represented by a "10") evokes fears of dependency and engulfment. It is associated with fusion rather than mature dialogue. Autonomy within the context of a highly intimate relationship does not seem possible. Although these women talk about independence and freedom, it is likely that counterdependent feelings are present. While they are certainly able to form satisfying, primary relationships, the interviewer sensed overtones of the mode of unrelatedness as these women discussed their relationships. The dynamics underlying this phenomenon are unclear, but the ability to maintain satisfying, close relationships while simultaneously avoiding feelings of dependency is a phenomenon worthy of further attention.

Satisfaction with relationships appears to be influenced by several variables, which are associated with several levels of analysis. First, fulfillment of the primary needs in the cluster of relational needs is important. Beyond that, an individual's interpersonal goals must be met. Most critically, the individual's relationships must be perceived as congruent with her lifestyle and her acceptable alternative ways of being in the world. Her ability to achieve this end may be largely reliant on the solidity of her sense of self; this enables her to view more alternative paths as acceptable and, since she is less dependent on others for her happiness, she is able to take a more active role in shaping her relational life. Finally, her relational style, which is partly indicated by her mode of relationship, must also be congruent with the way she sees herself as being in the world.

Adult Development and Lifestyle Issues

The preceding sections have examined women's close relationships from a number of perspectives: the attributes which are associated with them; types of important relationships; the cluster of relational needs which these relationships fulfill; factors which determine satisfaction with relationships; and features which determine the idiosyncratic aspects of relationships. The level of analysis has progressed from the descriptive to a more qualitative or clinical perspective as the shift has occurred from discussing relationships in general to examining individual differences in the ways women conduct their relational lives. Other factors also have a bearing on women's relationships. These relate primarily to the life career, the combination of occupation, relational life and leisure activities which jointly determine the individual's path within the social milieu. In the past, the female life cycle was regulated by the family life cycle, and women's roles were circumscribed by family roles. As these roles have widened and alternative lifestyles have gained acceptance and viability, women are confronted with a series of choices regarding their commitments to work and/or family (Lowenthal et al., 1976; Neugarten, 1967; Sheehy, 1974; Van Dusen & Sheldon, 1976).

For the participants in this study, these issues were especially salient. Many had achieved occupational success and were excited at the prospect of continuing that endeavor. Others were just arriving at the point at which professional development would be realized. These women were particularly reluctant to relinquish their work. Simultaneously,

as women around the age of thirty, the participants felt the pressure to decide whether or not they would have children. Most women perceived the career versus children choice as a dilemma, and one which would involve the necessity of giving something up. The decision carried with it implications for their primary relationships, other relationships, and lifestyles more generally. As was true for the other factors which impinge upon relationships, a great deal of variability was evident in the ways in which women thought about and chose to deal with this issue.

Children

Married and single women approached the decision about whether or not to have children from different perspectives. Most of the women in the married group had not decided if they would have children, although all were actively considering the issue. For most, lifestyle issues were of primary concern.

Joan, a 31-year-old, married social worker talked about the issue this way:

It is 50-50 whether or not I will have kids. It would be difficult to integrate a child into my lifestyle, and it would change my relationship with my husband. I can't see it right now. In the future, our lifestyle would have to change. I feel the lack of good family models. But I also feel the time press somewhat in terms of chronology. I was reading Pas-sages, about age 30, but I couldn't find myself in the book. It was depressing--I felt isolated. It's difficult making the decision, especially in view of what I've always thought "30" should be--staid, settled, with a family.

Joan sees her marital relationships as stable and satisfying and is not sure that she wants to upset that balance. Leisure pursuits and her career are important to her; she has integrated these facets of her life

with her marital relationship in a way which is satisfying for her. To add another variable into the equation involves risk. At the same time, Joan acknowledges the effects of her upbringing--that 30-year-old married women should be settled and have families. She has not put this behind her, yet seems reluctant to embrace it.

Wanda is a 29-year-old married woman. She is employed in a professional position, and is simultaneously finishing a graduate degree in the same field. The decision to have children would have career implications for her:

The biggest problem is not knowing if I want to have children. It would probably mean the end of my career. I have to decide, Jed has to, and we have to decide together. I feel pushed into making a decision that may not be the right one. I'm starting to feel the time press. . . . I'm at a funny set of turning points--children, career, finishing a degree. Next year I'll have more free time, and I have to decide what I want to do--pursue my avocation, scholarly research, change jobs. I can't imagine staying home and taking care of a child.

At this time, Wanda perceives the decision to have a child as involving another decision to give up her career, but she also sees herself as on the brink of new work possibilities. She sees herself as being in transition, even without the decision about a family. Therefore, the time pressure she feels is especially acute.

Only one married woman had definitely decided not to have children. Although she did not discuss the reasons for this conclusion in detail, she stated that she had decided to make her work the primary commitment in her life.

Single women think about the issue of children differently. Most

of the single women stated that they want to have children, but problems arise if they are not involved in stable, primary relationships. For some women, the realization that they want children encompasses a dual time pressure; they feel the urgency to develop a satisfying relationship with a man, and to do so within the childbearing period. While many are also considering various forms of single parenthood (adoption, foster children, bearing a child while single), the lifestyle adjustments such a decision would entail would be enormous. Single women discuss the factors involved in the decision in many ways:

I think about my age. I have my professional motivations versus family structure--it's a conflict. I want both. I couldn't think about having a family for four years, until I finish my degrees. And what about the man? Can Tony (her current lover) do it? Can I? I don't know. Having a family would be a responsibility. I want to raise my children myself. I haven't made any decisions yet. I think I'll be happy if I don't have a family.

I've thought about marriage again. I want kids. I've thought a lot about single adoption. I feel the time pressure. I have a couple of years if I want to have a child. I realize the problems with single parenthood, especially with my job. I would have to change jobs.

I can't imagine going through life without a child. I want to do it in about two years, then I'll be 33, definitely within four years. I have goals for myself before I have a baby. I want to be bilingual, to develop a private practice, to develop my writing. I want to be able to support myself when I have a child.

Some other women, who were discussed in previous chapters, discussed similar thoughts. For some, especially Karen, her satisfaction with her life was fundamentally tied to the development of a marital relationship and a family. For other women, more flexibility is apparent. Yet for all of these women, the decision about whether or not to have

children is paramount. They feel faced with making a choice, in their early thirties, with which they will have to live for the rest of their lives. The decision not to have children, should they make it, means surrendering familiar patterns of behavior. At the same time, the decision to have children, but maintain one's career, is also unfamiliar since, as Joan said, there are few role models for this lifestyle.

Work and Professional Life

This study was designed to explore professional women's relationships; as such, the focus was on relationships and not on work life. Although no question directly addressed career issues, it became apparent that for many women their professional identity was such an integral part of their identity as a person, that one could not be separated from the other. Many women invest a significant amount of energy in their careers. Work is an important source of problems and joys. In otherwise difficult times, a satisfying work life can be an important basis for self-esteem.

For single women who are not involved in primary relationships, work is especially critical, as is illustrated by several of the women discussed earlier. Nora, a 30-year-old, single, director of a social service agency immerses herself in her work and other community activities to ward off feelings of loneliness. She says, "My career is fulfilling, and I can spend as much time at it as I want. Activities keep my mind off it." For Nora, work offers an alternative source of gratification for many of her interpersonal needs, and she uses it effectively. Elena, a 29-year-old, single psychologist who is contemplating

a single lifestyle said that, "I feel good about my professional career. I see the potential for growth. I can lead a meaningful life and contribute something. . . . I need to develop myself to the fullest of my ability." For Elena and several others, work has become a primary arena for self-development and for gaining gratifications, and is acquiring at least an equal status with that granted to relationships. The extent of this phenomenon is exemplified by the words of one of the participants who said, "I love the work I do. I can't think of myself disconnected from my career." This viewpoint marks a radical shift from traditional patterns for women.

The importance of the workplace as a forum for developing friendships which enhance the elaboration of one's professional identity has already been discussed. For some women, work has had other repercussions on their relationships. Charlene is a 28-year-old, divorced woman who is currently living with her lover. In addition to working full-time, she is also finishing a degree. Because of her work schedule, her free time is usually limited to one evening per week and Sundays. Her lover does most of the household chores. While she describes their relationship as a good one, her schedule obviously puts many strains on the relationship, and at this point she is quite certain that her professional development is her first priority.

Maureen is a 33-year-old married woman. Four years ago, she made a radical career change, from an academic position to a free-lance writer. She describes this change as taking place within the context of the "age 30 crisis", which involved a massive reevaluation of her life, herself, what she wanted to be and what she wanted to do with her

life. This period of transition put an enormous strain on her relationship with her husband, since her self-redefinition also involved a redefinition of the relationship. The relationship almost ended, however they discovered how important they were to each other, and were able to break out of their established patterns of relating and renegotiate the relationship. The change of careers has also entailed an extreme change of lifestyle for Maureen, and she now spends much of her time out of Amherst. The relationship appears to have been able to accommodate this change.

Sally is a 30-year-old, married woman, whose relationship with her husband, Ted, is currently in transition. Ted is in graduate school in another part of the country; Sally could not find suitable work there, and elected to remain in Amherst during his two years of study. This separation is putting a strain on their relationship. A greater strain, however, derives from their differing lifestyle goals. Ted is certain that he wants children; Sally is not sure, but doubts that she does. This divergence of goals may result in the ending of their relationship. Sally says, "I've gotten most happiness and satisfaction in life from my work and from doing well in school, not from interpersonal relationships. I'm unwilling to give that up. But Ted wants a family. . . ." For Sally, commitment to her career may necessitate a choice between her work and her marriage. These issues are ones which more and more dual career couples are having to confront. Again, the very fact that these issues are arising speaks to the changing ways in which women see themselves interacting with the world.

The choice of career versus children or a combination of the two

can be seen as the central developmental issue for professional women around the age of thirty. The factors which influence this decision are embedded within the individual's relational context (married and single women feel the effects of this dilemma differently), within her work context (the status of her career may affect the relative priorities she assigns to work versus relationships), and by her personal goals for herself. Women approach this situation in a variety of ways. Each alternative path carries with it repercussions for her relationships, and has a bearing on the lifestyle she chooses to adopt. Throughout this study, the differences between the individual participants has been striking. The twenty women in this sample expressed desires to pursue five divergent lifestyles: married with children, married without children, single and living alone, single and living communally, and married, but shifting from living as a couple to living communally. Some of the factors which influence these choices have been discussed. However, in the final analysis, there is fascination and amazement at the complexity of each of the individuals, and at their ability to arrive at the style of life which suits them most comfortably.

It should be noted that the balance between relational needs or between relational needs and work commitments is a temporary one. The interplay between these elements must be viewed as fluid and as subject to disruption by internal choices (such as Maureen's career change) or by external influences (such as the time pressure to have children). The women who report current high satisfaction with their relationships have achieved a dynamic homeostasis, yet they are aware that it requires work to maintain that balance in the face of continually changing life

demands .

CHAPTER V

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

In this exploration of professional women's close relationships, it has been emphasized that the interaction of all three components of the "life career", work, relationships and leisure pursuits, must be acknowledged in order to gain a clear understanding of any one component. This study has concentrated primarily on work life and relational life. In a rapidly changing social climate professional women, and the others with whom they interact, are faced with the arduous task of developing new guidelines and modes of relating. The increasing number of options which are currently available allow greater freedom in the selection of lifestyles and personal goals. Simultaneously, however, new forms of social supports must be developed to make these unfolding options truly viable. Traditionally, affective and instrumental tasks were divided according to sex, and each group had its own support systems. As women and men seek to expand their areas of expertise, and as they struggle with both tasks, self-definitions are changing and both expressive and instrumental competence is sought by both sexes.

As women venture into the professional arena, new sources of gratifications and problems are available to them, and consequently, women's relationships are undergoing change. Previously, a woman's relationships (primarily with husband and children) were the focus of her life. Intimacy needs were met primarily through the family, although

friendships were also important. Professional women find that the time available for relationships is diminished, and accordingly, priorities must be established. The balance between personal and professional commitments can be a delicate one. How, then, do professional women meet these needs?

Styles of Meeting Intimacy Needs

It appears that most women still choose to fulfill many of their intimacy needs in one, primary relationship. In most cases this relationship is with a man, although another woman may also be the emotional intimate. For the professional woman who is involved in a primary relationship, that relationship and her career are the two most important commitments in her life. Most women also feel the need for other types of relationships, as represented by the cluster of relational needs, which fulfill other important functions in her life. As such, the degree of dependence on the primary relationship has changed, as women rely less on that relationship for the fulfillment of all of their relational needs. The evolution of a stable group of supportive peers may represent an attempt to rectify the isolation engendered by the recent reliance on the nuclear family for the fulfillment of all affective needs. In this way, the presence of a network of supportive others may fulfill a similar function to that of an extended family. The functions subsumed within the cluster of relational needs--emotional intimacy, the feelings of being "special" to another, of knowing another and of being known, of connectedness and belonging, of sharing experience with an-

other who "understands", of continuity and a link to one's past, of stability and constancy--are ones which have previously been met in familial relationships. When a group of peers fulfills these functions, that group takes on one of the fundamental tasks of the family: of communicating to the individual both a sense of belonging and a sense of being separate (Minuchin, 1974).

It can be seen, then, that in some cases the fundamental needs for intimacy can be met in one, primary relationship, while groups of supportive others fulfill more general needs for close relationships. In some cases, another pattern is evident. A woman may not have one, emotionally intimate relationship, but a number of close relationships may in toto meet her needs for intimacy. In this case, each relationship fulfills a different aspect of the total need for intimacy, as well as meeting the other needs for close relationships. This style of meeting intimacy needs corresponds with the work done by Ramey (1976), in which he outlines six components of intimacy: intellectual, emotional, sexual, social, family and work. An individual may share intellectually with one person, emotionally with another, and exchange issues relating to work with a third. Although no one relationship fulfills all of her intimacy needs, the total gestalt of close relationships offers the individual support and confidential sharing in each important aspect of her life. This pattern of meeting intimacy needs offers stability and security to the individual, and is similar in this way to the pattern characterized by one intimate relationship and several other close, supportive relationships. In each of these patterns, the loss of any one relationship, while difficult for the individual, is not traumatic

because other people are available for support. The individual therefore gains a solid sense of interpersonal connectedness, and is not likely to feel isolated and/or alone.

This situation is different from the one in which a woman has one, emotionally intimate relationship but no other close relationship. Although these women may report that their needs for intimacy are met, they are more likely to feel isolation and loneliness. In many cases the emotional intimate is a husband, and the woman feels the need for other types of relationships. Even if the individual reports that the one intimate relationship meets all of her interpersonal needs, she is in a vulnerable position since no other resources are available to her in times of stress.

This third style of meeting intimacy needs was reported primarily by married women, many of whom expressed dissatisfaction with their relationships in general (although the marital relationship was viewed as satisfactory). The married women in this sample, as a group, reported lower satisfaction with their interpersonal relationships than did the single women. This may be due to greater reliance on the husband for the fulfillment of all of one's relational needs, and of a corresponding overinvestment in that relationship. The women who demonstrate this style are the ones who are most closely allied with traditional women's patterns, in which all relational needs are met in the home. While many of these women recognize the need for additional close relationships, many of them are not actively seeking to develop these relationships. These women, more than the others in the sample, may be experiencing more conflict regarding the "professional woman" role. Although they

are competent in their work lives, they still pursue more traditional, and reportedly unsatisfactory, patterns in their relational lives.

The Place of Work

As was previously discussed, work plays an important role in the lives of professional women. The existence of this role offers an additional source of self-esteem, and allows for a multi-faceted identity and solid sense of self. Women are gaining, as men have more usually had, a sense of effectiveness and competence in more than one sphere of life.

Women also appear to be approaching this additional sphere of their lives self-consciously. A high degree of reflectivity marks the ways in which these women think about the development of their careers and professional identities. As they go through this process, they turn to other professionals, usually other women, to share problems, aspirations, goals and experiences. The process of professional development, for these women, is not only instrumental, but is also interpersonal. In this way, women seem to be integrating traditional areas of expertise with the newer, occupational competence. This phenomenon is evident in the importance that the majority of women place on having a relationship, usually with a coworker or friend from graduate school, within which they can share professional issues. If this represents a trend, relationships in the workplace may become increasingly more collaborative and less competitive, as coworkers share experiences, problems and joys. However, this trend may also be partially an artifact of this

sample of women, all of whom were employed in the arts or human services. These occupations are more commonly chosen by women, and the work environments may be more supportive of collaboration and affective expression. A sample of women in more traditionally competitive work settings, such as business, might evince a somewhat different trend.

For all of these women, work provides a source of gratification which is especially important if one's relational life is not satisfying. For women without close relationships, a satisfying work life can provide a sense of stability and security, as the individual feels that she is making a significant contribution to others. In this way, work provides an adaptive alternative to relationships as a source of self-esteem and interpersonal contact. Women whose jobs are not particularly satisfying, and whose relational lives are not going well, report feeling more distress than women who are pleased with their professional lives. High investment in one's work, and corresponding gratifications, seems to lead to a diminished need for intimacy and interpersonal contact.

In some cases, however, investment in work may become extreme. Some women seem to become overinvolved in their work, and this is accompanied by a denial of relational needs. These women exemplify a pattern of sex-role reversal. For them, work has replaced family as the sole source of gratification. This pattern appears especially likely in women who have counterdependent tendencies. Their relationships tend to be characterized by the attribute "allows separateness", and their interpersonal styles by the mode of unrelatedness. As they invest primary energy in their work, their relationships suffer. A balance be-

tween the three components of the "life career" is absent.

It can be seen, then, that the attainment of a satisfactory balance between work and relationships is difficult to attain. Most women put a primary emphasis on one sphere or the other, although this area of emphasis may shift back and forth over time. The women who report highest overall happiness, however, are ones who have several close, satisfying relationships (usually including a primary relationship) and who are involved in satisfying careers.

Implications

The trend which is evolving seems to be one in which the scope of women's lives is broadening to include professions and extra-familial relationships. This study has been an exploratory one; before its findings can be completely validated, similar work must be conducted with other samples of women (i.e., in urban settings, from other occupations, etc.). If this trend exists, however, critical changes in relational systems and structures are likely to occur.

As increasing numbers of women engage in professions, career development is likely to be emphasized in early adulthood and marriage will be postponed (Appley, 1976). This pattern is likely to lead to more child-free marriages, and older parents as families are decided against or delayed. As more women reject the model of the nuclear family, and gratify more of their relational needs in extra-familial relationships, other types of living situations, such as communal ones, may be chosen at least at some times in women's lives. Just as the liv-

ing situation of the family reflects one pattern of meeting relational needs, as new patterns evolve, living arrangements may develop which also reflect these new styles.

As women postpone marriage and concentrate on personal and professional development in early adulthood, it is likely that, like many of the single women in this study, they will develop solid identities, and will individually determine their own values and lifestyles. As these women then put greater emphasis on compatibility in potential mates and feel that marriage is an option but not a necessity, the prevalence of singlehood will probably increase. Additionally, as women make stronger commitments to their work and derive more gratifications from it, more women may decide to make their careers the primary focus of their lives, and may decide not to marry. It may become more common for groups of adults to perform the functions more usually performed by the family, such as support, nurturance, sharing responsibilities for children and pooling economic resources.

Perhaps the overall conclusion which can be drawn is that there is no one "right" way. The previously accepted path from singlehood to early marriage to children is less often accepted without question. As more women examine the options available to them, more people may move in and out of various lifestyles at different times in their lives. Changes in career and in relational lifestyles may become more common. While this type of a pattern would imply greater levels of personal growth as individuals challenge their limits, it also implies more transition and less stability. The potential effects, both positive and negative, associated with the lack of a lifetime commitment or interper-

personal connection cannot be ascertained at this time. It does seem clear, however, that this is a time of transition in at least this segment of the population.

Directions for Future Research

The findings of this study must be considered in some sense tentative, due to the small and restricted sample. In order to gain a clearer sense of the phenomena which have been investigated, they must also be explored in other groups. Some research questions might be:

Are similar phenomena evident in women in other age groups?
Are older women also experiencing new options as available to them? What are the effects on their relationships?

Does this trend extend to non-professional women? What are the effects on their feelings about their own lives? Do women feel comfortable choosing to be housewives and mothers?

Are parallel changes occurring in men? Do men also view expanding alternatives for themselves in regard to work and relationships? Are men considering singlehood? Are they considering devoting themselves to full-time childcare? What is the impact of the changes in women on men?

The cluster of relational needs also requires more investigation. This study was designed to explore intimacy, these other findings were not expected, but arose from the data. Questions might be asked regarding the relation of intimacy to the other needs. Are they really distinct phenomena, or can they be more accurately considered "components" of intimacy as Ramey (1976) suggests? Is the list of needs complete, or are there others which were not addressed in this sample? Are the needs discussed in this study experienced as important by other groups

of people?

The factors which influence satisfaction with relationships also merits further study. As options increase, there seems to be some "lag time" in the alternatives for meeting relational needs which are considered viable. A closer look at the variables which influence satisfaction would be especially useful for clinicians who may be working with people who are trying to develop new patterns for meeting relational needs, and as a means of validating these alternative patterns.

In a more clinical vein, the relationship between a solid sense of self and the qualitative aspects of relationships could be explored. How does a solid sense of individuation interact with the dialogic mode of relating? Does that sense of individuation ever lead instead to unrelatedness as the primary mode? What are the aspects of individual development which foster the evolution of an individuated personality capable of dialogic relationships? (A paradox seems evident: Relationships are necessary prerequisites for the individuated sense of separateness, which is in turn a necessary prerequisite for the capability to form mature relationships.)

The findings of this study, then, can lead to future research on three levels: sociocultural, interpersonal, and intrapersonal. This research indicates that some women have begun to integrate the implications of all three of these levels in their personal and professional lives.

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Appendix A

I am a third-year graduate student in psychology at the University of Massachusetts and I am conducting research for my masters' thesis. I obtained your name and address from the Amherst street directory and I am hoping that you will agree to meet with me for an hour or two at your convenience. I am interested in knowing more about important personal relationships in women's lives. I am looking primarily for women who work outside the home and are married and have no children, or who have never been married.

I will call you in the next few days to answer any questions you have, at which time you can decide whether or not you would like to participate.

Thank you for your time.

Sincerely,

Lynn Starker

Appendix B
Interview Schedule

Participant Number:

Age:

Marital Status:

Occupation:

Number Years Married:

1. Describe your four (4) closest relationships.

Information to be obtained: age, sex, how long known, type of relationship (friend, lover, relative). For each relationship determine:

- a. Where does each live (how far)?
- b. How often do you see each? How do you usually get together (who initiates the contact)?
- c. How often do you speak to each on the phone? Who makes the call?
- d. Do you visit him/her or does he/she visit you?
- e. What do you do with each?
- f. On what is each relationship based (activities, talking, etc.)?
- g. Do you usually hold the same values, opinions, etc.?
- h. How well does each know you (1-10 point scale with 1 = not well and 10 = very well)?
- i. How well do you know each (1-10 point scale with 1 = not well and 10 = very well)?
- j. If not obtained spontaneously, ask about dimensions of intimacy:

--Do you talk about your feelings with _____?

--When you have a problem, do you talk to _____ about it? Is it satisfying?

--How much do you rely on ____? Does ____ rely on you? For what?

--Do you feel comfortable telling ____ how you feel about him/her?

--When ____ is in trouble, do you want to help him/her? Does s/he want to help you?

--How much does ____ know of your innermost thoughts, secrets and fears? Do you trust him/her with that knowledge?

2. About how many other people (acquaintances, etc.) do you see, speak to, etc.?
3. On the whole, how do you spend your time? (Pick an average week) Who do you see, how often?
4. If you were depressed, who would you call, if anyone?
5. If you had a problem who would you call:
 - a. to talk about it?
 - b. if you needed a favor (i.e., someone's time)?
 - c. if you needed money or concrete assistance?
6. Who calls you with the problems mentioned above?
7. When you have a vacation, what do you do? With whom? Who makes the plans?
8. Who is your "best friend"?
9. Describe your family of origin. How many? Ages? Sex of siblings? How close are you to them? How often do you see them? Speak on the phone?
10. Do you ever feel lonely? Isolated? Bored? How often? When? What do you do about it?
11. How do lovers fit in? What kinds of sexual relationships do you have? What functions do they serve?
12. Is your pattern of relationships now typical for other periods in your life? If not, how is it different? Which was best for you?
13. On the whole, how satisfied are you with your interpersonal relationships? What makes it that way for you (1-10 point scale with 1 = not at all and 10 = very satisfied)?
14. Is anything missing in your relationships? What would you add?

15. Is there anything else you would change?
16. Do your present relationships meet your needs for intimate contact?
17. On the whole, how would you rate your overall happiness (1-10 point scale with 1 = very unhappy and 10 = very happy)?

