

lick Stinnett raig Wayne Birdsong

Stinnett Birdsong

#### Craig Wayne Birdsong **Nick Stinnett**

one-parent families cohabitation, communes, swinging, group alternatives to traditional marriage: extensive studies dealing with six marriage, extramarital affairs, and This important work is the result of

experienced in these life styles? dying? What do participants see as the alternate life styles? Is the family really are we currently witnessing an explosion in human emancipation and fulfillment. Why hailed as the beginning of a new society of subject to public censure are now often between men and women that were once ife styles? What are the major problems benefits and advantages of these alternate Forms of associations and relations

extended family experience. Many of those more intimate relationships and an trying to escape the loneliness, who have opted for alternate life styles are marriage, people are largely searching for belief that, through alternatives to commitment and stability. It is the authors developments in the search for some of the more popular and significant Stinnett and Craig W. Birdsong examine Concerned with these questions, Nick

(continued on the back flap)

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restrictiveness, hypocrisy, and materialism

(continued from the front flap

that they see in the Establishment The authors explore at length the

way). The authors remind us that like extramarital affairs heading the list of experiments mentioned above, with with us, whether or not looked at by the death and taxes, such affairs will always be (although it is not usually thought of in this circumstances and, as much as possible, prying eyes of social scientists. alternatives to conventional marriage the "results" of the various social

exploded; i.e., people living in communes the dishes?" commune members have) "If everyone is matters are considered, too; Stinnett and engaging in group sex. And practical doing his or her own thing, who is doing Birdsong ask the question (as many do not spend 50 percent of their time process, many popular myths are verboten life styles are examined. In the Then, the more exotic and, until now

a piece of the emotional rock which is experiments is "Can we as a people and as men) want?" paraphrase Freud, what do women (and individuals survive the mad scrambling for do not fail to remind us that the becoming all the more illusive? In short, to tundamental question behind all of these On a more serious note, the authors

### About the Authors

the University of Nebraska in Lincoln. Nick Stinnett, Ph.D., is professor and chairman of the Department of Human Development and the Family at

University in Fort Collins, Colorado. Craig W. Birdsong is Federal Housing Specialist with the Cooperative Extension Service at Colorado State

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with contributions by nancy m. stinnett

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8/The Future and Human Potential/191 2/Extramarital Sexual Relationships/25 1/Emerging Alternatives/1 7/One-Parent Family/161 6/Group Marriage/137 Chapter Notes/211 5/Communes/101 4/Cohabitation/77 3/Swinging/49 Foreword/vii Index/227

Cohabitation

8

courtship and will likely continue to increase in the future An increasing number of individuals are experimenting with the cohabitative life style because they feel it frees them from the legal entanglements of marriage and enables them to avoid many of the common problems of marriage.

Research indicates that many individuals have difficulty terminating a cohabitative relationship, however, and that cohabiting couples experience many of the same problems as married couples. In addition they also face several unique problems directly related to the cohabitative life style.

As a result of avoiding the legal bonds of marriage, many cohabiting couples and their children face frustrating legal problems such as illegitimacy and inheritance.

There is a real question concerning the effects of cohabitation on the emotional development of individuals; much research is needed in this area.

It is possible that the nature of cohabitation, with its emphasis upon freedom from any kind of legal commitment, also tends to result in a decreased emphasis upon interpersonal commitment in general.

The possibility that cohabitation may result in decreased commitment seems to be supported by a study that indicated that cohabiting males expressed little marital commitment and expressed less need and respect for their partners than did a group of noncohabiting males who were steadily dating a special partner. In fact the findings of this study indicated that the cohabiting couples to a large extent did not reciprocate the feelings of needing and respecting each other that the noncohabiting couples did. 45

That a lower degree of commitment may be associated with the life style of cohabitation is also suggested by a study that found an extremely low degree of religious participation among cohabiting couples. The researchers offered the possible explanation that there may be a relationship between a lack of commitment to a religious sect and an unwillingness to commit oneself to another person in a legal marriage.<sup>46</sup>

## 

The Communal Living Explosion
Who Are They?
Types of Communes
History
Goals
Achieving Objectives
Problems
Sexual Relationships
Childrearing Practices
Economic Support and Property
The Stability of Communal Life
Similarities between the Communal and Poverty
Subcultures
Comment

## The Communal Living Explosion

Only a handful of communes existed in the United States during the 1950's. One rarely heard talk of them. Suddenly the decade of the 1960's witnessed an explosion in the growth of the communal movement. Ten thousand persons had settled in more than 500 communes across the nation by 1969. Today the number has soared to approximately 3,000 communes, and there is no estimate of the total number of residents. Commune has become a household word.

Much can be learned from the communal movement. If it does nothing else, this movement gives some indication of the needs that have not been adequately met in the lives of those who choose to live in communes. This information may very well offer insight into the qualities of life that have been lost in modern society.

### Who Are They?

Most of those who adhere to communal living are in the age range of 20 to 28. Typically the people living in communes have been reared in middle- or upper-class families. Individuals from poverty backgrounds or minority groups are rarely found in communes. Possibly persons from less affluent backgrounds have had all the experience they desire in sharing living quarters with several others and, consequently, do not view this as a utopian experience.<sup>2</sup>

Communes have been composed of such diverse

chologists, former monks in New Hampshire, Quakers in hippies and dropouts, pacifists, former drug addicts, psygroups as homesteaders, political radicals, intellectuals,

South America, and Hasidic Jews in Boston.<sup>3</sup>

a group living experience with like-minded persons. The people in the professions. Dr. Herbert Otto, Chairperson of of the older population as well as increasing numbers of communal movement has begun to attract a larger segment are people who believe they can find a better way of life in disillusioned with the dominant life styles in America; they the National Center for the Exploration of Human Potential In a real sense they are Establishment dropouts

some friends were in the process of organizing a comseveral psychiatrists, an engineer, a teacher, and a chemmune. They were looking for a large brownstone close to ist. When I visited New York . . . a senior editor of a that he had been a member of a commune composed of their offices. large publishing house casually mentioned that he and . . a college professor in his early thirties mentioned

communal movement has been taken over by a stable, stream of society.5 they have chosen to remove themselves from the main cally wrong with the way people live and think; therefore, movement is not simply a composite of social radicals are viewed as part of a drop-out generation, the communa serious-minded people. Although many commune members Commune members generally feel there is something basi-There are indications that, in many respects, the

### Types of Communes

characteristics, and yet they are all different. Although any general types of communes. Most fall in the following types: classification is arbitrary, it is helpful to identify some crash pads, cooperatives, and intentional communes Communes are not easily classified. They share certain

105

#### Crash Pads

member with a job. a rented apartment financed by generous parents or by a hippies or runaway preteens or teenagers. It usually involves This type of commune is generally composed of

necessary work around the commune. and strangers "crash the pad," stay for varying periods of time, and may or may not help with expenses or with to drop in and stay as long as he or she wishes. Both friends members and an open-door policy to anyone who wishes A crash pad commune usually has several core

security from the group. the point where members derive a sense of identity and sharing and intragroup relationships may be developed to does pretty much what he or she wants to do. Many crash pads are little more than a night's lodging. Some do involve There is little group decision-making and everyone

commune.6 group. Some members may introduce destructive drug practices. Health problems are greatest in this type of high. This tends to disrupt the relationships within the persons may come and go as they please, the turnover rate is Crash pads are the least stable type of commune. Since

#### Cooperatives

sions are made usually by majority rule. Many cooperatives upkeep and cooperate in doing daily chores. Group deciwhich the members share the expense of a dwelling and its have a strong political orientation as their major generative Cooperatives are organized living arrangements in

### Intentional Communes

economic or practical reasons, they also are faithful to an they should. While they may establish a commune for establishing a life style that allows them to live as they think Most members of this type of commune are involved in

107

ideological principle. It is the following of an ideological principle that sets them apart. Intentional communes often have a strong political or religious orientation.

### Urban and Rural Communes

Another, and perhaps the simplest, classification of communes is the division into urban and rural, or open land, communes. Most communes are located in urban areas.

A good example of an urban commune is one that was established near the University of Minnesota by a Methodist minister named Bob. The commune was housed in an old fraternity house. This commune consisted of five families including eleven children and one single woman. All the adults in the commune had private rooms. The three preschool boys were assigned to one room. The five grade school children (three boys and two girls) shared one very large room with movable partitions. The three teenagers had separate rooms.

Seven of the adults had outside jobs. Within the commune, there were rotating teams for cooking and cleaning. Some meals were common, while other meals were held separately in natural family groupings.

All the adults shared in the discipline of the children. And how were the children influenced by the communal living experience? Perhaps it is impossible to determine that at this time. However, the founder, Bob, stated, "People who knew them before and see them now tell us they seem more stable, more poised and happier."

Another commune was started by a middle-class, Los Angeles couple. Among the things that most frustrated the couple was that they found themselves spending \$60 to \$70 each week for babysitters. They had no grandparents or nearby relatives to care for their three children. To this and other frustrations, communal living arrangements seemed to be the answer to this couple. The Los Angeles lawyer and his wife therefore formed a middle-class commune with six other like-minded couples. The couples purchased a six-unit apartment building in southern Los Angeles. They knocked

out walls and doors and built interjoining apartments and a communal nursery. The couples worked out a schedule in which they took turns doing chores. For example, each couple would do all of the housework and cooking for one week. The husbands began to take a greater part in child-rearing and cooking and apparently enjoyed increased participation in these areas.<sup>9</sup>

Some communal groups prefer to live in a rural setting. The land is purchased, leased, or acquired as a gift. As might be expected, there is a trend among the open-land communes toward ownership of land. They attempt to be self-supporting by growing much of their food, developing their own educational systems, and establishing some basis for financial independence. Many rural communes cultivate organically grown vegetables, grain, and other crops for sale to health food stores, health food wholesalers, and supermarkets.<sup>10</sup>

The differentiation of sex roles is most marked in rural communes because the nature of the work requires more division between men's and women's work, as men of necessity do the heavier work. In fact, many of these communes are very traditional, their members' life styles having come full circle.

The open-land communes especially have sought a return to the extended farm family of the past. They attempt to combine life-support and recreational activities and to integrate the aspects of life that are usually fragmented by society.

It is interesting that rural communes lean more toward a futuristic orientation than do urban communes, perhaps because people who live off the land must plan for the future to some extent, as they must anticipate the changing seasons and work within the rhythm of planting and reaping.<sup>11</sup>

Jim, a member of a rural commune in the mountains, described the life style of his group:

There are 16 people in our family. That includes five couples and six children. We are all between the ages of

aren't. Concerning our sexual relationships, we are moother is physically working together, working with our hands, on projects important to our survival. We helped tried it to some extent earlier, but it created too many nogamous. We just can't accept the sexual sharing bit. We 22 and 28. Three of the couples are legally married, two of the main things that has made us feel close to each result. It sounds OK on paper, but it didn't work. We all problems, too much jealousy. Two couples split as a each other build our houses. We cut logs, hauled them in feel close to each other. I mean it's a family feeling. One manage to feed ourselves with it and even sell some of the kids. We have established a good, big garden, and women do the cooking, canning, sewing, and taking care Generally, the men do most of the heavy work. The When you do something like that together, you feel close. and put them up together. Even the women helped some gifts. Occasionally, we take outside farm labor jobs and relatives and friends give us small amounts of money as have to spend a lot of money. Every now and then our own clothes and don't use electricity, so we don't We have a little income from the crafts we sell. We make produce. We eat vegetables mostly and get food stamps. get wages from that. I don't think I could go back to the city. There is something purifying and spiritual about living next to the land

#### History

and shared their belongings with one another. They would times. Their existence can be traced back into earlier century phenomenon born of the dissatisfaction of our many indications that communes are not a mid-twentieth from Good News for Modern Man, Acts 2:44-45, is one of among them according to what they need." This quotation sell their property and possessions and distribute the money periods of history. "All believers continued together in close fellowship

past many communes were formed of necessity.12 closed society whose members share everything has recurred in most periods of social turmoil and change. In the like-minded, determined individuals can build a small As Margaret Mead has stated, the belief that a group of

In the early 1800's the first of a long series of group

Spiritualists, and Separatists. nal living. Such religious groups included the Hutterites, whose withdrawal from the world took the form of commuliving experiments emerged in the form of religious families Zoarites, Fourierites, Shakers, Moranians, Perfectionalists

sprang up and prospered in the United States during the Hutterites, survived. years before and after the Civil War. Only a few such as the More than one hundred different utopian communes

able that the communes stayed intact as long as they did. 13 period. They were transient individuals, and it was remarkartistic and political achievements in the post-World War II necessarily dropouts or mistits, were artistic and political centered in New York City. These people, though not came to be called Bohemian. The Bohemian life style liberals, many of whom went on to make outstanding During the early 1930's one style of communal living

section of San Francisco in 1964. the new communes was established in the Haight-Ashbury from the 1940's to the 1960's. However, the decade of the 1960's witnessed the rebirth of communal living. The first of There were few developments in communal living

Newsweek reporter described the change: movement's greatest enemies: drugs and the mass media. A Ashbury had been left in ruin by two of the communal Within three years the communal experience in Haight-

movement picked up steam and began to grow It was at this point that the current communal living hands. Gather into tribes; take it anywhere. Disperse."14 unbearable, word went out from the hippie elite " the younger generation. When things really became scene had turned into an overcrowded Miami Beach for The Haight is not where it's at-it's in your head and By October, 1967, the once gentle Haight-Ashbury

#### Coals

sought after by persons who join communes movement? What are commune members searching for? Sociologists have identified some common goals that are What are the motivations behind the communal

commune members most strongly seek from their group people are attempting to recapture loving, accepting family childhood that is associated with a wistful desire to obtain mon to commune members is an emotional isolation in living experience. A major personality characteristic comsouthwest, stated: relationships, which were either lost or never existed at all. love and security in a new kinship environment. Such Jake Jenson, a 25-year-old leader of a commune in the Close, meaningful human interaction seems to be what

people who wanted to establish very emotionally close really cared for each other. Most of the people here did relationships with each other. We wanted to be part of a not have that type of experience while growing up. family where members really had time for each other and Our main objective was to get together a group of

One 18-year-old young man who lives in a commune

A commune is in reality a substitute for the family. It seems like one of the reasons that this is happening is that, not more than twenty years ago, if the son had a hassle on the kids were doing almost identically the same trip. Like in the past, the father and mother were doing one trip and because you are having to explain it to them. 15 is very little chance for them really to understand what's between us and our parents and just no possibility—there to him. Whereas now, like there is generally a big gap was hip to what was going on and could explain the trip his mind, he could go talk to the old man and his father going on well enough to be able to explain it to you,

expressed over and over. This generally is a reaction against the extremely individualistic, fragmentary type of family life that many people experience today. The desire to belong to a larger family group has been

person commune in California called itself "The Lynch denced by the names they adopt. For example, a liftyextended families in their warmth and intimacy is evi-That today's communes model themselves after

"The Family." Chosen Family." A New York City group chose the name of Family." A New Mexico commune named itself "The

a method of psychological survival. 16 in an industrialized society. They view their way of living as the answer to overcoming alienation and depersonalization Commune members generally believe they have found

Family of Peace", located in a big, old Victorian-styled twin One member of a commune in Philadelphia, called "A and assume a greater personal responsibility for each other. house, stated: There is a deep desire to understand one another better

someone else's personal problems, but if this personal the group and when he needs privacy. It's time-consuming and sometimes painful to get involved in other people, learn when someone needs to be drawn into must learn when he is inconsiderate, learn what upsets be disastrous for the community in the long run. each other's head. When someone feels hurt, you can responsibility for each other is lacking, the results have to frustrated, you can avoid them. But in a commune, one ignore it. When someone is depressed, withdrawing or Communes, or families, can be run without getting into

of Peace commented: "We're more oriented toward the expansion of the idea of a commune. Everyone may not be their particular commune. As another member of A Family the same sky."17 living under the same plaster roof, but we're all living under lishing more intimate, responsible relationships beyond Many commune members extend their hopes of estab-

### Personal Growth

sense of intimate involvement.<sup>18</sup> One rural commune disagreements, regenerate commitment, and develop a commune's activities, as the group process is used to settle sessions. Group experiences can be a major part of the criticize and support each other in encounter and sensitivity member stated: Many commune members can openly and honestly

support I received from others in these "head sessions." hurt and didn't quite get put back together again. A lot of meeting, confessional, and revival. Some of the encounter psychoanalysis, encounter group, sensitivity group, pep There is also a feeling of satisfaction I get from the them and to see what kind of impact I have on others. group sessions have gotten out of hand and people were rience, and there are some people who are too sadistic. people are too sensitive for an encounter group expe-The "head sessions" have been sort of a combination of I have found it helpful to see my faults as others see

### A Spiritual Rebirth

study yoga and various Eastern religions. spiritual meditation in so many communes, many of which rebirth. This is reflected by the great emphasis placed upon finding themselves spiritually; they are seeking a spiritual Several people view communal living as a way of

claims he has direct communication with Christ. and pray. Norn House was founded by a young man who an old Indian meeting ground. Members regularly meditate such as the Norn House Commune, located in a forest near Spiritual growth is the major goal of some communes

animals as well as humans is taken for granted. cino, California, expressed the view that God is found in all forms of life, and therefore, spiritual communication with Members of the Road #721 Commune, near Mendo-

priest. Yoga classes were taught daily in a meditation room, reading, and astrology. 19 and classes were also held in psychic healing, Tarot card have been held under the spiritual guidance of a Catholic In the El Centro Commune in Santa Fe, "love masses"

### De-emphasizing Competition

one man in a religious commune stated: competition that is characteristic of the Western world. As Many communal members want to get away from the

himself or herself as a functioning part of a whole that is "We are holists-in the sense that each of us sees

> We each make an equal contribution. We are totally interdependent."  $^{\rm 20}$ much greater and more valuable than the sum of its parts

supportiveness in human relationships appears to be one of supportiveness toward each other that is unusual. This want to try to beat each other. The children have an attitude popular among Hawaiian children because they do not another child look bad. Organized football has not been not answer the question because they do not want to make a child a question he does not know, the other children wil among many native Hawaiian children. When a teacher asks to achieve a situation similar to that which exists in Hawaii emphasizing competition major goal the communes are trying to achieve by de-By de-emphasizing competition, communes are trying

### Getting Back to Nature

polluted, and much of the wildlife has been destroyed. grass have been replaced with concrete, the air and streams warred against nature, exploited it, and raped it. Trees and We have separated ourselves from nature; we have

their babies at home by natural childbirth techniques. For and grow organic food. Many commune members deliver many communes is to reunite with nature, to work the soil unnatural. others the practice of birth control methods is considered It is not surprising then, that one important goal of

expressed his feelings: members are concerned with all aspects of ecology.<sup>21</sup> A characteristic. One 24-year-old rural commune member deep respect and reverence for nature and the ecosystem is There is, in fact, evidence that most commune

singing, to be able to lie down on the ground when I want to, to see something grow that I've planted, is really living hands, to feel the wind hitting my face, to hear birds machine-dominated world, it has been like a breath of fresh air to me to live next to nature. To work with my After living most of my life in the artificial and

for me. This is what I had been wanting for a long time. In a real way, this close contact with nature makes me feel closer to God. When you are in a commune like this one, you are forced to have a close relationship with nature, you must respect it and cooperate with it.

## Rebelling against the Establishment

For many persons a basic motivation in choosing a commune is rebellion against the Establishment. For others living in a commune is a demonstration of their rejection of their parents' way of life. It is a way of saying no to the work ethic, no to competition, no to industrialism and technology.

### Achieving Objectives

Do those who adopt the communal way of life achieve what they seek? There are indications that many do and are quite satisfied. They feel that through group living they grow as persons, they experience closer, more meaningful relationships, as well as a greater spiritual awareness.

There is also evidence that many persons do not achieve what they seek. One indication of this is the high degree of instability that characterizes most communes.

One young investigator, Elia Katz, who was sympathetic to the counterculture in which he sought a satisfying life style, discovered some major problems in communal living. Katz toured communes across the nation and concluded that the growth of communes was a significant development in our society with implications for future changes in life styles, but, in general, he reported finding unhappy individuals who were apparently made even more miserable by living in communes. He repeatedly encountered hypocrisy among commune members.

Katz also found that in the communes he studied there was no room for individuals. Each person is urged to rid himself of the characteristics that make him different, eventually becoming almost interchangeable with other group members. As Katz noted, a person is encouraged to explore what it is about himself that he prizes, what defines him as a person, and then to get rid of it.<sup>22</sup>

#### Froblems

Although establishing better relationships is one of the major goals of commune members, it is ironic that interpersonal relationships are a major problem area in many communes. The close, intimate relationships people seek in group living are not often found.

### Interpersonal Relationships

Relationships are often more superficial than those experienced outside the commune. With several people living in close quarters, it is a considerable challenge to establish an intense relationship with any one person. A person's interaction, affection, and time are diffused to the extent that some individuals have difficulty establishing the intimate relationships they want.

The following conversation with a 25-year-old woman reflected a concern over forming close relationships:

Question: Do you believe that your relationships have become more loving since your experience with communal living began?

Answer: I feel that I have become a more loving person. I seem to be better able to accept people.

Question: Do you feel that you truly love everyone in your commune?

Answer: Yes. It is easier to love some more than others, but I feel that I have a loving attitude toward everyone in the group.

Question: Do you think everyone in the commune loves you?

Answer: Yes. But there is a big disillusionment here for me. After a while, it loses something, and I wonder if we're just mouthing a lot of words.

Question: What do you mean?

Answer: Well, Jim over there says he loves me.
And that's just fine, but after I think
about it awhile, there's not anything

117

confused. It's good to love everyloves everybody. I guess I'm a little body, but I still want to be a special special about it. I mean, so what? Jim person for someone.

ousy are indeed disruptive forces in communes authority structure, the possibilities for interpersonal conmoniously in a family-style situation. When a large group of different families and backgrounds to live together hartlict are greatly multiplied. Arguments, conflict, and jealindividuals share close quarters, particularly if there is no most difficult for four or more persons from

me out, too. One day another guy gave me twenty bucks and said I'd better split. So, I did." there as "great," and the people as "beautiful." She spoke sadly of the reason for her enforced departure. "Well, it the silent treatment—Sally more than Joe; but he froze nant. Anyway, the relationship came apart. They gave me mysticism commune. She had been taken in there by Joe and his "old lady," Sally. Mary described the situation was like this. I got pregnant. Sally got all uptight. She and There was something wrong and she couldn't get pregbeing pregnant. Somebody told me she was jealous. the whole relationship. She was really angry about my loe and I were real close, and all of a sudden, she blew Mary K. had evidently enjoyed her stay at a California

stretch himself in uncomfortable directions, something most over a period of time in a commune requires that a person styles. He reported that building interpersonal relationships people are unwilling to make a genuine effort to do. He that communal life is as alienating as more traditional life northwest called The Community, David French suggested further concluded that: After having lived in a middle-class commune in the

abstraction, and an atomistic version of individual straight world, the fragmentation of lives, immersion in ity, the nuclear family, it has carried over from the if the counterculture has rejected grades, author-

Authority and Structure

responsible for providing the fuel to keep warm. buy, grow, or hunt the food, and someone has to be must be performed. Someone has to cook, someone has to the instability of communes. To survive, certain daily jobs Lack of authority and structure contribute greatly to

sentiment against authority that no one in the group is done. It creates a situation ripe for arguments and disagreeresponsible to anyone else, and no one is really responsible ment over who should do what. Nancy M. talks about a for any particular task. As a result essential tasks are never "doing your own thing" and so much anti-establishment Calitomia commune: In many communes there is so much emphasis upon

turn. I got so I could cook pretty good food after awhile. I whole place was an awful mess. Nobody really bothered atterwards.24 even liked cooking as long as I didn't have to wash things some of them would just wander off when it was their turns making the food-three of them at a time. Only to clean things up. The chicks were supposed to take We usually had plenty to eat. Good food. Of course, the

little more than a year. crowded, some people would leave. Morning Star lasted would select the people, and if the commune became too ties would not arise. He did believe, however, that the land Gottlieb believed that with no rules or organizations, hostili-Liters, established a 32-acre commune called Morning Star. Lou Gottlieb, an entertainer formerly with the Lime

terns are often of a religious nature.<sup>25</sup> successful and permanent are those that are structured and that have definite authority patterns. These authority pat-Research indicates that the communes that are

Lack of Privacy

living than the lack of privacy. A common practice in open-Few problems have been more apparent in communal

woods or fields in order to have some privacy and solitude. land communes is for an individual to walk off into the

private rooms. date more members or to give the present members more cerning whether to expand facilities in order to accommocommune in Virginia, there was considerable debate conis a room of his own. It is interesting that, in the Twin Oaks of communal living, the greatest treasure a person may have Skinner described in Walden Two, namely that, in a world Commune members often discover the truth that B.F.

many persons find it trying to give up their private possessions. As one commune member stated: Associated with the problem of giving up privacy.

my wife, and I never intend to do that. like my television, stereo, and my car. I would not share harder than I ever realized it would be to give up things It was hard for me to give up what was mine. It was

individual's privacy and freedom to do what he wishes or her own room, but even so, group living infringes on an when he wishes In some communes each member of the group has his

### Community Relations

authorities or unfriendly neighbors. One woman in an urban commune stated: Communes often find themselves in conflict with

around and harrassing us pretty often. We became afraid involved in sex orgies. Anyway, the police started coming our use of drugs. They thought we were constantly afraid of us. They didn't like our clothes, our long hair, or and resented our living close to them. I think they were constantly harrassed by the neighbors. They despised us In the commune I lived in before this one, we were communes that had bad problems with the community. We've been careful to avoid that. Most of us have been in too much of a hassle and we left they would find the drugs. The whole business became We don't have any problems with our neighbors here

Many commune members realize that there have been

underground paper in Hawaii advised hippie commune ground press, stated: and engaging in sexual intercourse on the side of the road members that they would do well to stop creating problems ing to correct this situation. For example, an editorial in an munities toward them. Many commune leaders are attempt good reasons for hostility on the part of surrounding com-Another article that was widely circulated in the underthrough such acts as leaving a trail of garbage over the land for themselves by antagonizing members of the community

work with them, bake good bread for them, then they're people. Unless we can sit down and talk with them, came to Truchas and started washing their clothes and your neighbors, then go some place else.26 become dangerous. . . If you can't be brothers with not going to understand where we're at, and that can situation, to give them a chance to get to know us as made on the Lower East Side and in the Haight. We don't our people have made the same mistake here that we taking baths in the drinking water. . . . Unfortunately, bother to get to know our neighbors, to find out the local

### Lack of Stability

commitment to the group. For example the turnover at People often enter and leave at will with little feeling of communes is their instability. The turnover rate is very high prompt them to leave. their talents. 27 Feelings of not being appreciated apparently the people who still expect to receive special recognition tor group identity and family closeness is hard to achieve. Also 70 percent. With this high rate of turnover, any sense of Twin Oaks in Virginia during one year was approximately those who leave are often the most competent—these are Perhaps the most glaring problem experienced by

arms often must put up with the unstabilizing influence of free-loaders who drop in for a weekend or short period of Those communes that greet new members with open

121

There is a hippie grapevine. It passes messages far and wide—with astonishing speed. Word passed swiftly through Hippieland that there was a new commune in West Virginia. It was called Anaphia Farm—what a gas!—and the cat who owned it had plenty of bread. Everybody was welcome and everything was FREE. Within a month, Anaphia Farm had almost 40 people of both sexes. Some brought a little money. Most brought only ravenous appetites for whatever they could get FREE. During the 14 months that Anaphia Farm was in existence, there were 4 major turnovers of people living at the farm.<sup>28</sup>

### Financial Instability

Though commune members ideologically de-emphasize materialism and money, financial problems persistently plague them. Trouble arises over how the limited funds should be spent, and frequently the necessities of life are not obtained because of a lack of money. Malnutrition and ill health among commune members are directly related to inadequate funds.

The basic reason for the financial problems is related to the attitudes of many commune members toward work, as indicated by the following statement of a 25-year-old male leader of a southwestern commune:

We have rejected the idea that everybody has to earn a living. People don't have to work from eight to five to justify their right to live. We believe people should do what they enjoy doing when they want to do it. We have to have some income, and it is a problem sometimes. But we just have to work it out. Some of us have part-time jobs and that helps; others do some crafts, which brings income.

Like many other communes, at Freedom Farm, a rural group, the majority of the members lived on welfare, unemployment compensation, and food stamps. A few members had part-time jobs picking apples and harvesting wheat. Some engaged in crafts, free-lance writing, making wall hangings, selling jewelry to psychedelic shops, and

raising rabbits. One member made \$50 a month from his leather work. One of the leaders of Freedom Farm believed that they could become self-supporting by growing organic grains to sell by mail order. However, there was not enough cooperation among commune members to accomplish this.<sup>29</sup>

The Whole Earth Catalog, a popular source book for people living in communes, undoubtedly owes some of its popularity to the fact that it offers information on how to make a better go of communal living financially. For example the Whole Earth Catalog lists tools and books for making furniture, repairing cars, building houses from styrofoam, car tops, or mud, and raising bees for honey. It refers readers to other books such as How to Get Out of the Rat Race and Live on \$10 a Month and How to Live on Nothing.

#### Sanitation

Sanitation is a trying problem in some communes. Some urban groups are housed in run-down, rat-infested buildings, though the sanitation problem has perhaps been more of a problem in rural communes, which frequently have limited sanitation systems.

At one open-land commune called Wheeler's, it was reported that six chemical toilets had been installed in order to comply with county sanitation requirements. The owner of Wheeler's Ranch stated: "I wouldn't go in one of those toilets if you paid me. It's very important for us to be able to use the ground because we are completing a cycle, returning to Mother Earth what she's given us." <sup>30</sup>

The overall sanitation system at many communes is haphazard and, as a result, the water is contaminated. Until people adjust to the water, they may suffer from dysentery, and there may also be periodic outbreaks of hepatitis or typhoid fever.

### Legal Problems

Because communes lack a legal identity, they inevitably face some legal problems. One example is that of 14 youths

who formed a commune and considered themselves a tamily.

They had to go to court in order to answer to the application of local zoning laws which prohibit more than desire is not upheld by the constitution.31 under the same roof in any part of the city which they constitution, but the right of commune members to live that the right to form communes was protected by the and religious communities. The judge further concluded guishable trom such traditional groups as residence clubs port and cohabitation and that they are legally indistinchanging membership with no legal obligations of supselves to be a family did not constitute a legal family. The was that simply living together and considering themwere members of one family. The decision of the court four persons from living in the same dwelling unless they judge concluded that communes have voluntary and

to the commune, she decides to leave. What property is she After a year, during which time she contributes her earnings amounting to \$200. The money goes into a common fund named on the deed, are new members' names added as they the deed to property the group may own? If they are all ownership. Which commune member (or members) holds entitled to take with her? If the commune has purchased young woman joining an established group. She has savings join the commune? Consider an example of the case of a difficulties of illegitimacy: rated into the structure of the group, children may face the belongs to her? Also unless legal marriage has been incorpofurniture or equipment during her stay, what part of it Communes also face the legal problems of property

### Sexual Relationships

relationships?" "Do you practice group sex?" "Who sleeps with whom?" "Do you have monogamous

successful rural New Mexico commune: such questions by outsiders, that there is more interest in the living. Michael R. talks about sexual relationships in his very sexual relationships than in any other aspect of communal Commune members indicate that they are often asked

Communes

123

munes and communitarian living.32 sense that most of the couples here, whether legally with or without children. Monogamy is the rule—in the kind that the media so often like to associate with comexhibitionistic-voyeuristic orgies or sexual activities of the have any group sex here. There are no "love-ins" or other married or not, choose to be monogamous. We do not The commune is made up of family units-couples

ethical grounds, and some communes emphasize rechanneling the sexual impulse through sublimation. behavior. There is sometimes complete sexual abstinence on Many communes exercise strict limitations on sexual

traditional middle-class.33 course, takes place in communes than among the more marital involvement, including flirtation and sexual intercuriosity in communes than among the general public. The interesting observation has also been made that less extraless conspicuous and that there is less sexual titillation and In fact some researchers have observed that erotic sex is

of commitment in these relationships. monogamous sexual relationships and reflect a high degree restrictions at all. The most stable communes practice communes practice sexual exclusivity while others have no as it does among individuals in the larger society. Many Sexual behavior varies from commune to commune just

someone else, it is better for this desire to be satisfied than says, "If my partner wants to have sexual relations with to cause great tensions among group members.34 unsatisfied," violation of the sexual exclusivity norm tends Regardless of the presence of a permissive ideology that relationships is a norm for most commune members. Research indicates that a belief in monogamous sexual

and a tendency toward commitment in a continuing relasome communes, there was also a high degree of pairing off even with the considerable degree of permissiveness in Contrary to popular belief, group sex took place quite tionship. Nudism was observed to be casual and accepted Dr. Herbert Otto, in his study of communes, found that

### Childrearing Practices

We believe in natural childbirth and, when a child is being born, the whole group is present and celebrates by delivery of his child. We encourage this; it symbolizes his chanting and singing. connection with the child. The father usually helps in the

a doctor frequently assists with the births. emphasis upon natural childbirth is a basic part of the describes the childbirth practices of many communes. The requiring hospitals and doctors, although a midwife or even seems to be a rejection of the idea of childbirth as an illness ideology of many communes. One reason for this emphasis This statement by a commune member accurately

and depersonalized aspects of life in a technological society. education. Many commune members feel that, by rejecting what many commune members believe is an indoctrination State.35 For this same reason many commune members also birth certificates, they are counteracting the mechanized into society's values through compulsory public school putting a person in line for taxation, Social Security, and certification and regard the birth certificate as a method of reject birth certificates. They question the process of human belongs more to the family or commune rather than to the births are not present, there is the feeling that the child the commune, for when "officials" who preside at hospital Another reason relates to the identity of the child and

accompanying her everywhere. in the birth process. The newborn rarely leaves the mother, given to the mother in order to provide a sense of continuity Immediately following delivery, the newborn child is

serves the natural cycle of life. feel that breast-feeding is healthier for the child and prenurse their 2-year-old children. Many commune members mother is able and the child is willing. Many mothers still Most commune babies are breast-fed for as long as the

foods with synthetic additives or artificial foodstuffs. this reason many parents do not permit their children to eat vegetarian nature also preserves the natural cycle of life. For Many feel that eating food of an organic or primarily

> dren, as well as unmarried couples with and without settings. Various nuclear units within a commune can and do exist, including legally married couples and their chil-Commune children are reared in a variety of family

that he or she has several mothers and fathers. all the adult members. Ideally a child will grow up feeling lesser degree, most consider childrearing a responsibility of think of themselves as extended families and, to a greater or belong to, the entire group. In any event most communes in others the child is the responsibility of, and is believed to bility of the nuclear family unit within the commune, while In some communes the child is considered the responsi-

necessity of spending all her time at home. are usually closer to the child and assume more responsibilthan just one or two, and for the mother to be freed from the the child to have many adult models to learn from, rather ity for child care than do the other adults. It is beneficial to As might be expected, however, the biological parents

made up by other adults in the commune. One male with several "mothers," "fathers," "uncles," and "aunts." In commune member stated: this way whatever strengths the natural parents may lack are loved by many and that they belong to a large family group The hope is that the children will feel that they are

several parents avoids being isolated in his adult contacts with his parents. He stands along with seven of his "parents." That's security. example of a child at a PTA meeting being asked to stand that he is loved by several adults. You've heard the him. Also, think of the security it can give a child to know to primarily two people who may or may not be good tor A child who grows up in a commune feeling that he has

guidance of a child, a situation is created that is conducive two or more members disagree concerning the discipline or to conflict and resentment. commune members can pose a problem. For example when Considering childrearing a responsibility of all the

Childrearing practices are generally permissive. The

dominant philosophy is to allow children to do as they wish in order for each to develop individuality and creativity.

Only the lightest of pressures toward conformity are exerted. This is demonstrated by such examples as a father who refused to take a smoking pipe away from his 16-month-old son who was smoking it and would not give it up, even though he was coughing from the smoke. The father exerted very little pressure, assuming that the child would willingly give the pipe up eventually, which he did.

Permissiveness does create some difficulties. Communal parents sometimes find it necessary to sacrifice their beliefs in the natural creativity of children and the right of children to choose their own activities in order to provide necessary discipline and encourage conformity to certain values and practices of the commune, such as spiritual meditation. Communal parents seem to experience a persistent dilemma concerning guidance and discipline.

Most communes consider themselves to be an extended family; and children are deliberately indoctrinated to feel a sense of kinship with other children as well as adults in the group. Appealing to this sense of kinship is a common way of trying to settle conflict among children. For example, a parent might say to a child, "Johnny is your brother, don't hurt him." <sup>36</sup>

Educational practices for children vary, with some communes sending their children to public school systems, while others assume responsibility for the education of the children and form their own schools. Education of children may be conducted exclusively within a single commune or sometimes through a cooperative effort of several communes.

As one female member of a rural commune stated:

before we have until a child is eight years old in this area before we have to send them to school. We will not unless it is totally impossible, we will not send a child to public school. We don't know how long we will live here, we don't know. Hopefully, ideally, we will be able to raise our children pretty much on our own, we don't know. It is

possible that by that time, we will have someone here with a teaching credential, then we will probably teach the children here—or use a correspondence school.<sup>37</sup>

Communal education for children is frequently based upon practices of communal living such as folk art, organic gardening, music, and singing. In many communes there is a complete absence of television because members feel it also influences their children with unacceptable values of the larger society.<sup>38</sup>

## Advantages of Communal Childrearing

Some advantages of communal living for children have been listed by several investigators as follows:<sup>39</sup>

- 1. Children can experience a sense of belonging to people other than their parents.
- 2. Children are exposed to many adult role models They have close contact with several men and several women.
- 3. There is a decreased dependency on the natural parents. A child may feel that he or she has several parents, or at least several family members, on whom to depend. If one of the natural parents is absent, a child still has a number of close, caring relationships with other adults.
- 4. Communal children might possibly experience an easier transition to adult life as they are often given the opportunity to make contributions to the commune. They develop a sense of responsibility of having their own work to do. In this way they become a vital part of the life of the commune.
- 5. If the commune has its own enterprise, the child sees work and family life integrated as a whole. The child sees parents work and often works side by side with them, thus creating a strong sense of solidarity and togetherness.
- 6. The child is frequently well trained in cooperation since it is a necessary part of daily life in a commune.
- 7. It is felt that communal children do not grow up alienated from adults as do many children in traditional

nuclear families, because the communal child is constantly involved with adults.

## Disadvantages of Communal Childrearing

A great deal remains unanswered about rearing children in communes. Much more time is necessary to determine the actual effects upon a child, particularly since most of the children observed in communes are age six or younger. There are some indications of some problems and potential disadvantages of communal childrearing. Conflict and resentment can emerge among the adults concerning the discipline of children, particularly when childrearing is considered a responsibility of all the adults.

There is often a problem with education. For children who do not attend a public school, what is the alternative? Correspondence school may not be adequate. Educational practices within the commune may be insufficient. Could a child be severely handicapped in later adult life because he or she did not receive an education of the same general type and quality as children attending public schools?

Childrearing practices in communes are often overly permissive. The practices are sometimes so permissive that the child does not develop the self-discipline to cope with frustration and to achieve his or her desired goals.<sup>40</sup>

The high turnover rate of communes may shake a child's sense of security and stability concerning his family. As he sees his other "mothers", "fathers", "brothers", and "sisters" leave the commune, he may come to fear close attachments to anyone because they could leave at any time.

It is quite possible that many children living in communes do not receive the care and attention they need. Research studies indicate that adult commune members tend to think of themselves as children, that they view their futures as uncertain and their lives as unsettled in childlike ways. Partially as a result of this view, the adult members of communes are generally not willing to sacrifice their own personal search for identity in order to devote full time to the rearing of their children.

Another attitude about children common among adults in communes is that all children are worthy of love and respect, but not necessarily of attention. As children grow out of the physical dependence upon adults, they are treated like any other member of the communal family.<sup>41</sup> While this view could have some positive effects, it could also very easily result in the needs of some children being ignored.

### Economic Support and Property

Communes ideally seek economic self-sufficiency, yet the major source of support in most is welfare, unemployment compensation, and food stamps. Commune members are aware of this dilemma, but have no solution.

In many communes the members work at outside jobs at least on a part-time basis and give their wages to the group. Such communes operate with a common treasury, and the commune has the responsibility to support everyone economically.

As sociologist Dr. Rosabeth Kanter reported:

Many of today's communards believe that money and private property create barriers between people. Money should be thrown into a common pot and property should belong to anyone who uses it. This acceptance of common ownership is reflected in the answer of a small child in a Cambridge commune, questioned about who owned a cat. He said, "The cat is everyone's." \*\*2

Some communes run businesses such as farms, crafts, and toy manufacturing, and gas stations. Still, subsistence farming and small craft industries generally do not provide enough income to meet the necessary expenses of food, utilities, mortgage, rent, or machinery.

As a result, communes continue depending upon welfare, benefactors, generous parents, or inheritances. This also pressures commune members to seek at least part-time employment with employers or institutions within what they consider Establishment culture. This, of course, contradicts some of their major objectives, such as getting away

131

from alienating work, fleeing congested, polluted citites and living off the land.

There is often a reluctance among people in communes to engage in the kinds of commercial activities that might bring them the economic strength they need to achieve the institutional completeness and independence they seek. For example two commune members who were writing a book on natural childbirth refused offers from commercial publishers. Instead they insisted upon going through the difficult process of publishing and distributing the book themselves.

Persons in communes are often discouraged from developing any special skills they may possess. Too great an involvement in one's talents is regarded as an "ego trip" that may distract from the solidarity of the whole group.

Most communes seek to re-establish work as a "holy" and natural activity in which the worker experiences fulfillment, peace, and individual growth, a theory that is best illustrated by the example of religious feeling with which communal gardens are tended.

Work is usually not organized except for the necessary daily tasks, such as cooking and care of animals. Most of the other work is not scheduled, and there are no deadlines. Usually the need to get something done does not take precedence over the willingness of people to do it.

Women assume most of the traditional women's work; however, this depends more upon the skills or training a woman may have than upon tradition. For example a woman skilled in a craft is apt to spend her time doing that in order to bring in money. If she lacks specialized training, she is more likely to cook, sew, care for the children or tend the garden. She is less likely to haul lumber or do other heavy work that men are physically better able to do.<sup>43</sup> Particularly among rural communes, it has been observed that:

. . . While both sexes work, women are generally in a service such as waitress, masseuse, and secretary. Male dominance is held desirable by both sexes. The recog-

nized dress is in a semi-rural or western style which emphasizes sexual differences. The women tend to wear long dresses and long hair, while the men tend toward the western or frontier clothing of boots, rough woven clothes, and outdoor jackets.<sup>44</sup>

## The Stability of Communal Life

What contributes to the stability of communes? If we can answer this question, perhaps we can gain greater insight into human nature and what it takes to survive.

Research has indicated that the most stable and successful communes share the following characteristics:

- Monogamous sexual relationships
- Large age range
- Religious orientation
- Presence of authority and structured delegation of ks
- Respect for individual privacy
- Noncompetitive achievement orientation
- Stable source of income
- No use of hard drugs
- Good relationships with the surrounding community and local law enforcement authorities

The commune to which Jittendra C. belongs demonstrates many of the characteristics that are typical of successful communes:

Jittendra C. is a member of an urban commune in Los Angeles. It occupies two apartment buildings that are next door to each other. The buildings have been joined by an enclosed gallery and considerable remodeling has produced a number of smaller individual apartments and some communal rooms.

This is a religious commune. The religion is based on Eastern beliefs—mainly Hindu.

There are 21 adults in the commune. There are five married couples, four single men, and seven single women. Each single person has his own apartment, and each married couple has an apartment. The members range in age from 21 to 33, with the exception of one couple who are 52 and 49.

While all drugs—"hard" or "soft"—are prohibited, the

members do drink a liquid made from a mushroom. The liquid is said to expand consciousness. It is used only during certain religious rituals that occur about once a

rest of the commune members perform free services for commune doing housekeeping, cooking, repairs, etc. The into a common fund. Five persons work within the some capacity and earn salaries or wages. All income goes The commune operates on a democratic basis. Each unwed mothers, and migratory workers. There is no counseling to poor families, and work with runaways, tion center, providing free legal advice to the poor, free persons in need. Their activities include a drug rehabilitajealousy, as each commune member sees himself con-About half of the commune members are employed in

three administers financial matters. ing board elected for a one-year term. Another board of member has one vote. There is a three-member govern-

neighbors consider signs commune contributes to charity funds, buys Girl Scout improvements, relationships improved even more. The When the neighbors saw the commune making property neighborliness. 45 Cookies, and participates in other activities which the Commune members answered the questions courteously became curious. Neighbors began asking questions neighbors. At first the commune encountered some hostility from As the neighbors' fear diminished, they of citizenship

## Similarities between the Communal and Poverty Subcultures

living in a poverty culture do not choose their life style. difference, as Dr. Fullerton pointed out, is that persons ture. Her observations will be considered briefly. A basic similarity between communal living and the poverty cul-Dr. Gail Fullerton observed some interesting points of

is especially true of those who become deeply involved in they serve to prevent movement out of the subculture. This within the context of the subculture, but at the same time, behavior patterns that help members survive and flourish the use of hard drugs. Communal living, like the poverty culture, encourages

Urban communes, like the urban poor, are often

Communes

<u>[</u>33

and the surrounding community. reasons: cheap rent and security from interference by police tend to locate in these sections for essentially the same located in the deteriorated slum sections of the city. They

"live today and tomorrow will take care of itself." basis requires all of their energies. The attitude is one of part because, in both subcultures, survival on a day-to-day to emphasize the present rather than the future. This is in Commune members, like many of the very poor, tend

victory over self by failing to achieve or by not having any desire to achieve. mune member may feel that he or she has achieved a "ego trip." This is emphasized to the point where a commotivation to achieve are vices; ambition is viewed as an in communes often express the belief that ambition and the emphasize achievement by middle-class standards. People Both commune members and the very poor tend to de-

approach to life and by their great interest in such ancient arts as astrology and Tarot. effort but by fate or luck. This is illustrated by commune members' tendency to shun the traditional, scientific internalized that life is influenced not by an individual's both express a sense of fatalism. The belief has been The communal counterculture and the poverty culture

authorities such as the police and political leaders. dogs at the mercy of a culture represented by various In a sense both cultures tend to view themselves as underin both cultures, which provides a reason to fear authority. of authority. One reason is that the use of drugs is common In communes and poverty subcultures there is a distrust

a mate who is immature and demanding. ships are often not expected to be permanent, and males are There is also a reluctance for individuals to tie themselves to often not able to provide financial support for a family. consensual union is accepted. In both subcultures relation-In communes and the poverty culture cohabitation or

#### Comment

People who join communes are largely searching for

more intimate relationships and an extended family experience. The increase in communal living arrangements during the last few years has been phenomenal and can be expected to continue. Only a relatively small number of persons will be attracted to communal living, however, and most of those who do experiment with it will return to their former, traditional life styles after a few months. The family will not be replaced by communes.

successful communal systems, the Israeli kibbutz, there has group were to take precedence over individual interests. It ownership of property. The interests and welfare of the in 1920 and embraced the values of farming and collective interesting that, in this system designed to eliminate the was emotionally confining for adults and children. It is was their intent to abolish the family, since they believed it desire among adults to give children and grandchildren the child and grandparent-child relationships. The new wave of the kibbutz. Members are now experiencing close parentintimacy has emerged stronger than ever in recent years in family, the family bonds have survived. In fact, family been a return to the family. The kibbutz experiment began family closeness and warmth that they did not receive.46 family orientation in the kibbutz seems in part to reflect a It is significant that in one of the most publicized and

Most commune members are trying to escape the loneliness, restrictiveness, hypocrisy, and materialism that they see in the Establishment. Yet, many of the same problems, such as the conflict between individualism and conformity to the group, occur in the communes. Undoubtedly, many persons have tried communal life and failed because they were not suited for it temperamentally. It is interesting to note that recent studies show that children raised in communes display various negative effects with respect to social, intellectual, and emotional development.<sup>47</sup>

A contributor to the Whole Earth Catalog summarized his experiences with communal living. He stated that if the commune is to survive, "it must be authoritarian, and if it is authoritarian, it offers no more freedom than conventional

society. Those communes based on freedom inevitably fail, usually within a year." <sup>48</sup>

Observation of life in communes offers some insight into what it takes to survive as a group or society. The findings listed earlier concerning the characteristics of stable, successful communes, such as monogamous sexual relationships, high religious orientation, and the presence of authority and structure, have implications for our entire society.

The communal movement could act as a positive influence on traditional family life in America by making us aware of some of the reasons that have caused some people to join communes: the lack of time to spend with a family and lives that are frequently fragmented by demands, pressures, and activities.

The communal movement has brought this unfortunate condition to our attention. Such a fragmented, busy life style needs to be re-examined. Is it really necessary to live like this? If each family could find a way to decrease the fragmentation, participate in joint activities that are mutually rewarding, and genuinely enjoy each other's company, family life and human relationships in general would be strengthened.

Some of the values and goals to which commune members aspire could undoubtedly operate as a positive influence upon society in general. Examples of five such values emphasized by communes are:

- A respect for, and desire to, get closer to nature
- A desire for a brotherhood and sisterhood of close, truly family-like relationships with each other
- A need to become more people-oriented and less object-oriented
- A desire to move away from manipulation and dishonesty in relationships
- A desire to establish work as an activity in which the individual can experience fulfillment and peace.